



# Missionary Evangelism to Corrections

*Sharing the gospel & Christ's love with those in corrections since 1982*

*I was in prison and you came to visit me. Matthew 25:36b*

Dear Reentering One!

How glad we are for you that you will soon be released from incarceration and how aware we are of some of the challenges you will face. You have asked for prayer that you can continue on the right path from here. After 30 years of hearing this prayer request and knowing how real it is I am writing to you to encourage you and to provide some hope, ideas and beliefs that are from the depths of my heart in praying for you. - Yes, You! From watching many who struggle and many who make it on the right ways, we hope you will take to heart the very real Love of God that can make the difference between wandering or finding your way home. That home being love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control and true fellowship.

Before I begin with the bulk of this letter, let me say that if you are looking to overcome addiction that somewhere in your growing up years the foundation of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and actions led to trusting the wrong people or concepts. A faith-based treatment can help you have time to rework the foundation that will help you grow in your heart and mind and provide for a solid future. If you qualify for that, take advantage of it. Not everyone qualifies for it and having the time set aside to be able to work at the rebuilding of our foundation with many of the stressors removed is a privilege. Those who go out and try to do it on your own often come back with more struggles in the long run. Recovery or building a new foundation takes time. I needed to look at this personal and spiritual growth as though it were a job. This helped me set aside the time and energy to stay with it. Treatment, counseling, taking time alone and talking to others about your growth can be done without going to treatment, however going there is like going to character school. The faith part is the deepest part and doing it without incorporating God's power can lead to frustration. Although it is often looked at as a punishment, if you can go, it is really a privilege.

As you are moving on it reminds me of the Israelites after they had been freed from slavery to the Egyptians. This true history represents more than freedom from jail, it represents the slavery we have been under to sin. They had been freed and God led them to the promised land. The promised land represents a good life with good relationships. When the Israelites got there, they got scared thinking that it would be too hard to go into the promised land. They thought people there would be against them, that fighting the battles to get rid of the evil would be too hard and they would lose the battles that would make the good place their home. Because they did not trust God to help them and to go when He asked them to they wandered around in the wilderness for 40 years. The book of Deuteronomy records how God called them to return to Him, and commit themselves to Him and He would be there for them and help them. It gives warnings and gives them a lot of encouragement. I am going to list several of the encouragements here. They astonish me with the way the words say what we need to walk in the freedom and promises that we can have when we accept Jesus and let the Holy Spirit move us. I am going to give some of the ideas indented to connote the meaning of longer passages and make comments to clarify

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*why I chose those scriptures and note how they parallel to who Jesus is, what He said and the good love He gives to us. Many of the verses are NLT version but CV means I combined some versions together. If the reference is (in parenthesis) it is words from the scripture. If it is a reference scripture but do not quote it that reference will be in {brackets}.*

*In Deut. 1:6b is says " the LORD our God said to us, 'You have stayed at this mountain long enough. It is time to break camp and move on. Go to [the good places I have planned for you... Look! I am giving this ... to you!], ..for it is [what] I promised your ancestors.'" We can accept the spiritual promises that God gave to the ancestors*

*If we join the family of Abraham by faith. Christ tells us in Romans 8 that if we accept Him and allow Him to be a Father to us, we are adopted into His family. If we accept that He was sent by God, lived a life of no sin and took our sins and burdens on the cross we can transfer our sins to Him, receive forgiveness and the power to live right and live in His promises. We are allowing Him to be a Father, we are letting Him adopt us and we adopt His ways. Abba Father means a father of high respect and close intimacy. This means that the spiritual promises God made are ours to receive and live by. The book goes on to give them directions. I will summarize key areas in this letter to you. The number in the parenthesis will indicate the chapter it is taken from*

*May the Lord Bless you... You are a heavy load to carry with all your problems and bickering. ... Chose some respected men who are known for their wisdom and understanding ... Be perfectly fair in your decisions and impartial in your judgements. Hear the cause of both the poor and the rich. Don't be afraid of anyone's anger. Look! He has placed the land in front of you. Go occupy it. Don't be afraid, don't be discouraged. ...*

*You came to me and said ... lets send scouts to ...explore and advise us on the best route. ... They saw ... it is indeed good... (Two of the scouts trusted that the Lord would help you) But you rebelled (by listening to the ones that did not trust me) ... saying Our brothers demoralized us ... I said... Don't be shocked or afraid of them [the giants]! The LORD Your God is going ahead of you and He will fight for you, just as you saw Him do in Egypt. And you saw how the LORD your God cared for you all along the way as you traveled through the wilderness, just as a father cares for his child. Now He has brought you to this place. But even after all He did you refused to trust Him.... Only Caleb and Joshua will see it because they trusted and believed. When you complained it made God angry and kept you from entering the promised land. When He said if you go ahead on your own without Him you will be crushed by the enemy, you did and you were. ... but now you have been wandering around long enough... you will pass through, and pay, many died, but get moving. Take the land I promised you little by little. Destroy the things that are wrong and bring death. (Deut. 1)*

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*It mentioned here that when they had a problem that complaining and bickering made them a burden or heavy load. Choosing wise men to help them was important to resolving their problems and helping them fellowship with each other. Opening up to others is one of the key areas in life that can help us develop successful relationships and skills. It is challenging, but to find mentors, counselors, teachers, sponsors or friends that you can talk openly with and who will pray for you is well worth the effort. Be consistent in looking and staying with such relationships. Let the person know that you would appreciate their time and talk about what you are looking for, what they can offer and the boundaries that will make the relationships successful.*

*The giants are our problems and complaining and refusing to trust God will keep us from resolving them. God will help us to fight these giants and to overcome them, but we cannot do it on our own. We need to ask His help and to trust Him. In the book of James, it says if we ask for wisdom God will not find fault or scold us but will give it liberally.*

*The 10 commandments start with "I am the LORD your God who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. (Deut. 5). He has rescued you from the slavery of sin. {Romans 7, Gal. 1, Col. 1} There has been research on honesty that shows when people were tempted to cheat, many of them did. Those in the group that were asked to think about the 10 commandments before the test, even if they did not know them all, they did not lie or cheat. Learning these commandments and thinking about them can help prevent much sin. They are summed up in "Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength and with all your Mind. (Deut.6, Matt. 22, Mark 12, Luke 10)*

*You must... make no treaties... you need to destroy all the evil. Perhaps you will think, "How can we ever conquer these nations that are so much more powerful than we are.? But don't be afraid of them! Just remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh... remember the great terrors... and the miracles... wonders... strong hand and powerful arm with which he brought you out of Egypt. The Lord your God will use the awesome power against those you fear to drive out the few survivors still hiding from you. No, do not be afraid... For the LORD your God will drive out ... You must burn ... idols, not covet or take their silver or gold ... it will become a trap to you. Utterly detest such things... do not bring them into your home ...for you will be destroyed... they are set apart for destruction. (Deut. 7) Remember How God tested you and your character He [fed, clothed, disciplined and taught you]. He did it to teach you that man does not live by bread alone, rather we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Think about it; Just as a parent disciplines his child, the LORD your God disciplines you for your own good. So, obey the commands of the LORD your God by walking in all His ways and fearing Him... For the LORD your God is bringing you to a good land...When you have eaten your fill, [and have a home and provision] be careful... be sure to praise the LORD your God for the good land He has given you.*

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*But that is the time to be careful! Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the LORD your God and disobey His commands, regulations and decrees... Do not become proud and forget...[He rescued you...led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, ..gave you water, fed you, ... Never say 'I achieved this with my own strength and energy' Remember the LORD your God He is the one that gives you the power to be successful, in order to fulfill the covenant... you will be destroyed if you refuse to obey.] (Deut. 8)*

*These references to destroying represent the sin and evil that we want to keep out of our lives. The power of God is what has brought you to the point of being clean and wanting a new life. Some of this, the desires and attitude change He will bring about right away as you turn to Him and ask Him to be your God and He comes and lives in you. Some of it may go bit so you are not overwhelmed by change. With criminal and addictive thinking patterns you can be serious and make a commitment with sincerity and then later it does not seem very important, the temptation seems more exciting or important. Recognize this and change what you are putting in front of you and pursuing. It is truly the most exciting thing to pursue the living God who created you, designed you and knows you. Pushing past the lie that makes other things seem more exciting at the moment is worth the depth of life, love and excitement God provides for you. When you are bored, put the study, the learning, the doing good deeds and loving others in front of you. Doing good deeds in secret adds some excitement to it. Think about the sacrifices God has made for you and the reasons He did so.*

*Fearing the Lord means having healthy respect for him as you would fear fire -Like fire is good and necessary for light and warmth, God is good to give light to your path and ways and to bring peace and warmth to your life and relationships. As you would not want to burn yourself or have your child or yourself walk out into the street you would not want to cross God or be His enemy. You need not fear his judgement if you receive His forgiveness but remember that receiving His love and forgiveness is receiving the same Holy Spirit and power to change. The goodness includes both.*

*After [God has helped you] Don't say in your hearts, the LORD had given us this ... because I have achieved this ...with my own strength or because...we are such good people ... for you are not - you are stubborn ... and refused to trust Him ... That is why I threw myself down before the LORD [fasted and prayed many days] ... Do not destroy them ... please overlook and remember your servants ... [He gave me the commandments again] And now what does The LORD your God require of you? He requires only that you fear the LORD your God, and live in a way that pleases Him, and love Him and serve Him from your heart and soul. (Deut. 11) Micah 6:8 says to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

*Romans 6 and 7 talks about how we serve sin or God and that Christ gives us the power to choose right.*

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*Your heart is the center of who you are, what you love and what is important to you. It includes the mind, emotions and the moral beliefs and activity. The soul is the logic, the spirit and the appetite or desires of a person. Isn't this what is missing when we fall to temptation. We are trying to satisfy ourselves with something other than God and the ways that He designed us to be satisfied. That leads to decay and death, but pursuing Him and His ways leads to life. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. {Jn. 14} He is our bread of life. {Jn. 6}, our light of the World {Jn. 8} our good Shepherd and door {Jn. 10}, our resurrection and life {Jn. 11} and our vine (where we get our nourishment and life) {Jn. 14}. The excitement and rest in Him is immeasurable and cannot be compared to anything else. Recognize that everything you have is a gift from God. {Eph. 2} Ask others to pray for you. Call out for and accept His mercy and power and walk with Him.*

*Seek the LORD Your God at the place of worship...where His name will be honored... You will rejoice... and your pattern of worship will change... Today all of you are doing as you please because you have not yet arrived at the place God is giving you... Do not give in to those who test you... serve only the LORD your God and fear Him alone. Obey all His commands, listen to His voice and cling to Him. [Give offerings that are pure and worthy] ... Faithfully keep my commands by putting them into practice...Do not bring shame on my Holy Name... I am the LORD who makes you holy.*

*You have promised this day ... so be careful to do so whole heartedly ... You have declared today that the LORD is your God. And you have promised to walk in His ways ...[10 commandments and the 2 greatest to Love Him with all your heart, soul, strength and mind] If you do so the LORD will bless you, if you refuse to listen and serve with joy and enthusiasm for the benefits, curses will pursue you... you will be lacking ...and overwhelmed. Those who hear the warnings should not congratulate themselves, thinking I am doing well even though I am following the desires of my own stubborn heart. This will lead to utter ruin. In the future if you go astray and are exiled ... even if you are banished to the ends of the earth, if at any time you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey with all your heart ... He will have mercy and restore you, change your hearts...*

*This command is not too difficult for you... it is not beyond your reach...Do not say it is as high as the heavens so distant or beyond the sea... Today... I am giving you a choice between life and death... blessing or curse... Now I call on heaven to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants may live.! You can make this choice by loving the LORD your God, obeying Him and committing yourself finally to Him. This is the key to your life and If you love and obey the LORD you will live long in the land. (Deut 12,13, 22 & 30)*

*The offerings in the Old Testament were for sin and guilt, peace and fellowship. They were sacrifices that the people brought to the priests who offered the sacrifices on their behalf. When Jesus came He replaced the sacrifices with His life {Romans 3 & 8, I Cor 5, Eph. 5, Heb. 1,7,9,10 & 11, I John} Once we*

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*have accepted Him the offerings in the New Testament are for thanksgiving, money or goods {Acts 14}, prayer, our lives to God are our lives and the way we live them, spiritual as priests, {Eph. 5, Phil. 1&2, 2 Tim 4, 1 Peter 2} gifts we give {Phil. 4}, our bodies {Heb 10} accepting Christ's offering, obedience and God's will, {Heb 10} faith, {Hebrews 11} praise, {Heb. 13}, spiritual sacrifices {1Per. 2} money, {Rom. 15} walking in Love, {Eph. 5} and doing good and sharing with those in need {1 John} Sacrifices are good, but mercy and compassion are better than sacrifices. {Matt. 9 & 12}*

*It was important that they did not set up their own worship places away from the places that God designated for them to worship. When they did they started worshipping other gods. Keep visiting churches and learning about the body of Christ. Find one you see teaches scripture and keep going, worshipping with others and working through issues so that you find the place God has created for you. He wants us to be united in Him. He says we are accepted in the beloved {Eph. 1}. Know it is a process of learning and learn and walk in His commands to love - seek the benefits, but more than that seek the giver of the benefits. He would not tell us to love Him with all of our hearts unless He is going to love us back.*

*The choice is laid out in the book of Romans. Chapters 6 & 7 talk about the choices we make and how we are slaves to sin or to God/Love. We don't have the power to make the right choice unless we let Him provide it for us. Ask and receive Him and it. I Timothy 1: 19 reflects this clinging to God. Cling to your faith in Christ and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences and as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked. We pray for you as you embark on this new way of life!*

*Keren Happuch*

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