Helping Former Prisoners Back into Society

Changing Lives Through the Power of the Holy Spirit

Thesis

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a proposal for implementing a transitional program for inmates who have been released from jail or prison in Ogden, UT and the surrounding communities. The goal of the program will be to help these former prisoners change their lives by giving their lives to Jesus and becoming filled with the Holy Spirit.

America’s response to rising crime rates over the last 30 years has been rather simplistic. Federal, State and Local governments have simply built more jails and prisons. While crime rates have decreased significantly as a result of these efforts, the human toll has been devastating. An ever-increasing proportion of our population is being sentenced to longer and longer terms of confinement. As if this was not bad enough, 2/3 of those who are released from prison or jail can expect to return there within three years.

The problem is that when most people released from prison, they will not have the support systems in place to help move their lives in a new direction. Their world will have fallen apart and they simply will not know where to turn in order to put it back together. The result, most likely, will be a return to the only thing that they do know…the street.

Throughout the Bible, we find that God is concerned about those who are less fortunate, and He is constantly calling upon his people to take care of those in need. He has also issued a call for His people to spread the Gospel throughout the world. Here in Northern Utah one of the most destitute populations, in terms of spiritual and physical needs, are those who have been released from jail or prison.

These men and women have often lost everything. They have lost the jobs, their homes, their transportation, and often, their families and friends. They have no money and nowhere to go.

Many have only limited job prospects and poor communication skills. Others have never developed the work ethic that is needed to be successful in a career or occupation. Most have never had a good role model to emulate.
This paper is intended to analyze this problem and to propose a solution, at least for the Northern Utah area. It will explore the possibility of developing a program for working with those who have been in jail or prison.

This program will work with other community organizations in order to provide for the physical needs of the former inmates. It will focus on finding help with employment, training, housing, and medical problems.

It will also work to provide emotional resources. These will include mental health, drug and alcohol counseling, marriage and family counseling, and anger management. In addition, we will provide mentors to meet with and encourage former inmates in a loving, but firm, manner.

Most importantly, we will be helping these men and women with their spiritual needs. It is our desire to show them that they have worth in God’s eye, and that with the help of His Spirit, they can make tremendous changes in their lives.
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I. The Problem of Rising Jail Populations

National Statistics and Trends

One of the most popular shows on television in recent years has been Cops. This show has cameramen ride along with police officers as they arrest various lawbreakers. The show typically ends as the lawbreakers are being led off to jail and it is easy for us to imagine that this is the end of the story.

However, programs like Cops only show the beginning of the story. They do not show what happens to the prisoner after he or she is in custody. They do not show the pain and anguish of the person who knows they may not be free again for a very long time. They do not show the hurt and anger of a family who has lost a loved one for some period of time. Most important, they do not show the intense spiritual and emotional needs of those behind bars.

There were over 2 million Americans in serving sentences in America at the end of 2004. This is almost double the number of prisoners held in America at the end of 1990, and three times the number held at the end of 1985. The magnitude of the problem becomes readily apparent when you realize that this is 1 out of every 109 American men and it represents the population of a large city or medium state. The problem is even worse in the black community where over 1 in every 8 black men are in prison.

In 1991, the United States had the highest per capita rate in the entire world, exceeding even the rates of police states such as China, the Soviet Union and North Korea. The percentage of our population that is imprisoned has increased significantly since then. There has been a 200 percent increase in the number of people imprisoned.¹ In 1985, there were only 333 prisoners for every 100,000 people in the United States. By 2004, this number was 724 per 100,000.

While men are over 14 times more likely than women to be incarcerated, the gap is slowly closing. The number of women being put into prison has been increasing by

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almost 5% per year for the last 10 years. This compares to a 3% annual growth rate for men.\textsuperscript{2,3,4}

Juveniles are another major problem. A 1975 study showed that there were over 700,000 “throw away” children on the streets of America. These are children who have been rejected by their parents and have nowhere to turn.\textsuperscript{5} Many will eventually turn to a life of crime and end up in jail or prison. These children grow up never having a chance to learn about right and wrong. All they know is what they learned on the streets.

Minimum Mandatory Sentencing Guidelines were enacted in 1986 by federal lawmakers who believed that people would be discouraged from illegal drug activity if faced with stiff penalties. These mandatory penalties, which can be 5, 10, 15 or 20 years, are forced upon judges based upon the weight of the drug or the presence of a firearm.

These “one size fits all” penalties remove any discretionary action on the part of the judge who might otherwise consider the level of involvement of the individual and/or the likelihood that the defendant will commit an offense in the future. This has result has been thousands of low level, non-violent offenders who are serving decades long prison sentences for relatively mild crimes.

This magnitude of the problem was increased even more in 1984 when parole was eliminated as an option in the federal prison system as an option.\textsuperscript{6} This new law forced Federal prisoners to serve out their full terms. It also meant that when Federal prisoners were released, they were released without any oversight or supervision. They were simply kicked out the door with no resources or help and left to fend for themselves. The result has been that many have failed and have been returned to prison.

\textsuperscript{3}Allen J. Beck PhD, “Prisoners in 1999”, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, August, 2000, p. 2
\textsuperscript{6}Smarto, P 149
The irony of the Minimum Mandatory Sentencing Guidelines is that high-level drug dealers will often negotiate a plea bargain and testify against low-level participants. This lets the high-level dealer off with a relatively minor sentence while the low-level pawn ends up serving many years in jail.\(^7\)

A number of states have implemented “Three Strikes” laws. These laws are intended to punish career criminals and get them off of the streets. It has been very effect in some states. California especially has seen a sharp drop in crime rates since it put the program into law a decade ago. However, these results have come at a price. There are now large numbers of petty, non-violent criminals who are serve outrageous sentences for relatively minor crimes.

For example, one man is serving 25 years for shoplifting a set of bed sheets from a department store. Another is serving 25 years for stealing a pair of shoes, and still

\(^7\) Families Against Mandatory Minimums, http://www.famm.org/si_federal_sentencing.htm
another is serving 25 years because he was homeless and trying to break into a church kitchen to get something to eat.

While these laws are well intentioned, they put the focus upon punishing the offender and keeping him or her under lock and key, rather than helping them put their lives together. One glaring example of this is the problem of drug abuse. Almost ¼ of all prisoners in America are incarcerated for a drug offense. A large percentage of other prisoners are there because they robbed or stole to support their drug habit. This hits the black community especially hard because blacks are 10 times as likely as whites to be incarcerated for drugs.\(^8\)

The drug that is putting the most people in prison is methamphetamine, or meth for short. More than 12 million Americans have tried it and an estimated 1.5 million are regular users. In a nationwide survey of over 500 law enforcement agencies, meth was listed as the number 1 drug problem facing America today.

Meth is a highly addictive drug that has devastating psychological and physical effects in the long term. In the short term, the user feels like he is filled with energy and can accomplish anything. The drug releases dopamine in the brain, which gives the user a euphoric effect. However, before long, the user cannot function without it and will often sleep for days when coming down from the high.\(^9\)

The psychological effects of long-term use are paranoia, inability to relate to others, violent or erratic behavior, extreme mood swings and an inability to feel joy or emotions. The physical effects can be even worse. Long term use will rot away teeth and bones as calcium is depleted. In addition to organ failure, liver damage, heart damage and strokes, it can also cause open sores and wounds anywhere on the body.\(^10\)

These are not just statistics. These are human beings and each individual has a real life that has been tragically affected by criminal behavior. Each individual has a family and a story. Each individual is loved by God, and it is His desire that they turn to Him.

We here in America like to think of ourselves as living in a morally superior society. Yet the statistics testify to the fact that something is missing. The questions that we

\(^{10}\) Bartow Against Meth, http://www.bartowagainstmeth.com/prevention.html
should be asking ourselves are … “What is wrong with our society?” and “Why are we spawning so many law breakers?”

The United States Department of Justice estimates that 1 out of every 32 adults in the United States is under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system. They are either in jail, prison, on probation, or on parole. And, over 635,000 were released back into the community from jail or prison in 2002.  

**Utah Statistics and Trends**

The number of prisoners in Utah has also been skyrocketing. The prison population has doubled in the last 10 years and increased by 700% since 1977. State correctional authorities attribute this dramatic rise in these numbers to “Get Tough” laws, which passed in the 1970. While these laws have resulted in lower crime rates, they have resulted in more people spending longer amounts of time in prison.

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There is a growing recognition in the State of Utah that it is not enough to just house offenders, or those who might offend again. There is a real need to help them change.  

Unfortunately, the state of Utah is not currently equipped to help people change. The number of former state prisoners who are on parole in Utah grew by 111% between 1990 and 2000 when the numbers grew from 1,543 to 3,266.  

Another significant issue in the state of Utah is the number of women in prison. Incarceration rates are growing for women by 7% per year. Most of this growth is being fueled by drug use, especially meth. 62% of the women in Utah prisons are there because of drugs. These women come from all races and walks of life. Many were, at one time, responsible people with good jobs. However, once they were hooked, it was almost impossible to stop.

Meth use among is skyrocketing among women in Utah and many believe that it has reached epidemic proportions. Salt Lake City now ranks third in the country in the proportion of women arrested that test positive for meth and the Utah Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) is overwhelmed by the number of children it has had to absorb because of meth.

Minimum sentencing guidelines and “Three Strikes” laws have been the primary factors driving these increases in prison populations. Those in the United States who determine public policy have decided that the best way to handle increasing crime rates is to lock people up and throw away the key. As a result, we are spending 4 times as much on building new prison space as we are on education.

The current methods for dealing with prisoners are based more upon appearing to be tough on crime rather than being based upon what has been proven to be effective in

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12 Utah Dept. of Corrections, http://www.corrections.utah.gov/offenders/communityinvolvement/
16 Smatro, p. 13
rehabilitating criminals. Money is pouring into prisons and jails, but it is being used to increase capacity rather than reduce the numbers entering prison.

This has created a downward spiral. The number of people who are being imprisoned have caused states to cut back on programs for rehabilitation. The thinking is that it is more efficient to warehouse criminals than reform them. However, this simply serves to create ever-increasing numbers of criminals, putting an even greater strain on jails and prisons.

A large part of the problem is that these programs ignore the spiritual aspects of reform. Secular programs which ignore the spiritual development of those stuck in the criminal lifestyle do not work and there is very little money available for faith based programs.

We live in a throwaway society and prisoners are now treated as the human equivalent of garbage. They serve no purpose and therefore must be taken from sight and disposed of. Rehabilitation programs, based upon secular principles, have been abandoned because it did not seem to work. There was only a limited impact on recidivism and they failed to protect communities.

The unfortunate aspect of this problem is that many of those in our expanding prison populations are non-violent offenders. This is especially true in the black community where there are more young black men age 20-29 incarcerated than there are in college. In fact, “there is no other nation on Earth who treats people who commit non-violent crimes as harshly as does the United States.”

Even the Christian church seems to have bought into this throwaway philosophy. There does not appear to be much of a desire on the part of Christian leaders in Utah to reach this population of lost men and women. It is much easier to convince Christians to fly to a foreign country than it is to get them involved in jail ministry.

Part of the reason is that it is inconvenient to be involved in people’s lives on a daily basis. It is easier to just ignore them and pretend the problem does not exist. Christians

17 Petersilia. p. 26
18 Ibid. p. 22
are unwilling to reach out to them through the cultural and intellectual barriers. This is why over 80% of Christian ex-offenders never find a church.\textsuperscript{19}

Not enough just to go into the prisons and tell people about Jesus. This is the equivalent of what James was talking about in James 2:16 where Christians tell the poor to “be warmed and be filled,” but fail to provide needed food or clothing. As Christians in Utah, we need to put feet to our faith and help these hurting men and women reenter society. We need to provide friendship, mentoring and encouragement. They need to know that with God’s help, they can change, and that there are people who care about whether they succeed or not.

We need to be God’s agents of redemption in a fallen world. We need to remember that God loves those who belong to Him and will restore them. These promises were made to ancient Israel\textsuperscript{20}, they apply to us, and they apply to former prisoners who have given their lives to Him. These men and women can be restored, and we can be God’s agents, assisting in the restoration process.

**Ogden Statistics and Trends**

Ogden’s crime rates have been falling both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of population. Ogden’s crime rates are 50\% higher than the state as a whole. This is due to the fact that metropolitan areas always have crime rates that are higher than those in rural areas, and Utah has large rural areas.\textsuperscript{21}

Charts on Ogden crimes

There are currently 2000+ people on parole or probation in the Ogden area being supervised by 26 Parole Officers. This means that each parole officer must supervise 77

\textsuperscript{19} Smarto, p. 88

\textsuperscript{20} Jeremiah 31:2-4 – “Thus says the LORD: ‘The people who survived the sword Found grace in the wilderness—Israel, when I went to give him rest.’ The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! You shall again be adorned with your tambourines, And shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice.’ ”
people. It is almost impossible to keep track of 77 people, let alone making sure that they are doing everything that they are supposed to be doing.

This is why the corrections department is currently soliciting the community for people and organizations to partnership with them in helping these men and women re-integrate into society. They are overwhelmed, and they know they are overwhelmed.\textsuperscript{22}

II. The Reasons for Rising Jail Populations

The Effect of the Media

While sex and violence in the media are huge factors that are shaping our moral outlook today, they are not the most important. They are overshadowed by the concept of “instant gratification.” By this I mean that the media teaches people that all of their problems can be solved in a short period of time, and that it does not take long to get what you want.

Sitcoms are a great example of this. By the end of a half-hour, every dilemma has been solved and everyone loves each other again. It ignores the fact that the emotional effects of bad behavior will often take long period of time to be resolved, if in fact they ever are. In real life, relationships take time to develop. Problems are not resolved in a half-hour and it takes real work to rebuild trust after offending someone.

The ability to delay gratification is directly correlated to the future success of an individual in life. Unfortunately, our youth are being bombarded with the message that gratification should always be instantaneous. If you just drink the right beer, drive the right car, or use the right deodorant, you can have everything that you want immediately. This message has had a profound impact upon our culture.

In one study, High School students were given a choice between receiving a small amount of money immediately or receiving a larger amount one week later. Those who chose the smaller amount immediately also had other problems in their lives associated

\textsuperscript{22} Handouts received at Utah Department of Corrections Open House on January 4, 2006 at the Adult Probation and Parole Office, 2430 Washington Blvd, Ogden, UT 84403
with immediate gratification. They were much more likely to use drugs, alcohol and cigarettes. They also had lower self-esteem and lower academic performance.\textsuperscript{23}

This need for immediate gratification has caused many to turn to drugs and alcohol. They have been convinced that they should feel good and that they are entitled to getting what they want. When it does not happen the way they think it should, they turn to mind altering substances in order to get the feelings of peace they believe they deserve. These substances do help them feel better for a short time, and they do it without requiring any kind of work.

Another problem related to this in the state of Utah is overspending. For many years, Utah has led the nation in the percentage of households declaring bankruptcy. In the twelve months ending in March of 2004, one out of every 37 households declared bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{24} This is twice the national average and it is related to this.

However, a person needs to work to be successful in life, and to feel successful. Success without effort leaves a person feeling empty. Even though a person may feel better, they know, in their heart, that is empty and not real. This emptiness further fuels the need for illicit substances, as a person attempts to fill the emptiness, or at least dull the pain associated with it. He or she is trapped in a cycle and it seems like there is no way to escape.

The way that the media presents sexuality is another problem. Sex is presented as something that should be done primarily for recreational purposes. It is also presented as if it is something that cannot be controlled. The message that we get is that we are born a certain way, and we have to be true to ourselves by expressing ourselves sexually. While this attitude spreads emotional pain and disease, which is bad enough, it also convinces men, and sometimes women, that they are being cheated if they are not active in this area.

This leads to all sorts of abuse, including rape, statutory rape, sexual assault, and physical assault when the object of a person’s affection does not reciprocate. It also tends

\textsuperscript{23} Edelgard Wulfert, Jennifer A. Block, Elizabeth Santa Ana, Monica L. Rodriguez, and Melissa Colsman “Gratification: Impulsive Choices and Problem Behaviors in Early and Late Adolescence,” Journal of Personality, Volume 70 Issue 4 August 2002, Page 533

\textsuperscript{24} Dave Anderton, “Utah Stays Number 1 in Bankruptcies” Deseret News, June 22, 2004
to communicate that women are sex objects who want sex, even when they say that they do not.

Violence in the media is also having a tremendous impact upon our culture. I think most men enjoy a movie where the bad guy gets it in the end. There is something within each of us that enjoys seeing karma (as ye sow, so shall ye reap) at work. However, the problem is that not everyone has good discernment about who the bad guys are.

If a person is poor, he may feel that the rich are the bad guys. If a person is a minority, he may feel that whites are the bad guy. The bad guy may end up being a police officer, a teacher, a rival gang member, or even a parent.

The media has conditioned us to want to take out the bad guy, and to believe that it is OK to take out the bad guy. When there is poor discernment as to who the bad guy is, innocent people get hurt and the one with poor discernment ends up in custody. So, while many think of violence in the media as relatively harmless, it can fuel anger in those who have a poor sense of discernment, and lead to tragic circumstances.

“Many people within the criminal culture have a worldview that could be described in terms of jungle warfare. They tend to perceive themselves as lone combatants engaged in a guerrilla-type conflict, pitted against incredible odds. The enemy is ‘the system,’ a dark Goliath that seeks to swallow up their lives and overpower them at every turn. For these self-styled resistance fighters, getting over on the enemy is the name of the game. Hit and run. Attack and evade. They can even perceive that the stand they are taking against this monolithic foe is not only valiant — it is noble.”

Unfortunately, the concept of “good guys” and “bad guys” does incredible harm to our nation by desensitizing us to the humanity of those who we consider to be the “bad guys.” We tend not to see them as people and we tend to forget that all of us are part good and part bad. We do not look at them as individuals who God loves and desires to save. Instead, we tend to look at them as if they were expendable.

“Not long ago, a large convention was held in a Cape Cod hotel. Police were called in when drunken conventioneers committed numerous crimes. They pulled twenty-two fire alarms, sprayed fire extinguishers, broke the ice machines and stole two television sets. … Unfortunately, the convention was a gathering of the Massachusetts Police association and the inebriated criminals were all police officers.”

For the most part, we now live in a throw-away society. When something breaks and does not work anymore, we throw it in the trash and buy a new one. Public policy in America has bought into this philosophy whole-heartedly when it come to dealing with the “bad guys.” We now tend to see them as broken and unfixable. And…since we do not see them as human beings, we simply lock them up and keep them out of sight.

Finally, it is important to understand that the media does great harm to our society in the area of interpersonal skills. Many children learn to relate to the world by watching television. Many of the shows, sitcoms especially, teach children that the way to relate to others is by making cutting remarks about them. Through these shows, they learn to disrespect their teachers, their parents, and their peers.

They do not realize that real life is not a sitcom. When people do not react the way that a person feels they should, based upon his sitcom training, he feels that life is not fair, or as if he has been cheated. This learned behavior detaches our youth from the community at large and leads to emotional pain. This pain often leads to anti-social behavior and it is often dulled through the use of drugs and alcohol.

God’s kingdom is different. Within it we learn that life is worth living and that anything worth having is worth working for. We learn that love takes time to develop. It is respectful and forgiving. It does not cut others down. It builds them up. It teaches us that everyone is the bad guy because everyone sins, but that forgiveness is a better response to evil than violence. Finally, it teaches us that every one of us has value in God’s eyes. It teaches us that He loves us unconditionally and that if we will only reach out to Him, He will reach down to us and pull us into His kingdom.

26 Smarto, p. 166
The Effect of Evolutionary Thinking

At first glance, you might be wondering what evolutionary thought is doing in a paper like this. After all, evolution and creation are basically scientific questions with little relevance to day to day living, right?

Unfortunately, evolution has done more to undermine the kingdom of God than almost any other factor. It has taught our youth that the Bible has been proven to be untrue by science. It is nothing more than fables. While it may communicate some truths through stories, like Aesop’s fables, you cannot really take it literally.

This has led many to reject God, and it has led even more to question the Word of God, picking and choosing what they want to believe. Many men, in a desire to be intellectual, have discarded the concept of sin and the need for forgiveness from God. Others have decided that they are their own gods, or that through the application of spiritual principles and right living, they can either become a god, or gain His favor.

If evolution is true, then we are nothing more than a cosmic accident, and there is no purpose in our being here. How can you give people hope when they believe that they have no purpose and that they are nothing more than an accident? The answer is, you cannot. This is why many of our young men and women have no hope. This is why they turn to drugs, alcohol, materialism and sex. After all, if there is no purpose, we might as well enjoy ourselves and have a good time.

If evolution is true, the rule of law is “Survival of the fittest.” Whether you are in business selling computer software, or drugs, the goal is to do unto others before they do unto you. This means that it is OK to look upon others, or upon other groups of people as inferior to yourself. It means that it is OK to harm others if it will benefit you. It means that you must be the master and controller of your domain. It means that survival, procreation and pleasure are the highest ideals to be worked for.

This kind of thinking is exactly what makes people behave in ways that lead to their imprisonment. Their desire to dominate and control their circumstances caused them to do things that hurt others. In their effort to be the one who survives and thrives, they decided that they did not need to follow society’s norms. They decided that they could make up their own rules and to heck with everyone else.
However, if God did create the universe, then it means we are accountable to Him. It means that we have a purpose for being here and He is the source of our blessings. It means He has blessed us with material possessions, food and sexuality, but He is in control of these things and they should be used within the parameters He has given us. Most of all, it means that He exists and He loves us as if He were our father. It means that He only has our best interests at heart, and it is His desire for us to live in a way which will bring blessings to us, and those we know.

**The Effect of the Secularization of Society**

Closely tied to the issue of evolution is the secularization of society. We are being systematically taught that God does not exist. Evolution is just one area where this is happening. Children are being taught that it is “unscientific” to believe in God. The underlying message is that only ignorant and superstitious people believe in God.

Children are also being taught that it is unpatriotic to believe in God. They are being told that we have a “separation of church and state,” which prevents any mention of God or His moral principles in the public arena.

As a result, many children grow up with a humanistic world-views based upon the premise that men are basically good and moral creatures. Sin has been replaced with relative morality and everything in a person’s life is dependent upon his or her own desires and will-power.

This is a real problem for those who struggle with sin. They believe that they are supposed to be good, but they understand that they are not. They then come to believe that they are defective and unable to be good. This causes them to give up and wholeheartedly embrace their sinful lifestyle. They come to believe that it is their destiny and that there is nothing that they can do about it.

They have no hope because they have been taught that it is all up to them. They do not know that they are sinners and no different than the rest of mankind. They have never been taught that God loves them and that God will forgive them if they ask. They have come to believe that they are evil and beyond hope.

In a society which believes that people rise and fall based upon their own efforts, those who fail are regarded as inferior humans, even by themselves. As we have moved
God out of the public arena, as we have trained our children to be atheists, we have seen a need to compensate by locking more people up

**The Effect of the Disconnection of the Individual from Community**

It is so easy to get lost in today’s society. It starts in childhood with both parents working, or with single parents trying to raise their children. There is just too much to do to spend much time with their kids. It is just too easy in today’s society to put your children second and let them fend for themselves.

But it is not just within the family. We live in a society that thinks big. We have big schools, big churches and large corporations. All of these institutions make it easy for a person to become lost and alone.

And then there are the opportunities for entertainment that take us away from interactions with others. This includes television, computers and video games. A person can remain constantly occupied in a fantasy world and avoid human interaction all together.

These social trends have has a tendency to reduce the importance of connecting with others. We can live our whole lives with only minimal contact with others. This can create unrealistic expectations about what life should be like. Then when things then do not turn out as expected in real life, people tend to lash out and take what they think they deserve. This leads many to violence and theft. Others simply retreat farther into their fantasy world using drugs and/or alcohol as an escape mechanism.

The influence of Mormonism in Utah makes this problem even worse. Mormonism is a legalistic religion, which tends to ostracize those who are not perceived as perfect. This tends to polarize the population into two camps. One the one side are those who have made it and appear to be perfect. This side tends to think that there are better than the other side, which is everyone else.

What this means to those on the other side is that even though they may have many good qualities, they tend to look at themselves as failures. They figure that since they are never going to make it to the good side (because they know they are not perfect), they might as well give themselves completely to the bad side.
This has had devastating effects on the population in Utah. Utah leads the nation in Teen Suicide rates\(^{27}\) and in the percent of population being treated for depression. Many believe that this is a direct result of the pressure to be perfect that is brought to bear by the Mormon Church.\(^{28}\)

The net result of all these issues is that it is often difficult for people in today’s society, especially in Utah, to connect with the community at large. Many feel as though they are outcasts who will never be able to connect with their community. The result is anger and depression, which leads to anti-social behavior, which ultimately lands many in jail or prison.

**The Revolving Door**

A part of the problem with rising prison populations is that once a person enters the prison system, it is difficult to ever escape. A full 67% of those who are released from prisons and jails will be rearrested within 3 years. Most will return to custody either because they violated their parole, or because they committed new crimes. This means that large numbers of those who are serving time are repeat offenders who have been unable or unwilling to change their lifestyles. Those convicted of theft and robbery have the highest rearrest rates. Blacks also a more difficult time with 72% of them being rearrested within 3 years. Women fared better with only a 57% rearrest rate.\(^{29}\)

One reason for this is that the people being released from prison do not believe that they are capable of changing their lives and even if they did believe it, they do not have the tools that they will need to change their lives. These tools include social skills and coping mechanisms.

In a conversation with a Salt Lake City social worker who works with women who are addicted to meth, she revealed to me that most of the women she works with have

\(^{27}\) Tanna Berry, “Shurtleff: End Silent Epidemic – Utah’s Young Male Suicide Rates Lead the Nation.” Standard Examiner, Nov 15, 2005

\(^{28}\) Julie Cart. “Study Finds Utah Leads Nation in Anti-Depressant Use.” Los Angeles Times, February 20, 2002

\(^{29}\) Patrick A. Langan PhD and David J. Levin PhD, “Recidivism of Prisoners in 1994”, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, June, 2002
dreams about what they would like their lives to be like. They dream about being good mothers, having a good job, or having a home and a family. However they do not believe that they will ever get there. They do not have the tools to reach their dreams, so they give up and numb themselves with drugs and/or alcohol.

Very few resources have been allocated to helping former prisoners stay out of jail, especially compared to those that have been allocated to putting them and keeping in jail. In fiscal 2006, states are expected to spend $34.6 billion for corrections, which is up 24% from 2001.\(^{30}\)

Many lawmakers are beginning to realize that they can save money by helping prisoners stay out when they get out. There is currently legislation pending in congress that would allocate $200 million in funding for programs that help prisoners reenter society.

One State experimenting with this is Kansas. They have established a program that removes barriers to reentry. The program, which began 3 years ago, and concentrates on high-risk offenders, has had some amazing success. Only 13% of the participants in their program have returned to custody verses 89% of the high-risk offenders who were not in the program.\(^{31}\)

Weber County, here in Utah, has taken a different tack. They have decided to begin charging inmates for their custody. This means that when each inmate is released, he or she will be presented with a bill, probably for thousands of dollars, which they will have to pay if they want to avoid going back to prison.\(^{32}\)

### III. The Call to Ministry

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ ‘Then the righteous will answer Him, saying,

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\(^{31}\) Ibid.

\(^{32}\) Staff Writer, “Making Convicts Pay Twice,” Standard Examiner, December 9, 2005
‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’”

**Jesus’ Call in Matthew 25:34-40**

In these verses, God reveals the hearts of those who belong to Him. Quite simply, God’s people care about others. And, they don’t just care about those who care about them, they care about those who are less fortunate even if they have no relationship with them and even if their condition is a consequence of their own behavior.34

It also reveals that God’s people are men and women of action. They do not just sit around spouting religious platitudes. They are out in the trenches, putting their faith into practice.35

As Christians, we are saved by our faith, by our belief in Jesus Christ. We do not have to work to earn God’s favor. In fact, those of us who know the Bible, know that there is no way that we could earn God’s love even if we wanted to.

However, we also know that if we really believe, it will affect our behavior. We will want to do those things that we know are important to Jesus. And one thing that we do know about Jesus for sure is that He loved the underdog. He was always reaching out to those who society found to be less desirable.

Jesus last ministry on Earth was to a prisoner on a cross. The prisoner knew that he was a sinner and his last request was to ask Jesus for mercy in the next life. This was a request that Jesus granted.36

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33 Matthew 25:34-40

34 Matthew 5:44-46 – “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

35 James 2:15-17 – “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”
Harvest is Plentiful, but Workers are Few

Jesus told His disciples that the world was ripe for sharing the Gospel. There were many people, but few workers to go and share God’s love with the world. Today, the fields are still white for harvest, but there are some places where Christians fear to tread. Jails and prisons are included in those places.

At the same time, jails and prisons are some of the best missionary fields in the United States. You have large numbers of people who are hungry to make changes in their lives. They know that their lives are off-track, they just do not see any way of getting them back on track. The following quote from Leon Spitale, a Prison Minister, expresses the magnitude of the opportunity to spread the Gospel…

“Where else can you find so many for whom the facade of self-sufficiency has been stripped away? Where else can you enter a place that is filled from top to bottom with people who know that they have done wrong and, in most cases, readily admit it? Where else can you find so many who are genuinely sorry for what they have done? Where else can you find so many broken, hurting, lonely people all collected together in one space? Where else can you enter a community where so many members have been humbled?...Where else can you enter an arena where every unbeliever understands that your function is to talk about God? And further, that they expect you to bring Him up?”

During the time I have been ministering in the jail, I have had many inmates tell me that it was an act of God’s grace for them to be arrested. They tell me that someone

36 Luke 23:39-43 – ‘Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

37 Spitale, p. 190
would have killed them, or that they would have killed someone, or that they would have died of a drug overdose if they had stayed on the streets. “God, in His great mercy and compassion, has slowed them down and put them in a gracious state to receive it.”  

These are people who knew that they needed to change their lives, but they were caught up in circumstances that were beyond their ability to control. It was as if their lives were on automatic pilot and nothing could make them change directions. Getting arrested slowed them down and allowed them to take the time to reevaluate where their life was headed, and if they wanted to change direction.

In 1st Corinthians Paul tells us that the weaker or unpresentable parts of the Christian body are necessary. I believe that this is referring to parts of the body such as our intestines. We do not show our intestines, but we could not live without them. They are the part of our body which provides nourishment and life to the rest of the body.

I think that God can use broken people in the same way. Jesus told the story of two men in Luke, who were both forgiven for a debt they owed. They point of the story was that the man who was forgiven the larger amount loved the person who forgave more.

I have seen the way that this works in real life. I have a couple of men I am working with who have come out of prison. They have spent most of their lives living contrary to the law of God and have spent many cumulative years in prison. However, now that they have accepted Jesus as their Savior, and realize how much He has forgiven them, they are on fire for Christ. They cannot wait to spread the Gospel. I had one guy who knew all of the crack houses in town and he wanted to visit them to share about God’s love.

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38 Spitale, p. 191

39 1st Corinthians 12:22-24 - “No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty.”

40 Luke 7:40-43 – “And Jesus…said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ So he said, ‘Teacher, say it.’ ‘There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?’ Simon answered and said, ‘I suppose the one whom he forgave more.’ And He said to him, ‘You have rightly judged.’"
A Personal Calling from the Holy Spirit

There are a number of people in Ogden who have been called by God to jail ministry in the Ogden area. These men and women are committed to sharing the blessings that God has poured out in their lives with others. While there are many different personalities and styles, we all share a common goal. That goal is to see the power of God working in the lives of people who formally had no hope. Following are some of their stories.

Don

Don was raised in a Lutheran home from the time he was born until he graduated from high school in 1965. His family never missed a Sunday service and he spent a great deal of time memorizing Bible passages and creeds. The one thing that he never heard in church though was that a person needed to be born again.

He grew up thinking that a Christian was a person who had good behavior and went to church. He also thought that it was possible to be a good person without the help of God. He figured that he knew many people who had worse behavior than him, so he was OK.

After graduation, he left home and began to travel the country. His theme song for his life was “Born to be Wild” by Steppenwolf. He lived an exciting life of looking for adventure. He skied, rode motorcycles and took up hang gliding. This exciting life left him near death three different time, once from an automobile accident, once from a motorcycle accident, and once from an industrial accident.

He married late at the age of 30, but soon realized that his new wife had a serious problem with drugs and alcohol. This caused him to turn to God and begin praying for her. God answered his prayers. One day, when he returned home from a business trip, his wife informed him that she had given up drugs and alcohol and had started attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

Don and his wife started attending a local Evangelical Free congregation and God impressed upon him and his friend, Don Dickie, that it was time to start a ministry. The very next Sunday, there was an announcement in church that there was a need for
Christian teaching in the Weber County Jail. He responded to this call and five years later, he is still teaching 4 nights a week at the jail, reaching over 100 men per week.  

**Tom**

Tom is a recovering alcoholic and drug user. He grew up in the Ogden area and has lived here all his life. When he was young, he fell in with the wrong crowd and became involved in drugs and alcohol. He ended up living on the streets and was eventually faced with the prospect of spending several years in prison for his actions.

The threat of prison caused him to seek help with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). At first, he only attended the meetings because he wanted to convince the judge that he had changed, and therefore did not need to spend time in jail. However, over a period of time, he came to know God, and Jesus as his Savior.

Not only that, he came to believe in the redemptive power of God and the mission of AA. Within a couple of years, he was serving on the national board for AA. Over time, he came to believe that God had saved him for something and he began to ask God continually, “What do you want me to do?”

Eventually, he realized that the AA program was fine, for as far as it went, but that the generic higher power they taught was in fact Jesus Christ. This caused him to leave the AA organization and he began to teach a twelve step program that focused on Jesus instead of a generic higher power.

He eventually began holding several 12 step classes in the jail and began working with men when they got out of jail. He currently works with a half dozen former prisoners and is trying to find the funding for a transitional housing program.

Tom believes that God has personally called him to work with those in jail, and those who have been released. He has a passion for the men in jail, and it is his desire to see them develop a passion for Christ and a desire to change.

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41 Don Beuch, interview January 9, 2006 in Ogden, UT
42 Tom Finn, interview March 9, 2006 in Roy, UT
The Ladies of Washington Heights

Ralph and Mary were teaching a Wednesday afternoon Bible study at the jail for women. They were moving out of town, and we were praying for God to bring someone who could continue to teach after they moved.

I contacted one of the pastors at my church and he gave me the names of Judi, Pat, and Stacy. These three women agreed to take over the Bible study and have been faithfully sharing the Word of God ever since. Ann joined the group later and began to teach a study on Monday.

These women have had a tremendous impact on the women at the jail and are excited about the response they have been getting. They stepped out in faith, and they have all told me that they have been blessed by what has happened to them, and to the women they are ministering to.

My Calling

I suppose God has been calling me for this ministry ever since I was a little boy. I was diagnosed as Hyperactive as a young child and I never seemed to fit in anywhere. I did not fit in at school and I did not have many friends.

When I was 13, I was invited to church by Mrs. Williams, who lived across the street. I found out many years later that she and the pastor had prayed for me often. I was saved at a church camp when I was 13 years old, but I did not fit in at the church and so I forgot about religion and headed in a new direction.

At 15, I moved to Fair Oaks, CA, near Sacramento, to live with one of my Mom’s ex-boyfriends (John) who thought he could straighten me out. This worked OK for awhile. I helped him with his Real Estate business and he did his best to mentor me. I am especially appreciative for the desire he planted in me to go to college. I do not think that I would have ever reached my potential without this influence.

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43 Jeremiah 29:11-13 – “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”
However, I still had problems related to my hyperactivity. I quickly found out that the only people who would accept me in school were the druggies. I began to hang out with them and we smoked pot everyday at lunch.

I stayed with John for over a year and things were working out OK until one day when he accused me of doing something I did not do. When I argued with him about it, he hit me in the face. It did not really hurt, but it did give me a bloody nose.

After he hit me, I jumped out of the car and returned home where I raided the refrigerator, stole one of his cars, which I lived out of for about a week until he found me and shipped me home to my mom.

This period of my life lasted less than a year and within a few months of turning 17, I was enlisted in the Air Force and headed off to Basic Training. After training, I was shipped to Hill ABF in Utah where I soon fell in with the same type of people who had previously accepted me. There were a lot of drugs on the base and they were easy to get. Most people just smoked pot, but occasionally, there were other drugs. My Air Force years were just kind of wasted.

After the Air Force, I enrolled at Weber State College and fell in with another group of party guys. I was able to make it through school, but would have done much better if I were not burning my brain out with drugs and alcohol. The one good thing that happened to me during these years was that I met my wife, Lori. She has been a blessing to me and I would not be the person I am today without her love and influence.

As often happens, when my oldest child turned five and began to understand the world around her, I was convicted and realized that I had just been wasting my life. I remembered that I had been saved, and a desire developed within me to draw closer to God.

However, even as a Christian, I did not fit in. We have attended 4 different churches since I recommitted my life to Christ, but I never really found a place where I felt at home. I was able to learn a great deal at these churches and even served on two church boards, and was a Youth Pastor for one church for several years. However, none of them felt right and it was very difficult for me to make friends. My personality just did not endear me to others.
This all changed a 2½ years ago. One of the men at the church I am now attending invited me to help him with a jail ministry he was doing. We ended up teaching every other week and it seemed like I had finally found the place God had prepared for me.

Because of my background, I understood what it meant not to fit in. I understood the hopelessness of wanting to get along with others, but not being able to. I understood what it meant to disappoint those you love and not feeling like there was anything that you could do about it. I was able to be real with the men in jail, and eventually many of them opened up to me.

Every person’s call from God is different. In my case, God opened a door and I faithfully walked through it. It is amazing because even though I am dedicating a large portion of my free time to this ministry, it does not feel like a burden to me. In fact, it is the exact opposite. When God gives me an opportunity to minister to the men in the jail, or those who have been released, I feel energized.

My life was a mess and I spent a large part of it looking for peace in drugs or alcohol. All that time and money wasted, and I never found the peace that I was looking for. And then, I end up finding that peace by sharing the love of God with other men who need the Savior just as bad as I do.

IV. Changing Lives
The Power of the Holy Spirit

The biggest issue facing prisoners who are trying to change is that they just do not believe that they can do it. They have been trying all of their lives and have come to a realization that they are who they are, and there is no use denying it. They see life almost as if it was a movie, and they have a script to read that cannot be changed.

Without God and His Spirit, what they believe is probably reality. There are not a lot of people who can change the essence of who they are through sheer willpower. Try as they might, most prisoners will not be able to do it.

If you look at it from the prisoner’s point of view, it appears that their entire life is out of their control. They do not have freedom and they are separated from those they love. If they have not been sentenced yet, they are at the mercy of the judge and the prosecutor.
In addition, many are controlled by their emotions including rage, loneliness and fear, which they see as beyond their control.

What we need to keep in mind, as those who are ministering to prisoners and former prisoners, is that without God, their situation may be hopeless, but with God, all things are possible.\(^{44}\) The Holy Spirit is an agent of change in the lives of believers and there is no person who exists that can stop the Holy Spirit from working in a person’s life if that is what the person desires.

**Communion with God**

Separation is a big issue for those in jail. They are not able to share their lives with those that they love. Their family and friends might as well be in another universe except for those few precious moments when they visit them. Even then, a glass wall separates them. They might as well be watching their loved ones on television. There is no physical contact and the voices are muffled and indistinct.

The Holy Spirit provides communion with God. A person can be alone, but if they are filled with His Spirit, they will never feel alone.\(^{45}\) The Holy Spirit is capable of providing comfort and direction to those who are willing to follow God’s prompting.\(^{46}\)

The Holy Spirit can be a great comfort to prisoners in times of uncertainty. A person in jail is worried about many things over which he or she has absolutely no control. They worry about sentencing, they worry about if loved ones will still be there when they get out, and they worry about who will provide for their loved ones while they are incarcerated.

The Holy Spirit can give an inmate comfort by letting him or her know that God is in control. Nothing is going to happen to them that God does not allow. A prisoner who is filled with God’s Spirit will be less anxious because he or she knows that while there

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\(^{44}\) Mark 10:27 – “But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.’ ”

\(^{45}\) John 16:7 – “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.”

\(^{46}\) John 14:26 – “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”
might not be anything that they can do to control the situation, God loves them and He will control the situation and use it for the benefit of the believer.\textsuperscript{47}

**Freedom**

It is ironic that it is sometime necessary for a person to lose their physical freedom in order to gain spiritual freedom. The loss of physical freedom can be a severe emotional blow. It can also be a catalyst for change. It can help a person come to the realization that there is a need for change, even if that person does not know how to change.

God’s Holy Spirit can help a person change in ways that were never thought possible. It can set a person free from bondage to sin and give them the ability to choose to do what it right and good. This is the true freedom that is offered by God and it is our job as volunteers to help prisoners see this.\textsuperscript{48}

They no longer have be a slave to their passions. They can still have passion, but they do not have to let it control them. They can direct it to achieve whatever God is calling them to accomplish.

Emotions, by their very nature, are not controlled by thinking and logic. Emotions are driven by feelings and while we might learn how to control our behavior so that we do not always act upon our feelings, we cannot control them. Anger, loneliness and fear are the big three feelings that prisoners deal with.

Perhaps the best work of the Holy Spirit is the ability to set men free. The human spirit is designed to appreciate and love freedom, which is why it is so tragic when physical freedom is taken away. The Holy Spirit is capable of setting men and women free in a real and true way. Perhaps it is best expressed by a person who has experienced that freedom.

*“Escape from Alcatraz” is an article that was written by a young man who ‘had been rejected by his parents at the age of fifteen and pushed from one institution or orphanage*

\textsuperscript{47} Romans 8:28 – “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

\textsuperscript{48} John 8:31-32 – “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”
to another. Feeling unwanted and bitter, he reacted by trying to square his account with society by committing one crime after another in a career which finally culminated in a spectacular bank robbery. He was caught and committed to the Federal Penitentiary in Atlanta where he spent his time – by his own admission – thinking of ways to escape. He spent every waking moment trying to find some weakness in the prison and he finally found one.’

One day, he managed to wriggle through a storm sewer that led from the prison to beyond the walls. After spending seven or eight hours struggling through a narrow pipe and forcing aside the barriers with a wrench, the man was free – only to be caught soon after and returned to prison. He became so discouraged that he actually developed a psychosis and was transferred to the prison at Alcatraz.

There, under the influence of the Chaplin and his religious reading, he learned that he could as he phrased it, ‘beat Alcatraz.’ He beat it, he said, by concluding that before he went down for the third time in a sea of misery, he would try to reach toward God. He acknowledged that when he offered himself, he wasn’t offering much but what he was he offered freely and wholly. This is how he described what happened. ‘And God took me up. He took me – confused, searching and worthless me. Why He accepted me I don’t know. I’m afraid even to ask the question. Somehow it must be explained in terms of love. But just how could God love me? I didn’t know then and I don’t know now. All I know is that I surrendered every last bit of myself and He took me at my world. Ever since that wonderful moment, I have had the peace that comes only from Him.’

Anger

Anger is probably the issue that has created the most problems for a prisoner, and rejection is often the source of anger. There is an underlying principle at work in the mind of the inmate that says, “You reject me and I will reject you.” This attitude just leads to more rejection, which leads to more anger.

Often, these anger issues will stem from an inadequate relationship with a father. A father might have left the family, or worse, he might have stayed but simply rejected the

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49 Pederson, story told by James Bennett former Director of US Bureau of Prisons, p. 26
inmate when he or she was a child. There is no worse feeling in the world than believing that you have not lived up to your father’s expectations.

This is especially a problem here in Utah where the culture demands such high standards that many fail to live up to their father’s expectations. What begin as an acceptance issue with a father, often blossoms into a full-blown rebellion against all authority. This includes rebelling against God.

Proverbs 25:28 tells us “Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.” Isaiah 57:20-21 also tells us “the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest.” Both of these verses bring us face to face with the reality that there is no peace for a person who cannot control his primal rage.

The good news is that a person does not have to control his anger by himself. He can ask God and the Holy Spirit for help. With God’s help, a man can control his anger and begin to build a life that is in control and honors God.

**Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is probably the most important factor in removing pain and anger from a person’s life. Most prisoners have people in their lives who have let them down or rejected them. These situations create feelings of anger that can severely impact a person’s life. If a person can learn to let go of these feelings, then he or she will no longer be ruled by them.

Jesus told us clearly that if we want forgiveness for our sins, then we should be willing to forgive the sins of others.\(^{50}\) Often though, the prisoner’s dilemma is that they know that they should forgive, but do not think that they can really do it. This can make them feel like spiritual washouts.

The solution to this is to help them separate their feelings from what they believe. They need to understand that experiencing feelings after deciding to forgive does not mean that you did not forgive. Forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling. When you chose

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\(^{50}\) Matthew 6:14-15 – “For if you forgive men when they sin against you your heavenly Father will forgive you.”
to forgive someone, the feelings of hurt and anger often linger for quite awhile afterwards.

Point out to them that God hates our sin. And yet we know from his Word that He loves us. He cares about us. He wants only the best for us, and He has forgiven us. Also let them know that love is long-suffering. Forgiveness means that we are willing to absorb pain for the sake of God. God has given us grace to take the pain and emotions, that forgiveness often brings, to the cross.

One good example of this is the Corrie Tenboom story. Her family was arrested for hiding Jews from the German’s during World War II. She was sent to a labor camp and her father, sister and brother all died as a result of their arrests and imprisonment. After the war, she began to travel and tell people her story from a Christian Perspective.

One of the most compelling parts of her story occurred in a church she was speaking at in Munich in 1947. After the service, one of the former guards from the prison camp approached her and asked for her forgiveness. She then relates how she was able to forgive him through the power of God.51

Another great story on forgiveness is that of Elizabeth Elliott. A tribe of Indians in the Ecuadorian jungle killed her husband Jim. He was a missionary whose only desire was to share the love of Jesus with them. She later went to live with the same tribe for two years as a missionary, sharing the Gospel with them.52

**Fruit of the Spirit**

The Bible tells us that if we give our hearts to God, that fruit will grow naturally in our lives.53 This is recognition of the fact that real and lasting change only occurs on the inside of a person. It is not the result of simply doing the right things. The only real rehabilitation comes from the Holy Spirit. Our constant cry to God should be, “Create in

52 Elizabeth Elliott Home Page, http://www.elisabeth Elliot.org/about.html
53 Galatians 5:22, 23a – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”
me a clean heart, o God.” 54 We need to help people understand that “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation.” 55

Love is the first fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians. When we think of love, we are often thinking of different things. Some think of love as a feeling or passion. Others think of love as affection. These are both valid definitions, but when this passage speaks of love, it is speaking of “agape” love. This is the love that Jesus has for us.

It is the type of love that is not dependent upon feelings. It is based upon a willingness to sacrifice for others. This means that as the Spirit of God begins to work on someone, you will begin to notice that they are less concerned with their own rights and needs, and more concerned with the rights and needs of others.

This is a particular problem with most of those who have been in jail because it was the pursuit of their needs, even at the expense of others, that typically led to their incarceration. However, if a former prisoner can reach a point where the needs of others outweigh their own needs, they will be well on their way to becoming loving and productive members of society.

The second and third fruits of the Spirit are Joy and Peace. This means that no matter what the circumstances, a person does not lose their composure because they trust in God. They are at peace within themselves, even if the environment around them is in turmoil.

This is another area of difficulty for many of those who have been in trouble with the law. The only joy and peace that some have ever known was when they were medicated with illegal drugs and/or alcohol. This allowed them to forget about those things which they thought were unfair or out of their control.

Knowing the Lord, and knowing that He is in control can bring peace and joy to the believer’s life. There have been many times that I have left the jail after praying with inmates, where the peace of God was upon me. In those instances, I have felt something that I never did when I was younger. Our job in this area is to help former inmates trust God and depend upon Him.

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54 Psalm 51:10
55 2nd Corinthians 5:17
The fourth fruit of the Spirit is long suffering. In other places of the Bible, this word is translated as patience. Webster’s Dictionary describes patience as 1) The ability to wait or endure without complaining, 2) Steadiness, endurance, or perseverance in the performance of a task, or 3) The bearing of suffering, provocation, delay or tediousness with calmness and self-control.

One of the problems that many former inmates struggle with is immediate gratification. They want what they want and they want it now. They are unwilling to wait for what they want because it takes too much time, or they do not believe that they will be able to get what they want even if they work hard.

We can help them with this problem by helping them to set small yet measurable goals and helping them to achieve those goals. Part of our job is to help them understand that with God’s help, they can set goals and achieve them. We can also help them understand that even if they run into problems, they can overcome them and still accomplish their goals.

The fifth fruit of the Spirit is kindness. This implies that a Christian should always respond to others in kindness, even when they do not particularly deserve it. This is a fruit that defines our relationship with other people, Christians and non-Christians.

As we help the power of God influence the lives of those we are working with, we need to help them understand that as Christians, they are called to relate to the world in a new way. In their old lives, they may have treated others with disrespect and anger, but in their new lives, they need to treat everyone with kindness, whether they deserve it or not.

The sixth fruit of the Spirit is goodness. Philippians 4:8 tells us “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” This is a defining characteristic of a Christian, looking for the good rather than the evil. This does not mean that we ignore evil. It does mean that we have grace for the faults of others and concentrate on the good. It also means that we look for the positive in our lives rather than at the negative.

As an example, I was talking with a former inmate the other night at the Bible Study and he complained that it would be difficult for him to find a job because of his prison
record. He then explained to me that the previous week was very stressful for him because he had three different temporary agencies who wanted him to work for them. He was focused on the prison record rather than on the fact that there were a number of companies that wanted his services.

The seventh fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness. This is the ability to stick with something through thick and thin, regardless of the difficulties. There are two aspects to this. The first is our faithfulness to God and the second is our faithfulness to others.

As God’s Spirit begins to work in the life of a new believer, a change occurs within that believer where he or she begins to set new priorities in his or her life. These new priorities become the object of faithfulness in a person’s life.

Faithfulness can begin small and work its way up. At first, faithfulness to God can be as simple as showing up for a Bible study every week, or going to church every week. Faithfulness can also be expressed in getting up and going to work every day.

Faithfulness is an important character attribute that needs to be developed in former inmates if they want to achieve success. Without it, they will be condemned to wander from job to job and relationship to relationship.

Gentleness is the eighth fruit of the Spirit. It is an essential attribute for keeping the peace in a person’s life. Proverbs 15:1 tells us “A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.” Those who have been in trouble with the law need to understand that if they can learn to respond to a harsh world with gentleness, it will keep them out of trouble.

The final fruit of the Spirit is self-control. Without a doubt, this is the biggest issue facing those who have been incarcerated. Almost always, it is because they lacked the self-control to do what was right and good. They were ruled by their passions, and their passions led them into bondage.

Each of these fruits need to be developed within those who have been released from prison or jail. They are the natural outgrowth of growing closer to God and depending upon His Spirit. These character attributes are not just something that can be taught to them by other men. They must be taught by God and His Spirit.

However, the most important lesson that must be taught by the Holy Spirit is that God cares, God forgives, and God loves, even those who have led a life of crime. The
importance of the this was drive home by one study where the person performing the study “interviewed a sample of active offenders (persisters) verses inactive offenders (desisters) in England.

All of these men and women had extensive histories of property and drug crimes. Significantly, all of his participants also faced serious obstacles to success (e.g. economic, deprivation, long criminal records, substance abuse). The differences between the two groups stemmed from the way they defined themselves within their similar social worlds.

Persisters generally said they were sick of crime, sick of doing time, and tired of their general life situation. However, they also communicated a sense of doom and hopelessness that they tied to their lack of opportunities, poor education, drug habits and poverty. Maruna says they repeatedly described their past through ‘condemnation scripts,’ which conveyed that they had little choice but to continue in crime.

Desisters, on the other hand, saw themselves in a much more positive light. Often their positive self-accounts bore little resemblance to their past, but this ‘willful, cognitive distortion’ helped desisters ‘make good’ Maruna concludes that desisters employ ‘redemption scripts’ to transform their deviant histories into the present good.”

The Holy Spirit is the one who lets people know that their past sins can be forgiven, and that they can change their lives, becoming a new creation. The Holy Spirit is also the one who lets them know that their past lives can actually be a force for good in their future lives. As the author of the above study stated, “in order for chronic offenders to abstain from crime, they need to make sense of their past lives.”

Finally, it is important to remember that Bible is just a book without the power of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God has tremendous power, but only when the Holy Spirit gives insight and illumination.

56 Petersilia, pp. 207, 208
57 Romans 8:287 – “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”
58 Petersilia, p. 207
The Power of God’s Word

The Bible has gotten a bad rap over the last 45 years. Much of the problem can be traced back to the early 1960s when the “God is dead” philosophy of the philosopher Nietzsche took hold in America. This is a time in which God and the Bible were removed from our public schools and our society began to go into a tailspin. Drug use exploded, as did unwed teenage pregnancies fueled by the free love movement. Divorce and abortion became socially acceptable while those who believed in the Bible as the Word of God were ridiculed and rejected.

The degradation of our society that began with the rejection of God’s Word continues today. As we have seen from the statistics on crime cited earlier, life without the Word of God creates suffering and chaos. People without God and his Word are like lifeboats cast adrift in an endless sea with no hope of rescue for those trapped within their confines.

However, the Word of God is powerful, and it is capable of changing the lives of those who read it and believe it. The Word of God tells us what His desires are for our lives, and how we can live our lives in ways that honor him.

There are many in the secular world who believe that the Bible is nothing more than a set of rules created to control man and ruin his fun. Fortunately, this belief is based upon ignorance of the Word and what it teaches.

For example, the Bible teaches, and I have found it to be true, that the person who has given his or her life to God is a person whose life is filled with joy. That is not to say that there are not difficult times that sometimes bring grief. What it does mean though is that those who believe in God are generally happier and more joyful. This joy is something that God desires for us, and Jesus made it clear that is a joy that no person or circumstances will be able to take from us.59

In addition, I doubt that those who criticize the Word of God have ever stopped to think through the implications of their convictions. Would the world be a better place if no one ever got drunk again? Would the world be a better place if people waited until they were married to have sex? Would the world be a better place if people stayed

59 John 16:22 – “Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”
married and raised their children together? Would the world be a better place if children did not suffer from violence and abuse? Would the world be a better place without greed and illegal drug use?

The answer to all of these questions is a resounding “YES”!!! God does not want evil things for us. Like a loving Father, He simply wants what is best for us. Yet, we are like rebellious children determined to go our own way no matter the destruction it bring to our lives, and the lives of those we love.

Therefore, the first thing that prisoners and former prisoners needs to know is that the Word of God is true, and it is something that is good for them. It is not there to ruin their fun. It is there to teach them how to live their lives according to principles that will bless them, and bless their families.

One of the keys to this is to show them that science has not proven the Bible to be wrong. While there is honest disagreement within the Christian community as to whether God created the world in six literal days, or whether He used the process of evolution, I believe that there is solid scientific evidence supporting a young Earth. I also believe that there are serious scientific and theological problems with the theory of evolution.

Therefore, I believe that it is relatively easy, and important to show people that science and the Bible are not incompatible. They need to be presented with the evidence that God’s Word is true. This can be done through the use of materials supplied by experts. Dr. Kent Hovid provides an excellent series of tapes on the subjects of creation and evolution. These tapes will be used extensively by this ministry.

In addition to showing men and women that they can believe the creation account in the Bible, I believe that it is also important to show them other logical reasons for believing in the Bible. While our belief in God’s Word ultimately depends upon our faith, it is nice to know that we do not have to turn our minds off and stop thinking in order to believe. We can take comfort in the fact that the Bible is historically accurate, prophetically accurate, sociologically accurate, and also an accurate guide for living our lives.

Many might think that this is not a necessary part of rehabilitation. However, I see it as critical to helping former inmates understand the truths that will set them free. The
most important of these truths is the fact that God can and will set them free if they call upon Him and depend upon Him. Unfortunately, one of the things that will prevent them from accepting this as truth is that they have been told all their lives that God’s Word is not true. Until this issue is dealt with, they will have trouble believing that God can really help them. It is for this reason that we want to show them that God’s Word is reliable.

When we say that the Word of God is historically accurate, what we mean is that even those who are not Christians believe in the historical accuracy of the Bible. When my oldest son was home-schooled, he once wrote to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C asking about the historical accuracy of the Bible. In their response, this is what they said.

“it is impossible to verify the actual events recorded in the Biblical account of the flood. On the other hand, much of the Bible, in particular the historical books of the old testament, are as accurate historical documents as any that we have from antiquity and are in fact more accurate than many of the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, or Greek histories. These Biblical records can be and are used as are other ancient documents in archeological work. For the most part, historical events described took place and the peoples cited really existed.

This is not to say that names of all peoples and places mentioned can be identified today, or that every event as reported in the historical books happened exactly as stated. There are conflicts between present archeological evidence and historical reports that may result from a lack of information on our part or from misunderstandings or mistakes by the ancient writers.” 61

While the Smithsonian letter makes it clear that it does not endorse the Bible, it does confirm that even secular scientists consider the Bible to be a historically accurate document, at least as far the history after the flood is concerned.

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60 http://www.drdino.com/
In addition to being historically accurate, we can also show that the Bible is prophetically accurate. We can do this by pointing out many of the prophesies that have come to pass.

For example, in Ezekiel, there was the prophesy that Tyre would become like a bare rock. This prophesy was fulfilled in a way which was unmistakable. This fulfillment was described most eloquently by Hank Hanegraaff of the Christian Research Institute.

“Tyre was no small, obscure village. It was a great Phoenician city and a world capital for over 2,000 years. It was to the sea what mighty Babylon was to the land. Yet, in the heyday of its power, the prophet Ezekiel had the audacity to predict for it a violent future and ultimate destruction.

This downfall would be due to Tyre’s flagrant wickedness and arrogance, traits that were personified in its ruler, Ittobal II, who claimed to be God. Ezekiel predicted that many nations would come up against Tyre (Ezek. 26:3); that Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar would be the first to attack it (v. 7); that Tyre’s walls and towers would be broken down (vv. 4,9); that the stones, timbers, and debris of that great city would be thrown into the sea (v. 12); that its location would become a bare rock and a place for the drying of fishermens’ nets (vv. 4-5,14); and finally, that the city of Tyre would never be rebuilt (v.14).

History bears eloquent testimony to the fact that all this is precisely what happened. Many nations did come up against Tyre — the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Muslims, and the Crusaders, to name a few. And Nebuchadnezzar was indeed the first of these invaders, who — after a thirteen year siege — broke down the walls and towers of mainland Tyre, thus fulfilling the first of Ezekiel’s prophecies. Nebuchadnezzar massacred all of Tyre’s inhabitants except for those who escaped to an island fortress a

62 Ezekiel 26:2-5 – “Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, ‘Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.’ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up. ‘And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. ‘It shall be a place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,’ says the Lord GOD; ‘it shall become plunder for the nations.’”
half mile out in the Mediterranean Sea. Centuries after Ezekiel’s body had decomposed in his grave, Alexander the Great fulfilled a major portion of the prophecy.

In order to conquer the island fortress of Tyre (without the luxury of a navy), he and his celebrated architect Diades devised one of the most brilliant engineering feats of ancient warfare. They built a causeway from Tyre’s mainland to the island fortress, using the millions of cubic feet of rubble left over on mainland Tyre.

Thus Tyre was scraped bare as a rock, just as Ezekiel predicted. The most astonishing of Ezekiel’s predictions was that Tyre would never be rebuilt. This is singularly incredible because Tyre is strategically located on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It also contains the Springs of Reselain, which pump ten million gallons of fresh water daily — enough to take care of the needs of a modern city. Yet, history records that after a succession of invasions, Tyre finally and irrevocably fell in A.D. 1291 — never to be rebuilt again. Today Tyre has been humbled to the point of becoming a place for the drying of fishermen’s nets — just as Ezekiel prophesied two-and-one-half millennia ago.”

This is just one example of a prophecy that came true. It is easy to show other prophecies that also came to pass such as the dreams of Daniel, which predicted the rise of the Medo-Persian empire and Alexander the Great, or the 300 different prophesies relating to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. These are powerful proofs that the Word of God is true and that it can be trusted in every way.

The Bible also accurately describes the sociological aspects of the world in which we live. It tells us that mankind is corrupt and that we are not basically good. This is exactly the opposite of what the world wants us to believe, which is that we are basically good.

It is easy to prove that we are not basically good. If we were, then Communism would work. Everyone would be willing to work as hard as they could, but only take what they needed. However, it does not work, and we know this quite clearly from history. Capitalism works because it is based upon selfishness.

Even the Chinese Communists know this. Marxism states that society should operate under the concept of “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.”

Article 6 of the Chinese Constitution states, “*From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.*” They have realized that people will only work hard when it is in their own self-interest to work hard. In other words, people are selfish.

Capitalism is effective in the United States because we hold it in check through labor unions and government regulation. Without these checks, we would see the same abuses that we saw around the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century when robber barons abused the land and their workers.

This is important for them to know because they often feel like everyone else is basically good, but that there is something wrong with them. Our goal in rehabilitation is to show them that there is nothing wrong with them that is not wrong with every other human being. We want them to know that with God’s help, they can overcome their situation and change their lives.

As they do this, we also want them to know that God loves them and only wants the best for them. Submitting to God’s will not bring evil into their lives, but blessings. Think about it. We know from the Word that God’s will is for them to be free from addiction to drugs and alcohol. We also know that His will is for them to be godly husbands, wives, father and mothers. We know that it is God’s will for them to love others, to stop hating and to control their anger.

These are all good things that will make their lives better. If we take the time to help released prisoners think in Biblical ways, it will change their lives. They have to spend time in custody anyway. The time can either be wasted or it can be used wisely and invested in improving their lives. Biblical thinking is always an improvement or thinking in the ways of the world. Paul encouraged this when he said “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ.*”

**Where does significance come from?**

The first issue that a person must grapple with when he or she starts to think in Biblical terms is “What is it that makes me important in this world?” For many who have

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\(^{65}\) Philippians 2:5
been in custody, this significance comes from their self-image as a rebel or a bad boy. They see themselves as alone against the world, only able to depend upon themselves.

For the person who is beginning to live a Christian life, the answer to this question must change. They need to know that their significance comes from the fact that God them, He loves them and He cares about them. While they used to live in the world and were once a part of the world, their place is now with God in Heaven, and with Jesus Christ who change them in ways far beyond their expectations.

It is important for them to understand this because it is important for them to understand that their values will change. What they used to value will no longer hold importance to them. Their old values will be replaced with Biblical values as they draw near to Jesus. This total change is the only thing that will cause them to set different priorities in their lives, and it is the only sure thing that will keep them from returning to custody.

Setting the right priorities

Setting Biblical priorities is probably one of the greatest challenges for new Christians, especially those who have been released from custody. In the old life, they were preoccupied with immediate gratification. Their goal was simply to please themselves regardless of the harm it caused to themselves or those they loved. In their new lives, they need to learn to be content with what God provides on an immediate basis, but to set career goals and be willing to work towards them.

In addition, it is important for those who are in Christ to be able to put others first. This applies especially to their families. They are supposed to set the example for their

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66 Ephesians 2:10 – “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

67 Philippians 3:20, 21 – “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

68 Luke 11:3 – “Give us day by day our daily bread.”

69 Ephesians 4:28 – “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”
children to follow. This means that they need to become unselfish and loving, willing to sacrifice for the needs of others. They need to be able to move themselves to the bottom of the priority list.

This does not mean that they need to become a doormat or a slave for others. What it does mean though is that they need to understand that their immediate gratification is no longer the reason for their existence.

In addition to putting others before themselves, it is important for new Christians to make Bible study and prayer a priority. God’s word changes things in a person and if he or she is listening to a good Bible teacher on a regular basis, it will change their lives.  

Prayer will help a person draw close to God and it will be easier for a person to hear God and discern His will if he or she spends time in prayer.

**Right Thinking**

Many of those who are released from custody have scripts that run their lives. By scripts, I mean that they have patterns of thinking and responding to situations that have pushed others away from them and gotten them in trouble with the law. In order for them to change their lives, they need to first change these scripts. They need to literally change the way that they think and bring their minds in conformance with the Word of God.

One of the main ways that they have to change is to realize that life isn’t perfect. They need to expect problems in life and develop tolerance for situations and people when things do not go the way that they want them to go.

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70 **Hebrews 4:12** – “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two–edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

71 **1st Timothy 2:8** – “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;”

72 **Romans 8:6-8** – “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”
Living a Christian life means living a life of grace. This means that we are able to forgive others and work through difficult situations. It means that there is more to life than pleasing self, and that others and their needs must often come first. It means that the person who is a Christian needs to learn how to become unselfish.

Part of becoming unselfish is learning how to love in the same sacrificial way Jesus loves us. He was willing to die on the cross for our sins. In the same way, we must be willing to sacrifice because of our love for others. This sacrifice can take many forms. It may be patience with a person who still insists on acting out self-destructive behaviors. Or, it might be putting up with a person who backslides, or who has lied to you, or who has hurt you in some way. It might also be accepting a situation where you are going to experience loss, such as the affection of a loved one.

Each of these situations requires new thinking to replace the old. The old person would have become angry and lashed out. The new person trusts God and keeps his or her emotions under control. The new person develops coping mechanisms that help him or her deal with the fact that God’s people must often endure hardships for the sake of others and the kingdom.

Yes, life just does not seem fair sometime to those who belong to God. Just look at what happened to Job. He lost everything, and yet it was apparent by the end of the Book of Job that God loved Job. Everything was restored to Job, and then some. However, God never did reveal to Job exactly why He allowed those terrible things to happen to him. At the end of the Book of Job, we are simply left with the implied questions, “Can we really trust God even though everything in our lives seems to be

73 James 2:13 – “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”
74 1st Corinthians 13:4 – “Love suffers long and is kind…”
75 2nd Corinthians 1:5-7 – “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.”
76 Job 1:1-22
falling apart?”, and “Can we really trust God even though it does not seem like life is fair?”

Prisoners often say that they want justice, but what they really want is mercy. They are looking for loopholes in order to escape the consequences of their behavior. In fact, if you were to ask them, and they were to answer truthfully, most of them would not be sorry for their crimes, they were just sorry that they were caught.\(^\text{77}\) In fact, many of them would say that they were not guilty of the crime until they were convicted of the crime.

So, while they say that they just want things to be fair, what they are really looking for is loopholes. They are looking for something that someone else did that might let them off the hook for what they did. They need to shift their thinking so that they know that a crime is a crime even if they do not get caught for it.

As a part of this, they need to know that even though the occasional corrupt cop does exist, most police officers are not evil. They are there to protect people, to make sure that no one hurts anyone else, and that no one steals what belongs to others. This is good and noble work, and as Christians, we should be willing to support them.\(^\text{78}\)

The problem is that many films and television shows portray cops as corrupt and evil. Those who will not tolerate evil and wrong doing are portrayed as traitors to the rest of the police force. They cannot stand up for right even if they want to because they will lose the loyalty of their peers.

One response to this has been the Stop Snitching Program.\(^\text{79}\) This program, which is being promoted in a number of large cities in the United States, is aimed at convincing people that they should never tell the police about a crime that they might have

\(^\text{77}\) 2nd Corinthians 2:10 – “Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ’s, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ’s, even so we are Christ’s.”

\(^\text{78}\) Romans 13:1-3 – “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.”

\(^\text{79}\) Fox TV, America’s Most Wanted, Feb 11, 2006
witnessed. It is being promoted through t-shirts and music. Many Hip-Hop artists are vocally supporting it.

This program is indicative of how many, who have been incarcerated, feel. They do not trust government authorities, and they especially do not trust law enforcement authorities. In order to change, they need to shift their world view and recognize that the majority of law enforcement personnel are good people who are only trying to help.

In addition, they need to see victims as real people. Television, movies and music have combined to desensitize our society to pain and suffering. We see people get shot, stabbed and blown up all the time, and in many people, the line between reality and fantasy has been blurred.

As Christians, we realize that every time someone gets hurt or gets killed, it is a tragedy. They are real people, with real feelings, who are suffering. And usually, it is not only the victim who suffers, but also everyone who loves the victim. While there is much pain and suffering in the world, as Christians, we are supposed to be helping, not causing it. Realizing that crimes hurt real people and cause real suffering is an important step towards integrating oneself back into society.

Persistence and hard work are two other areas where people need to change if they are going to be successful in life. Those who have been incarcerated need to know that anything worth having almost always requires a significant amount of effort. It is real easy to give up, when things get difficult, but persistence is what separates those who are always failing from those who eventually succeed.\(^80\)

It is important for this ministry that we teach those who come to us not to give up on God, and not to give up on themselves. They need to be willing to stay the course, no matter how difficult it gets. They need to expect problems as a Christian and be prepared to deal with them effectively. They need to know that God is watching over them and that if they just continue being faithful, He will work everything out.

However, this lesson is not just for those who have been in jail/prison. It is also for those of us who minister to them. But we do not give up on this world and we do not give up on those that God sends to us. We are in the business of building disciples and

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\(^80\) Look at Peter’s success in Acts 2:41 and compare this with his failure in John 18:17
teaching people how to love God. This also requires had work and persistence. Just as we encourage former prisoners, we too must take up our cross and follow Jesus.

As we teach the above lessons to those who come to us, we need to realize that many of them might not have the same background and point of view as we have. Many have never really heard or understood the message of God’s redemptive grace. Others have heard it, but have bought into the idea that religion is nothing more than superstition and that science has proved that the Bible is wrong. Still others are so self-reliant that they think of Christianity as a crutch.

However, there is no shame in reaching for a crutch if you realize that your leg is broken, and it is relatively easy to show that science and Christianity are mutually compatible. The Weber County Jail population is different from the population in the State Prison. Those that are in the jail are probably serving short (under 2 years) sentences. Since it is a pre-trial detention center, many have not been convicted of a crime and they may escape with a short sentence or probation. They are a captive and transient audience of people who see the need for change, and many of them will be getting out soon.

It is for these reasons, that the jail population is uniquely suit for the presentation of the Gospel. We have an opportunity to change our community for the good by using the Word of God to change lives and then send them back out into the community.

When teaching the Bible to those in jail, it is important to remember a few things. They do not typically come from the same background as volunteers and are not versed in Christian vernacular. In addition, many of them are poorly educated and have a poor vocabulary. Avoid using big words like justification and sanctification without explaining them in simple terms. Try to use simple and easy to understand words.

Also, remember that the Jail population is constantly changing. Do not do studies that require a prisoner to be there the previous week, and always present the opportunity to accept Christ. You may not get another chance.

The Bible tells us that the Word of God is powerful and that it can change lives. It reveals God’s truth to us and helps us to better understand how we can live our lives in ways that please Him. Used correctly, it has the power to radically transform the lives of those who are serving time in jail.
The Power of Prayer

Prayer in not just one of the ingredients that will build a successful jail ministry, it must be the foundation. Prayer makes a difference. This is especially important in this particular ministry. We are dealing with people who have spent most of their lives in the service of the enemy, and the enemy is not going to let go of them without a fight.

Ephesians tells us that our battle with the enemy is not a physical battle, it is a spiritual battle. We cannot win the battle just by doing more in the physical realm. We need to be taking the battle to the enemy in prayer and letting God fight for us.

In Revelation 2:12-13, Jesus speaks through John the Apostle about the city of Pergamum. He tells us it is the city where Satan’s throne is. The implication is that it is a stronghold of the enemy.

Ogden is also a stronghold of the enemy. While Satan himself is probably not enthroned here, I am convinced that one of his chief lieutenants is. I have talked to many men in the prison system and they tell me that they can feel the spiritual oppression in this city. I also have talked to those in law enforcement at the state level, and they tell me it is one of the worst places in the state of Utah as far as crime goes.

There have been a number of ministries over the years that have tried to penetrate the darkness of Ogden. Some have met with limited success, while others have failed to survive. There has been tremendous success outside of Ogden with some very large churches being established in South Ogden, North Ogden and Roy, but the center of Ogden is somewhat barren when it come to the people of God. The enemy has defended his territory well.

However, I am convinced, that the people of God can make a difference in Ogden, and with those who are leaving jail, but it has to start with prayer. We are in a situation similar to that in which the apostles found themselves when Jesus came off the mountain

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81 Ephesians 6:12 – “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”

82 Blake Woodring, Staff Supervisor Ogden Parole Office, interview January 25, 2006 in Ogden, UT
in *Matthew 17:14-21*. The disciples had the authority to cast out demons,\(^3\) but they were having problems with this one particular demon. Jesus told them that the demonic forces they were dealing with were particularly strong, and that prayer and fasting would be needed to get rid of it.

Ogden is a similar situation. The enemy is particularly strong here and it will require tremendous amounts of prayer to break through his defenses. Even though many ministries have failed in the center of Ogden, if we can get even a few people praying, it will make a tremendous difference.\(^4\) A few of us together can take down this stronghold of the enemy.\(^5\)

In addition to breaking down the spiritual defenses of Ogden, prayer is need to break down the spiritual barriers in the lives of those we minister to. However, we each have issues in our own lives that prevent us from hearing God clearly. Before we can help them break down the barriers in their lives, we must first allow God to work on us and break down the spiritual barriers in our own lives.

Finally, we need to be prayer for those we are ministering to, and encouraging them to pray for themselves and the ministry. If they are really making an attempt to live a Christian life, the enemy will be doing everything in his power to put up roadblocks. They will have problems with their job, problems with their families, and temptations beyond anything they have previously experienced.

They need to realize that as they fight the battle, prayer will make a difference, it changes things. In one famous study, run by Dr. Randolph Byrd at San Francisco General Hospital in 1983, prayer was scientifically shown to make a difference for recovering cardiac patients.

In this study, Dr. Byrd divided the hospitals cardiac patients into two groups. One group received prayer and the other group did not. Neither the patients, nor Dr. Byrd

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\(^3\) Matthew 10:1 – “And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.”

\(^4\) James 5:16b – “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

\(^5\) Matthew 16:18b – “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”
knew which patients were receiving prayer. The results were statistically valid, which means that the power of prayer was proved through scientific methods.

However, this is not the only study that showed a relationship between prayer and healing. There have been over 50 others, including a 2000 study at Duke University Medical Center that proved that people who pray live longer.86

**The Power of Love, Caring and Friendship**

What’s the point? Most of us have asked ourselves this question at one time or another when it seemed like the world was closing in on us and nobody cared. That is exactly the place where many of those who have been released end up. They don’t think anyone really cares about them and they do not see any point in even trying to change. This is especially true when change is difficult and there are large obstacles in the way.

As Christians, we can make a huge difference in the lives of many just be being there for them. This is not to say that if we befriend them, all their problems will magically go away and they will live happily ever after. But, what is does mean is that friendship is an essential part of the healing process. It is much easier to believe in yourself when someone else does.

As we strive to love those who have been in jail or prison, it is important for us to realize that we are no different from those we are ministering to. Even the Apostle Paul claimed to be the worst of sinners87, and we are no better. We are under grace, just like they are, and just like them, when we stand before God, we will have no claim to righteousness other than that which is offered through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

The Bible tells us that many of God’s people have been in prison. Joseph was unfairly put in prison in *Genesis 39* and Samson was put in prison by the Philistines in *Judges 16*. Jeremiah also served time for proclaiming the truth of God in *Jeremiah 32* and *37*. Peter was put in prison in *Acts 4* and *Acts 22* and Paul was put in prison multiple times. Even today, God’s people are being put in prison throughout the world.

87 1st Timothy 1:12, 13 – “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”
Christians are imprisoned for the Gospel’s sake in China, North Korea, and most of the Islamic nations.

Now, there are probably some who would say “they deserve it.” After all, they are just suffering the consequences of their own behavior. However, we need to remember where we came from. Paul reminds us in 1st Corinthians that many of us who claim the cause of Christ were also horrible sinners at one point. We lived our lives without Jesus and without hope.

It all boils down to the old adage “There but for the grace of God, God I.” God wants us to realize that we are all the same. He does not want any of us to be lost. He wants all of mankind to know the truth. This is especially true for those who are jail and prison. Scripture declares the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. This means that all Christians are ex-cons and one is no better than another.

This means that we need to avoid the tendency to judge, even if it seems like someone is not getting it. It often takes time for God to change someone even after they

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88 1st Corinthians 9-11 – “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

89 Ephesians 2:12 – “that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

90 Romans 3:23 – “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

91 2nd Peter 3:9 – “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

92 1st Timothy 2:3-4 – “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

93 Hebrews 13:3 – “Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.”

94 Galatians 3:22 – “But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”
have accepted Christ. Give them time to practice righteousness and allow the Holy Spirit to work within them.

This concept was explained to me by Rachel, a social worker in Salt Lake City. She told me that often, her clients will reach a plateau in their spiritual growth. It seems like no matter what they do, they can’t seem to grow anymore. However, a period of backsliding will often result in a new desire to progress and initiate a period of significant personal growth.

We need to remember that are not medieval crusaders out to convert the world using the sword. We are in the business of helping people open up to the Spirit of God so that God can help them change their lives. We need to give the Holy Spirit time to work on people. We do not have to coerce, manipulate, or trick them. God is capable of fixing them and completing the job He started without our human supervision.  

Our job is not to change people, but to meet them where they are at and point them to Jesus. He is the one who will change them. Smarto points out that “To minister effectively, we need openness and approachability without judgment and condemnation. Prisoners need to feel that they are worthwhile and desirable to be with, and they measure that by how you respond to them.”

This is consistent with how Jesus approached the Samaritan woman in John 4:3-39. He did not chastise her for her sin. He simply pointed her to true religion. Then, this one woman, a sinner, was instrumental in leading an entire village to Christ the Messiah.

We too should be like Jesus. We should avoid legalism and stick to the essentials. There are so many things that Christians argue over including going to movies, playing cards, wearing make up, dancing, instruments in church, smoking, speaking in tongues, drinking, rock and roll…etc. If someone is personally convicted in these areas, then they should follow what God is calling them to in their own life, but they should not be dividing the body of Christ, or driving non-believers away with their convictions.

We are not so much worried about the external as we are the internal. We need to let the Holy Spirit do His great work on the hearts of those we minister to. Let the wheat

95 Philippians 1:6 – “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”

96 Smarto, P100
and tares grow together and Jesus will sort them out. If we try to uproot all of the tares, we will end up uprooting too much wheat just as it is getting established.\textsuperscript{97}

Jesus struggled with this same issue. He ate with the tax collectors and was judged by the Pharisees. They called Jesus a sinner and hence, an unworthy leader. They failed to realize that they needed help just as much as the tax collectors and prostitutes.

Many of those who have been in and out of prison are weary of their lives and they want change. They know judgment and condemnation, but they are unfamiliar with forgiveness. It is our job to see them in the same loving light in which God sees them, and to help them and encourage them to live for Him. Don’t look at them as prisoners, look at them as people who God loves and who Christ died for.

For prisoners, the Gospel means hope, purpose and love. We are the ones who bring them the Gospel, and we need to love them, and let them know we love them. Some may leave prison and enter the ministry. Others will have changed lives and greatly impact their family and friends for God. Still others may reject the Gospel and return to their former lives. However, not one of them should ever leave jail without knowing that God loves them and cares about them, and we do also.

\textbf{The Next Step - Discipleship}

Once a person is saved, they start on a journey towards God. It is a process called sanctification and it is all about becoming more like Jesus Christ. It is a growth process where the Christian learns to become less selfish and more caring about the needs of others. It is also a process where the Christian learns to hear and obey God’s voice.

Those who have been in custody have their own little secular discipleship program, supervised by the state. However, probation officers can only effectively supervise 20-30 cases.\textsuperscript{98} In Ogden, they are supervising 70-80 cases each. This means that most of those released into the community have been released with very little supervision. They are pretty much on their own.

Loneliness is a huge issue for many who are or who have been in prison. One of the reasons many people end up in prison is because they do not have any one in their lives

\textsuperscript{97} Matthew 13:3-9
\textsuperscript{98} Smarto, pp. 58-59
who thinks that they are important. They often commit crimes because they are starved for attention and acting bad is one way to get it.

They can get attention from their friends who think that their illegal exploits have merit, but even if they get caught, they still get attention. In a warped way, this brings significance to their lives. At least they are no longer ignored by society. Society is forced to deal with them.

Discipleship is the process developing a relationship with a former prisoner as you help. This is one way to help former prisoners stay out of prison. If they know that someone cares about them and believes in them, they will be less likely to commit a repeat offense and return to custody. However, it needs to be a real friendship with genuine concern. Most of those in prison, or who have been in prison, will quickly spot someone who is a fake.

Building a discipleship relationship can be a time consuming and difficult task. Those who have been in prison have usually learned to hide their feelings behind a mask of independence. For their own emotional survival, they have decided not to let anyone inside of their armor because they are afraid of being hurt. The thought is that if I do not care about others, then they cannot hurt me.

Prison tends to increase these feelings of being a loner and reinforces the notion that there are very few people who can be trusted. Prison also hardens a person and fortifies the idea that the only one who will look out for number 1 is number 1.

Our goal is to get inside the wall, to be real and get the prisoners to open up and be real. Deep down, the thought that nobody cares is devastating. This is why listening is so important. It shows them that someone cares about them and values them. When someone listens to them, it let’s them know that they have significance beyond self.

There is a need for mature men to minister in jail because they can be perceived as loving and accepting father figures. They do not replace the fathers, but they can give encouragement and love in a way that mimics something that has been missing in the lives of inmates. There is nothing like the power of a father figure saying “I believe in you!!!” In a world where so many fathers have failed to live up to their responsibilities, we can be an expression of God’s love and acceptance.
One of the main reasons that mature men are needed is for the process of discipleship to occur. Discipleship happens when a young Christian becomes a friend with a more mature Christian. In these instances, the more mature Christian can counsel the younger Christian during times of trouble and indecision. He can also help him understand the authority of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus.

Having someone there to support you when you have been through, or are going through the Criminal justice system can make all the difference between successful rehabilitation and failure. There are certain times when prisoners are open to the things of God because of the stress of their situations, and Christians should be there to support them. Friendship produced fruit. Studies show that those who receive two or more letters a month are more successful when released on parole.99

These stressful times include just after arrest, just before or after a trial, the first weeks in prison (especially if first time), and just before release. It is during these times that the men and women are most open to accepting Jesus and asking God for help. Having a Christian there can go a long way towards helping someone get established with God.

In addition, the first 6 to 9 months after release are the most critical. This is when parolees become most discouraged because jobs or supportive relationships are not there. Don Holt tells the story about what happened to him when there was no discipleship. “I tried to renounce drug when I was seventeen. At that age I had a religious or spiritual experience. Walking up to the alter at a Baptist Church, something happened to me on the inside. I couldn’t explain it. I got baptized, but there was no discipleship or nurturing of my infant faith. Within two week I was taking illegal drugs again.”100 It would be 25 years before he would return to God. Rehabilitation can occur more frequently with the Christian Communities involvement. J. Michael Quinlin – Director of United States Bureau of Prisons stated, “without the help of volunteers, the prison services’ ability to make a meaningful difference is limited.”101

99 Pederson p. 90
100 Smarto, p. 154
101 Ibid p .148
Right now, there are two areas in prison ministry that need to be addressed by the Christian community, evangelism and discipleship. Evangelism is happening in many ways, but discipleship is not happening the way it should be.

V. The Proposal

Overview

The essence of this ministry is the idea that criminals can change. People can repent and be forgiven. This is a concept that will not usually be understood by those who have not given their lives to God because they do not have first hand experience with the transforming grace and power of God.

Prisoners are people who are loved by God. Most of them feel bad for what they have done. The fact that their conscience is still working is an indication that the Holy Spirit can work in their lives.

Most prisoners will eventually be released back into society at some point. When this happens, they will be faced with an array of decisions that will affect their ability to stay out of jail in the future. While no man can really be helped if they do not want help, it is the desire to use this program to help those who do want help.

Because of this, we need to be asking ourselves, what experiences during their incarceration will help them prepare for their release and help keep them out of jail after they are released? What experiences after their incarcerations will help them stay out of jail? What barriers will they face that will discourage them and cause them to give up? Where is the best place to put our focus given the limited resources available?

All of these questions, and many more, need to be answered if we want to have an impact upon these men and women in the name of Jesus.

Meeting the Spiritual Needs of Former Inmates

In Jail Bible Studies and Evangelism

The first need for any person, in jail or out, is to know Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, there is no hope for any person in the long term. Jesus is the foundation of everything
else good that might happen in a person’s life.\textsuperscript{102} In Scripture, He is referred to as the “cornerstone”.\textsuperscript{103} The cornerstone is always the first stone laid when building a structure. In the same way, establishing a relationship with Jesus is the first action a person must take if they wish to grow spiritually.

For this reason, our personal relationships with those in jail and our Bible studies in the jail must place a heavy emphasis on evangelism. Our first goal must be to get those we are ministering to, to take that first step and give their lives to Jesus. This is the beginning of the process and nothing else can happen until this decision is made.

One thing that we want to make sure we do as we bring people to Jesus is explain to them that they are at the beginning of a process. This process, which is called sanctification, is the process of becoming more like Jesus Christ. They need to understand that not all of their problems will go away just because the accepted Jesus. While Jesus often does immediately deliver people from problems and sins, at other times, He does not.

As we lead people to Jesus, we want to make sure that they are aware that God loves them, even if they still continue to experience problems and/or struggle with sin. This means that they will have to practice righteousness. Becoming like Jesus is often very much like learning to play an instrument. At first, they hit a lot of sour notes. As they progress, and try more difficult things, they continue to hit sour notes. However, if they stick with it, God will reward them with changed lives that will bless them and everyone they love.

We do not want to sugar coat the gospel and tell them that everything in their lives will become perfect once they accept Jesus. If we do this, then many will be lost when they realize that things are not perfect.

Those who are in jail are sheep without a shepherd and we want to point them to Jesus, the eternal shepherd. We want them to understand the eternal truths, that God holds their future in His hands, and that God will give them peace and set them free.

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\textsuperscript{102} 1st Corinthians 3:11 – “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

\textsuperscript{103} Mark 12:10 – “Have you not even read this Scripture: ‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.’ ”
Our goals in the in-jail Bible study should be three-fold. First, to get them to make a decision to follow Christ. Send, to be prepared for problems and make a commitment to work through them with the help of Jesus. Finally, we should be getting them to make a commitment to follow through with their new life once they are released.

This part of the program, the in-jail Bible studies, is currently in progress. There are three different Bible Studies (one men’s and two women’s) in the Weber County Jail being run by members of Washington Height’s Baptist church. In addition, Wasatch Evangelical Free Church is running several men’s Bible Studies and Ogden Christian Fellowship is running a men’s study. Solid, Bible believing Christians are teaching all these Bible studies, with a strong emphasis on evangelism.

Out of Jail Bible Studies and Discipleship

Most of those who will attend a Bible study, once they get out of jail, will have already made a decision for Jesus. Now, they will need help in growing closer to Jesus and changing their lives to be more like Him.

I am currently holding a Wednesday night Bible study for those who have gotten out of jail. While it is open to anybody who would like to come, there is an emphasis on helping people who have been in jail or prison. We are there to help them as they struggle through their problems.

Our goals in this Bible study are several. First, we want them to stay committed to Jesus no matter what problems they are struggling with. We want them to be committed to responding to their problems in a way that will honor God. In addition, we want them to set goals for themselves and develop a plan for achieving those goals.

The first goal that we would like them to set is for employment and education. Statistics show that those who are employed are much more likely to avoid jail in the future, even if they are only working for minimum wage. Part of this goal should be the desire to establish good work habits that they can use as they become more educated and are eligible for higher-paying jobs.

The second goal we would like them to set is for reconciliation with family. Studies have also shown that those former inmates with strong family bonds are less likely to commit acts that would send them back to prison or jail.
Finally, we will encourage them to set goals for becoming involved in a church body. It is not important whether they are a part of this Bible study, or another church body, as long as the body teaches from the Bible and is accepting of those who have fallen, but are recovering.

Bible study is the fertilizer that causes the seed which Jesus plants in our hearts to grow into a fruitful life. There is no way to grow spiritually without it. Our goal is to not only help those who come to the Bible study set goals for themselves, but to use God’s Word to show them how to achieve those goals. For this reason, our Bible study will place a heavy emphasis on life application.

**Prayer Times**

If Bible study is the fertilizer for spiritual growth, then prayer is the water. Whether in-church or out, we need to be praying with those we are ministering to, and teaching them to pray. And, as we pray with those in our ministry, we need to make sure that they understand what prayer is, and what pray is not.

Prayer is not something we do to give God information or tell him what he should do. He knows everything already, including our needs, and he already knows what is best for us. This may or may not agree with what we think is best for us. Prayer is also not something we do to make God happy and it is not a magical formula, which will bless us if we repeat it enough.

Prayer is meant to establish our relationship with God. It is used to express our deepest feelings and fears to him. He already knows them, but it is our way of building a relationship, just as you might do with a close and intimate friend.

However, it is also a way for God to communicate with us. It is a way for Him to provide us with guidance, and more important, assurance that He is there with us. Not matter how bad the situation may look, He communicates to us through prayer that He is in control and He loves us.

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104 Matthew 6:8 – “…For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.”

105 Roman’s 11:34 – “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?”

106 Matthew 6:6 – “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.”
Currently, this ministry is taking place in the jail, where we pray for the needs of the prisoners, and at the Wednesday Night Bible Study at the Solid Rock Café.

Drug and Alcohol Counseling

This is one of the greatest needs for those who are returning to society. For most, the temptation to do drugs and alcohol are still there even though the former prisoner has a sincere desire to reform and build a Christian life. However, there are very few resources for those who want help in Ogden, especially those who want help form a Christian perspective.

Currently, the groups that are helping the most people are Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. While both these groups are somewhat spiritual in nature (i.e. they acknowledge a higher power), neither of them will admit that the higher power is Jesus.

This is similar to Greeks of Athens in Acts.\textsuperscript{107} When Paul spoke to them, he thought it was commendable that they believed in a god, but he felt compelled to point out to them that the unknown God was in fact known. In the same way, it is commendable that AA believes in a higher power, but it will lead some astray if they do not acknowledge Jesus as that power.

There is one person teaching a twelve-step program from a Christian perspective at Washington Heights on Wednesday nights. It is a class that I would recommend highly. However, there is only limited space and it is long way from downtown Ogden where there is a concentration of those who need this service, but have no transportation.

There is a strong need to develop more Christian based programs to help those who are struggling with alcohol and/or drug addiction. In addition, all of these programs are out-patient programs that meet once or twice a week. There is also a need to establish some Christian based live-in programs to help those who need a more comprehensive program.

\textsuperscript{107} Acts 17:22-23 – “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you’”
Meeting The Physical Needs of Former Inmates

Temporary Housing and Food

Perhaps no issue is more important than providing a place for men and women to live when they are released. Without a place to go, they will return to old friends and pick up their lives just exactly where they left off. The biggest thing that they can do is to find a place to live that is free from the influences of their former life so that they can begin building a new life.

I met Louise* one night after the men’s Bible study in jail. She was very depressed and one of the guards asked if I would speak with her. She told me how she had made a mess out of her life and how she really wanted to change. She had a son and was hopeful that someday she would be reunited with him. She also explained to me how she had burned all her bridges with her family. The only person who really wanted to have anything to do with her was an abusive boyfriend. Apparently, he was OK most of the time, but had a tendency towards violence when he was drinking.

I went to visit her every other weeks for several months. At first, she appeared to be committed to make real and substantial changes in her life. I had prayed with her and had thought she was convinced that she should pull her life together before developing any kind of a relationship.

However, as the time of her release approached, she began to realize that she had nowhere to go. Her family would not take her and she had medical problems that would have prevented her from staying at one of the local shelters. By the last time I visited her, I realized that she was going to return to her old boyfriend and her old lifestyle. It was difficult for me to criticize her because she had absolutely nowhere else that she could go.

This is a situation that many of those who released from jail face. They have nowhere to go and no one they can count on, except for their friends from their former life. If they go back into the same environment they came out of, their chances of succeeding are limited at best. As Christians, we need to help them find a place where they can live that will encourage them to continue with the new life they have chosen.
Initially, our options in this area are limited to finding the resources in the community that will provide temporary shelter for those who are down on their luck. Right now, this includes the Rescue Mission and St. Anne’s Shelter. Both will allow men to stay there while they get a job and build up some cash reserves so that they can rent an apartment.

The options for women are more limited. Your Community Connection (YCC) has a limited amount of space, but they will only allow someone to stay there for one month. There is also the House of Hope, a Christian Ministry that will take in women, but they are in desperate need of funding and may have to drop their ministry in the near future.

While it is a long-term goal, one of the projects that we would like to do is start a Christian half-way house, or partner with someone who is starting one. This would allow prisoners to experience life within a Christian community while allowing for a gradual transition into a new way of life.

Job Skills

Perhaps the greatest job skill needed by many who have been in prison is the presence of a good work ethic. Many who have been in prison, where there because they wanted immediate gratification. They were unable to formulate long-term plans and work towards achieving them.

For this reason, we are going to encourage every man and woman we work with to formulate a plan for developing their career and to begin working towards that plan. In the mean time, we want them to start working at any job they can find. This means that they should be working even if they do not think that they are getting paid enough. Not only should they be working, but they should be working hard and they should doing so without grumbling and complaining.

Temporary employment agencies will be a good resource for men who do not think that they can find work. Most temp agencies will take who ever they can get as long as they think that they can do the job. This will give former inmates the ability to develop a work history and references.

If they cannot even get work at a temp agency, then we will encourage them to volunteer at a church or charitable organization. It is important for them to understand

* Not her real name
that they need career goals to get ahead in life and that developing a good work ethic will be the foundation for achieving those goals.

**Meeting the Emotional Needs of Former Inmates**

There is nothing worse in this world than feeling like nobody loves you, and nobody cares whether you succeed or not. Studies have shown, and it just make common sense, that the more emotional support a person has when they leave jail, the more likely they are to be successful. This means that one of the most important things that we can do as Christians, is just be there for them.

When a person is released from custody, they need to make a transition from a life of total dependence with no major decisions, to a life of total freedom. This can be very difficult for many as they are bombarded with an array of decisions. All of a sudden, he or she must decide, where to live, where to work, what to drive.

Some people who function quite effectively when in jail or prison, are unable to cope on the outside. Inside, they know what is expected of them. Outside, it is too unstructured with too many decisions. People with this mindset are more likely to be sent back to prison because they do not fear being caught for their crimes. Prison is a relief for them. They are taken care of and all their decisions are made for them.

Our goal, as we minister to them, is to get them to identify with the culture of Christ rather than the culture in prison. We want them to understand that God will take much better care of them than prison ever could. There is nothing for them to fear.

Part of this process involves hold them accountable with love and without judgment. They have lived their whole lives a certain way, and they have developed an identity which most likely is in conflict with the Christian way of life. We cannot expect them to change everything overnight.

There will be frustrations along the way as they develop their new identity. They will not understand many of the aspects of Christian behavior, and then when they do understand them, they will not agree with them. There will be setbacks and backsliding. Our job is to continually point them in the direction of Jesus, with love and without harshness so that they do not give up.
God’s Word tells us that we are to encourage one another, and this especially applies to those who have been prisoners. We can remove the man from the culture, but it is much more difficult to remove the culture from the man. It will require persistence on our part to accomplish this, but with God’s help it is possible.

One of the most powerful forces in the universe is having someone who believes in you. It can make all the difference in the world. They have even done studies on this phenomena and given it a name, the Pygmalion Effect.108

It is named after a mythical sculptor (Pygmalion) who created a statue of a beautiful woman, the woman of his dreams. The idea behind it is that your expectations can influence reality.

In a famous experiment, two groups of evenly matched children were given to two sets of teachers. The first set of teachers were told that their students were the best and the brightest. The second group was told that their students were beyond hope, but that they should do the best they could to teach them anyway.

The results were amazing. The first group excelled in everything that they did while the second group struggled and failed. This experiment, which was repeated many times, proved that the expectations of others can have a great influence upon results. Just letting those we minister to know that we believe in them will help them to be successful in their efforts to change.

As we minister to these men and women, we need to seeing them through God’s eyes. We need to let them know that we believe in them, and we believe that they will succeed. We need to help them believe that they can change their lives completely with God’s help.

**Success Stories**

**Darwin**

**Rondia**

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108 Good or Bad, What Teachers Expect from Students They Generally Get!, http://www.kidsource.com/education/pygmalion.html
VI. A Plan for Change

Welcoming Men and Women to a New Life

The current methods for working with those who have been released from jail have met with limited success. Right now, the mindset is simply to warehouse men until they have served their time and then release them, letting them sink or swim based upon their won will-power. There are very few programs for prisoners when they are in jail, and even fewer when they are released. Those that do exist, totally ignore God and the spiritual aspects of change.

Right now, there are a number of Christians going into the jail and preaching the gospel to those who have no hope. However, even though they may begin to develop hope while in jail, when they are released, they are forced back into the only life they know, and their hope disappears.

The first thing that needs to occur, for those getting out of jail, is for there to be a new life waiting for them. This means that there must be places for them to go and get plugged in. They need churches that are loving and accepting, but knowledgeable enough that they will not be taken advantage of. They need Bible studies to attend where they can talk to mature Christians about the problems they are facing. Most of all, they need mature Christians who will be their friends.

This is the first step, developing social structures where former prisoners can fit in and be given time to develop their new life and identity. Some of this is already occurring as there are churches that would welcome former prisoners. There are also Bible studies available where they can feel comfortable sharing their problems. However, a good next step would be to develop a mentoring program to match up released prisoners with mature Christians.

Helping Men and Women Build a New Life

A second phase would be to begin providing counseling services for those who are released from jail. Perhaps the most important service that we could offer is drug and alcohol counseling. Many, if not most, of the problems faced by those released from jail are the result of substance abuse. There is a strong need for counseling in this area, and it could be done effectively by trained volunteers.
In addition, there is strong need for other types of counseling as well. Many need help in developing job skills. This could include vocational training, but it would also have to include training in conflict resolution, patience, dependability, work ethics and maintaining a positive attitude.

Other counseling that will probably be needed is in the areas of marriage, parenting, anger control, and finances. All of these are areas where people tend to struggle, and where a little good advice can go a long way. When working with those who have been incarcerated, we need to remember that we are working with people who have probably never had good examples to follow.

**Helping Men and Women Transition to a New Life**

I left this one for last because it is the most expensive. It includes elements of both the initiatives discussed above, but it is much more intensive. What is really needed for those who have found Jesus, and have a sincere desire to change, is a transitional living program. This would be a three to six month program where men and women who are leaving prison would have a chance to pull their lives together and move in a new direction.

In order to make this work, there would have to be funding to purchase either a large house or a small apartment complex. There would also have to be funding for ongoing expenses such as utilities, food and a resident manager.

In addition to the funding, there would have to be a solid organizational structure with impeccable financial accountability and oversight of a program with solid controls for holding those in the program accountable.

For example, residents would be required to work or attend training 40 hours a week, even if they had to work for minimum wages. They would also have to assist with chores around the house and contribute a percentage of their income towards the program. They would be required to develop a budget and begin saving so that they can establish themselves once they are done with the program.

There would also be requirements for attending Bible studies and counseling. The counseling could be tailored to their specific needs. Most would probably be required to attend a substance abuse program, but they might also have to attend other counseling
such as anger management or financial management. The idea would be to insure that each man or woman gets help in the areas where help is needed.

One house/program will probably not be enough for the Ogden area. There needs to be at least one for women and one for men. However, there are 1400 people on probation or parole in the Ogden area, so there is probably a need for more than one per gender.

**Pulling it All Together**

While the components of the plan listed above might seem sparse and simplistic, they reflect the fact that it would not be very hard or complicated to impact the Ogden area by changing the lives of those who are released from jail. After all, it is God who does all of the heavy lifting, changing hearts and minds, and giving hope to those who have none.

However, what it does require is committed Christians who are willing to spend their time and resources to help those who have only a limited ability to help themselves. I have a firm belief that God is calling me to ministry in this area. I may or may not be a leader in terms of pastoring an inner-city church or running a transitional program.

However, I know that He is calling me to be a catalyst for change in Ogden. Ogden is currently a stronghold of the enemy, but with God’s help, and His Spirit, we will have the power to break down the gates of the enemy. We will have the power to set people free, and to see the blessings of God poured out in their lives.
Appendix A – Opportunities to Get Involved

a. Opportunities for Christian Volunteers

Four qualities of the volunteer, perseverance, caring, patience and determination.

Grant writing

Letter Writing – Studies show that those who receive two or more letters a month are more successful when released on parole p 90

adopt a prisoner – Volunteer commits to meet once a week with prisoner for a year

Find volunteers to mentor wives of prisoners in budgeting, parenting, etc.

Provide rides to jail for visiting if needed.

b. Opportunities for Church Involvement

c. Future Ideas

Work with Juveniles to keep them out of Prison
Appendix B - List of resources for those getting out of prison

ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
950 25th Street, Suite E-10 Ogden, UT 84401 Phone: 393-4728
Hours: Mon. - Fri. 1:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Sat. 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
For recovering alcoholics to share experiences, strengths, hopes, and social support to solve their common problems.

Alano Club
684 24th Street Ogden, UT 84401 Phone: 393-5054
Hours: Daily 7:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.
A place for recovering alcoholics to go and experience an alcohol and drug free environment.

Alcohol & Chemical Dependency Treatment Center (ACT)
Columbia Ogden Regional Medical Center
5475 South 500 East Ogden, UT 84405 Phone: 479-2250 800-215-2250
Hours: 7 days a week, 24 hours per day
To help alcohol and chemical dependent persons overcome their dependency.

CLOTHING

Salvation Army
2615 Grant Avenue Ogden, UT 84401 Phone: 621-3580
Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Sat. 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Clothing distributed Tues., Wed., Thurs., 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

St. Anne's Center
137 West Binfords Avenue Ogden, UT 84401 Phone: 621-5036
Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Men's clothing distributed to persons who are homeless or low-income.

COUNSELING / SUPPORT

Catholic Community Services (CCS)
622 23rd Street Ogden, UT 84401 Phone: 394-5944
Provides emergency food supplements for clients who would otherwise go without food, the elderly (60+), and people with disabilities. They also counsel those with substance abuse problems
Family Counseling Service of Northern Utah
3518 Washington Blvd. Ogden, UT 84403  Phone: 399-1600
FCS has been dedicated since 1966 to improving the quality of life of residents of Northern Utah by providing affordable counseling to children and families.

Family Support Center
2780 Madison Ave. Ogden, UT 84404  Phone: 393-3113
Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Offers crisis nursery for children up to 11 years old, parenting classes, and in-depth parenting counseling.

Homeless Veteran’s Fellowship
541 23rd Street  Phone: 392-7662
P.O. Box 1706 Ogden, UT 84402-1706  Fax: 392-5796
Provides comprehensive services to address homelessness among veterans in Utah. Assists participants in moving from homeless to self-sufficiency.

New Horizons (Sexual Offenders)
3003 Grant Ave., Ogden, UT 84401  Phone: 392-7662
Fax: 392-5796
Provides comprehensive counseling services for sexual offenders and victims.

Pregnancy Care Center of Ogden
2909 Washington Blvd. #105, Ogden, UT 84401  Phone: 612-9293
Free pregnancy test, supportive option counseling to help women discover alternatives to abortion, post-abortion counseling, abstinence education for Weber, Davis & Morgan counties.

Your Community Connection (YCC)
2261 Adams Ave. Ogden, UT  Phone: 394-9456
Information about social services in Weber County.

EMERGENCIES
McKay Dee Hospital
4401 Harrison Blvd. Ogden, UT 84403  Phone: 627-2800

Ogden City Police
2186 Lincoln Ave. Ogden, UT 84401  Phone: 629-8221

Ogden Regional Medical Center
5475 S 500 E Ogden, UT 84405  Phone: 479-2111

FOOD
Catholic Community Services (CCS)
622 23rd Street Ogden, UT 84401  Phone: 394-5944
Provides emergency food supplements for clients who would otherwise go without food, the elderly (60+), and people with disabilities. They also counsel those with substance abuse problems.

**Ogden Area Community Action Agency**
3159 Grant Avenue Ogden, UT 84401  
Phone: 399-9281
Emergency food pantry Mon. - Thur. 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. and Wed. 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

**Salvation Army**
2615 Grant Ave Ogden, UT 84401  
Phone: 621-3580
Provides emergency food, clothing vouchers, and a rehabilitation program.
Breakfast is served Mon. - Sat. 7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.

**Share, Inc.**
Weber County. P.O. Box 89, Ogden, UT 84402  
Phone: 399-5046
A volunteer, emergency referral system that delivers five days of nutritious food per person to the homebound and needy in crisis in

**Weber Human Senior Services**
3564 Lincoln Ave. #6 Ogden, UT 84401  
Phone: 625-3770
Meals on Wheels: hot meals for the homebound.

**IDENTIFICATION**

**Social Security Administration**
324 25th Street Ogden, UT 84404  
Phone: 625-5641
Hours: Mon. - Fri. 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Here you may apply for a Social Security card, Disability, SSI, and Pension

**Utah Driver's License Division**
615 E 5300 S South Ogden, UT 84405  
Phone: 476-7700
Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Here you may apply for an I.D. card or a driver's license. (Fee required)

**Weber County Health Department**
2570 Grant Ave. Ogden, UT 84401  
Phone: 399-8386
Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Offers access to Weber County Birth and Death certificates. (Fee required)

**JOBS**

**Utah's Job Connection**
480 27th Street Ogden, UT 84401  
Phone: 626-0300
Offers services for job seekers such as job listings, Utah's job bank, America's job bank, writing resumes, and tips on interviewing effectively. Web site: jobs.utah.gov
LEGAL SERVICES

Utah Legal Services
893 24th Street Suite 300 Ogden, UT 84401 Phone: 394-9431
Handles civil cases for low-income Utah residents. They can answer questions, give advice, and prepare legal documents.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Hospice of Northern Utah
893 24th Street Ogden, UT 84401 Phone: 621-6642

Health Clinics of Utah
2540 Washington Blvd. #122, Ogden, UT 84401

Midtown Community Health Center
670 28th Street Ogden, UT 84401 Phone: 393-8432
Hours: Tues., Thurs., Fri. 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Mon., Wed. 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Offers walk-in's and appointments at low cost for prenatal care, dental care, medications, and counseling.

Weber County Health Department
2570 Grant Ave. Ogden, UT 84401 Phone: 399-8432
Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Offers VD clinic, immunizations, cancer control, Baby your Baby, AIDS testing, and prenatal and infant development program.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Golden Hours Center
650 25th Street Ogden, UT 84401 Phone: 399-5230
Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Provides daily lunch 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Suggested donation of $2.00 for those 60 and over and $4.50 for those under 60. Various activities offered on a daily basis.

SHELTER AND HOUSING

Homeless Veteran’s Fellowship
541 23rd Street Phone: 392-7662
P.O. Box 1706 Ogden, UT 84402-1706 Fax: 392-5796
Provides comprehensive services to address homelessness among veterans in Utah. Assists participants in moving from homeless to self-sufficiency.

House of Hope
Calicobrenda@comcast.net Phone: 393-0040
www.makarioministries.com Cell: 628-4699
Provides shelter and counseling for abused and homeless women.
Housing Authority of Ogden City  
2661 Washington Blvd, Suite 102, Ogden, UT 84401      Phone: 627-5851  
Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.      Fax: 627-6012  
Provides safe, affordable housing, free from discrimination, with self-sufficiency opportunities for persons of low to medium income in partnership with the community.

Housing Authority of Weber County  
2380 Washington Blvd, Suite 240, Ogden, UT 84401      Phone: 399-8764  
Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.      Fax: 399-8862  
Provides and develops safe, sanitary housing for low-income families and elderly individuals. Rental assistance and public housing. Emergency home repair loans.

Ogden Rescue Mission  
2781 Wall Ave. Ogden, UT 84401      Phone: 399-3058  
Provides shelter for men, women & children. Sign in by 6:30 p.m. Mon. - Sat. and 3:30 Sun. Showers available, meals served at 7:30.

Phoenix Living Foundation  
P.O. Box 3164. Ogden, UT 84409-3164      Phone: 920-7148  
Fax: 399-3351  
Transitional living program for men in the downtown Ogden area. $300 per month for rent, utilities and case management.

St. Anne's Center  
137 W. Binford Ave. Ogden, UT 84401      Phone: 621-5036  
Hours are 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
Provides shelter for men, women and children. Lunch is served from 12 p.m. - 1 p.m. every day and clothing is distributed on Mon. - Fri. Showers provided April - Sept.

Women's Crisis Center (YCC)  
2261 Adams Ave. Ogden, UT 84401      Phone: 394-9456  
Hours: Daily, 24 hours      392-7273 (24 hour hotline)  
Provides shelter for women and children experiencing domestic abuse (women must be 18 or over, under 18 must show proof of marriage).
Appendix C – Dos and Don’ts for Volunteers

Dos

Pray, Pray, Pray
   Philippians 4:6
   Matthew 6:25
Fervent in prayer and relaxed in ministry
   Philippians 4:7 Prayer brings peace with God and ultimately peace with others
Encourage participation in the service.
Be real/vulnerable
Be honest
Be dependable
Be Prepared
   Arrive 10 minutes early
   Dress Appropriately
   Learn and follow all the rules of the jail
   Ask if you are unsure about anything
Have integrity
   Do not pretend to be someone you are not
   Live your life in such a way that it does not matter if anyone is watching
Dwell on the positive
   Do not be dragged down by the negative
   Rejoicing is contagious
   Do not reinforce Negativity towards the Prison Administration
   You can have a positive or negative affect upon the atmosphere in the jail
   Do not make negative Comments about other Groups or Religions
   The great commission was given to the church as a whole, not to you as an individual.
Listen with compassion
   Let your gentleness be evident to all
Be yourself
Develop the trust and confidence of the jail staff in you

Be willing to listen
Examine your motivation
   Pride is bad
See the inmates as individuals
Remain objective
Be willing to learn

Don’ts

Take anything in or out of the jail for an inmate
Pass anything, including notes between one prisoner and another
Get involved in an inmate’s legal problems
Ask what they are in for.
Preach at them
   When we look down on others, we are forgetting that there are really only two
types of people, those who have been caught, and those who have not been
captured.
Be authoritarian – Most inmates have problems with authority
Make Unauthorized Public Statements about Prisoners
Try to visit or minister to victims or victims families if you are teaching in the jail
Make promises you cannot keep
Think you are better than the prisoners
Come as an expert or reformer
   Don’t try to tell officers how to do their jobs
Come to help yourself
Feel like you need to know everything
When ministering to families, men should not visit alone. This prevents mis-
understandings
Appendix D – Games Prisoners Play

Don’t expect everyone to be saved
Don’t expect prisoners to think like you do
Don’t put yourself in a position where a prisoner can take advantage of you

   Wise as a serpent and gentle as a dove
Appendix D – Life Change Plan for Prisoners and Former Prisoners

1) Let them know that God will forgive Them
2) Let them know that God will help them change
3) Let them know that someone will be there to help them
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