

FISHERS OF MEN

"And he said unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." - Matthew 4:19

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Fishers of Men Ministries
Jesus Loves You!

A Newsletter For and By Saints of Christ in Prison

Asleep at the Wheel



I would like to encourage my brothers and sisters in Christ, both inside and outside prison walls to remain spiritually awake in these days and times we live in. Our enemy is out to catch us sleeping and slumbering when we should be alert.

I recall a time when I was moving from California to Arkansas. I was in a hurry to get there as I already had job interviews scheduled. I figured if I drove straight through only stopping for gas and a quick ten-minute nap, followed by coffee and caffeine pills, I could trim the normal drive time of 28 hours down to 20 hours or less. I did okay until I hit Texas.

The lines on the highway became almost hypnotic. The road seemed to be a straight shot to forever. A curve to negotiate was non-existent. It was a flat endless ribbon of asphalt. The sound of the radio faded in and out, my eyes keeping rhythm opening and closing. I knew I was tired, but refused to admit that I could fall asleep.

I was proven wrong by the sound of tires skidding on asphalt and gravel. My instinct, fueled by panic, caused me to jerk the steering wheel too much and the car went into a spin. By the time the fog of sleep had faded from my mind, I was pointed the wrong way on Hwy. 40 and amazed at still being alive. I had dozed for just a few seconds, but that was all it took for me to end up spinning out of control. It could have been all the time needed to end my life.

Sin is like that. It creeps up on us, gets us to feeling comfortable with it, then it strikes when our spiritual alertness is down. Just like my “spin-out”, the results can be tragic. Spiritual alertness is as important to our lives as physical alertness is in driving a car. It is when we “fall asleep at the wheel” in our spiritual lives that sin can send us spinning out of control.

The smart driver recognizes when they are growing tired and get off the road to get refreshed and rested. Likewise, as Christians, we must recognize sin creeping up on us, causing us to compromise our better judgment and fall asleep spiritually. God alone is our source of rest, renewal, and rejuvenation! When your spirit grows drowsy, He is our great energizer! When we are in need of rest, He is our peace! And when we are weak, He is our source of strength! So, if you are catching yourself “asleep at the wheel” on your spiritual journey – get alone with God, then ask your Christian brothers and sisters to pray with you, for you. God will get you back on the road again, pointed in the right direction, strengthened to make it to your destiny in Him!

*With Prayers for God's Blessings
to be Poured Out on You Always,
Brother Rick*

A New Life

It is faith, hope and glory that has changed me.

I'm so glad to have all that in my new life.

All the sins are washed away and my prayers
all have been answered in His Name.

Thank God.

My life is a lot better and I have seen the light
and I am proud of it.

Brother Larry H

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5



I was celebrating being transferred from a maximum prison to a high-median correctional center, and after ten years I am finally closer to my family and home. The Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, “Home is where the heart is.” After thinking about it, I realized I had my mind on the wrong “home.”

Jesus said in John 17:16, “They are not part of this world, even as I am not part of this world.” Our home is in Heaven! The Greek word for home is “oikia.” In Strong’s #3614, the meaning as in John 14:2 is “in my Father’s house.” But the word, “endemeo” in Strong’s #1736 means in one’s own country, i.e. home, literally to be among one’s people, that is being in the body (2 Cor 5:6).

The body is only our temporary home until we go to our final house with God in Heaven. So while this body is among our people, we are to labor as Verse 9 says, “...present or absent that we may be accepted of him.” How do we labor in our home? We labor by keeping our house clean, using it to help all those in need and using it to worship God.

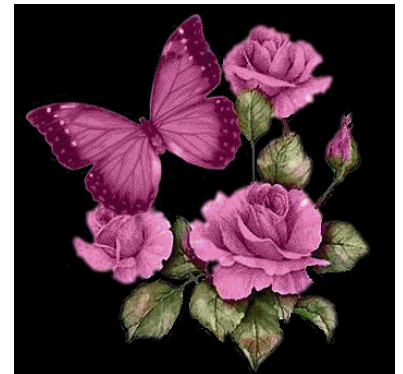
It is the essentially the same with our bodies. We need to keep it clean from not making provisions for the flesh (Romans 13:14). We use it to help all those in need (Ps. 10:14) and we worship God because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

*Your Brother in Christ,
Anthony*



Just a Thought ~The Ultimate Reality Show~

The other day I was sitting at my sewing machine at work, minding my own business, kind of half-listening to the radio and talking to God. See, since my incarceration, I speak to God about everything. Sometimes I just talk, sometimes I pray. Well, in this one instance, a disc jockey came on with the details of Whitney Houston’s life since Bobby was incarcerated. It came to mind at that moment that society is more and more finding entertainment in others’ distress, fortune and lives. Even our television selection revolves around reality shows. In the Bachelor/Bachelorette, we see people try to make someone fall in love; in the Fear Factor, we watch people do unheard of things for money; on talk shows, we see people defend, brag and/or get humiliated. It’s becoming a way of life. Simple entertainment as we once knew it is gone; the media and viewers have become obsessed with everyone else’s lives, no matter the expense.



We all have been brought up with opinions and it’s alright to say them. We’ve grown up with a sense of judgment. We were taught to be proud of who we are. I, in fact, have watched some of those shows, voiced my opinions, been proud of who I was and even judged others. Those are still some of the biggest battles I face as I seek the Lord’s face and presence in my life. Perhaps that is why that day at work I was allowed to see just how much society thrives on other’s lives for personal entertainment. Throughout the Bible, we are told not to fall into the ways of the world. Allow me to give some examples so that maybe next time you see or hear of someone else’s life being used for the pure purpose of entertainment, you will remember the Lord’s word and be able to stand in the Word and walk away!

II Timothy 2:18 – “...who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.”

Proverbs 18:2 – “A fool finds no pleasure in understanding, but delights in airing his own opinions.”

Deuteronomy 1:17 – “Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God.”

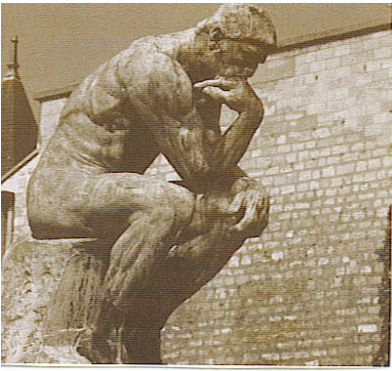
Proverbs 21:4 – “Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin!”

Proverbs 18:12 – “Before his downfall, a man’s heart is proud, but humility comes before honor.”

One of my favorite books in the Bible is Proverbs. You see, there are 31 Proverbs and at the most 31 days in a month. So each night before I lie down my head, I read a Proverb for the day. The saying “an apple a day keeps the doctor away,” reminds me that we should all try “a Proverb each night and find the soul’s delight.” The world wants us to have pleasure from other’s pain and distress, but we can rely on the Word of the Lord to bring us pleasure.

*Yours in Christ,
Melissa*

THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS



Like every other morning here, breakfast came at 4:30 a.m. in a Styrofoam tray. My built-in mental alarm clock pretty much tells my body to expect breakfast at this time, so I'm usually up. After deciding whether or not I want to eat it, I usually lay back down for a couple of hours for some more sleep. This morning however, I found myself thinking about what I could write for the *Fishers of Men* Newsletter. Our publisher, known to us close to her as Momm, is always encouraging us to write articles. I find while I'm writing them, I am recalling many of the people who the newsletter will eventually reach. This article I'm writing now is for everyone who reads this newsletter. I've collected a few topics and questions and I would appreciate any response. Fellowship here is minimal, so this newsletter is one outlet for me. Some of my topics may seem humorous, but I assure you, I actually get asked these questions or face these dilemmas.

First up is Genesis 1:1 – “In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.” After recently reading it again, for the first time, I paused and considered the word ‘heavens.’ I noticed it was plural. As you know, throughout the Bible we read there is one heaven. Correct? So I thought that the plural form likely meant God created things outside the earth, known to us as the Universe. But I'm curious, why use the word heavens here. Any helpful thoughts?

As Christians we pray for the healing of those who are sick. A recent visit by a close pastor of a church I belonged to in the 80's, made me revisit this thought...Is it not God's will to heal everyone? For some, that's a hard pill to swallow, especially to the non-believer. While God is closely associated with love, He generally is not associated with pain. When I pray for healing of someone, I pray that they will be healed, not that God's will be done. Is that wrong? You see in churches and on TV many people fervently pray for healing, some even ‘claiming’ the healing is already taken place. When I'm asked about this, I usually respond that it is not God's will to heal everyone and that God can use the infirmity for good (see Romans 8:28). Yet, much like the cynical non-believers of the days of Malacai who shouted in verse 2:17, “Where is the God of justice?” we too are faced with the non-believers cynicism of God and His will. When non-believers see a Christian in grief or pain, some sarcastically ask, “Where is your God now?”

Are there any among you who are like me and are not able to discuss the Bible well with a challenging non-believer? I tend to get emotional and lose focus when anyone challenges my belief. A recent example comes to mind. At lunch a week or so ago, a young man began asking me questions about God. I realized instantly his interest was not in God, but in challenging, “How I could possibly believe.” This naturally changed my mode of expression from instructive to defensive. The young man actually became indignant and our ‘discussion’ ended. I later asked myself, why would someone challenge God's existence? I don't believe in Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny or aliens, but I don't run around antagonizing anyone who does. I think that sometimes, not always, that some of these people who challenge us as to God's existence actually want to believe, but are having trouble overcoming some obstacles. So perhaps its better once I see a non-believer's real motive in discussing God with me, I should step away from the discussion before it becomes an argument. I don't believe I'll ever be one of those people who can discuss the Bible well regardless of the other person's agenda. Perhaps my forte lies elsewhere?

A couple of sort of humorous thoughts come to mind. You know how that no matter how many times you read the Bible through each time, you always learn something also. Well, it happened again today. As a former eight-year member of the seafaring U.S. Coast Guard I always attributed “red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky in morning, sailor's take warning,” to a saying originated by an old, old sailor. But that's not true. Anyone know who and where it was said? If you guessed Jesus in Matthew 16:2, you were correct. While no mention of a sailor is made, the people of that time said “when evening comes, it will be fair weather, for the sky is red; and in the morning, today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.” This made me think again, we shouldn't just pick up our Bibles and wearily begin to read. I've done that way too many times and that's why I miss many things despite reading the Bible many times through. I read the Bible daily, but admittedly sometimes too quickly.

Aliens...I mentioned that subject earlier. Now don't laugh, this is serious. Yet again a challenging non-believer asked me, “How does a Christian feel about the existence of life on other planets? Human life.” I once again refer to Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In verse two it says the earth was formless and empty and from thee God created all life...on earth. There is no mention of anything being done to the heavens (the Universe). So how does a Christian answer that questions as it comes from a non-believer looking for a Christian response? I usually reply there is no evidence of life outside our earth and no mention of such in the word. Often I get, “well, there's no evidence of your God either.” Why do I always get these questions? So how would you respond?

One thing I've notice more in prison that I did outside of prison is the scrutiny of Christians by non-Christians. I know that is a subject that is not uncommon to any of you reading this. In prison, if you carry a Bible, wear a cross or speak the word, be ready to be judged when you make even one slip up. This personally irritates me although to a much lesser degree now. There is no way any of us can be perfect. We are going to slip up and sin. We get angry, depressed and experience many other emotions and sometimes we don't handle them like we should. Does that mean we no longer believe in God? I finally realized one day that it was just an attempt by the ‘judger’ to discredit me and my faith and I should not become discouraged. Mind you, it's a fact you are being watched and you should represent your belief in God accordingly. But do not become discouraged and say, “I can't do this.” You can't, God can. Please refer to Genesis 32:22-26. This is where Jacob wrestled with God. Jacob had undergone tremendous spiritual growth up to this point, but still had to see, ‘He’ was not the one who was doing it, it was God. God came to Jacob in such a form that Jacob could successfully wrestle with Him, yet God could disable Jacob at will. Jacob was persistent and rewarded. Jacob finally acknowledged that any blessing must come from God. Jacob realized his own strength was futile and sought God's help. Personally, I want to give everything to God to control in my life. But I confess, I find it difficult to let go of everything. How about you? I came across this poem titled, “Let Go and Let God.”

<p>“Let Go and Let God”</p> <p>As children bring their broken toys, With tears for us to mend, I brought my broken dreams to God, Because He is my friend.</p>	<p>But then instead of leaving Him in peace to work alone, I hung around and tried to help, with ways that were my own. At last I snatched them back again and cried, “How can you be so slow?” “My child,” He said, “What could I do? You never did let go.”</p>
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Some of you may have seen on CNN or read somewhere about a “faith-based” state prison in Florida. According to various reports, nearly 700 inmates are practicing 28 different religions at the institution. Naturally, the ACLU is challenging this saying it is a clear violation of the separation of church and state. The ACLU will probably win that case. As a Christian, I’m glad I can practice my faith in prison. However, as Christians if we support this faith-based prison, wouldn’t we indirectly be supporting what our Word refers to as false-religions? I’ve found that politics, government and religion are a tough mix. I’d be interested in hearing any other opinions.

I’d like to succinctly share my favorite part of the Bible. It is the life of Joseph. He was shunned by his brothers and sold into slavery. He had nothing to deserve that. He was put in charge of Potiphar’s house and prospered. Then was lied about by Potiphar’s wife and thrown into prison. God allowed him to prosper there as he was put in charge of the affairs of the prison by the warden. Later he helped the imprisoned Chief Cupbearer who was later restored by Pharaoh. The cupbearer however forgot Joseph’s kindness. We see no evidence that Joseph was guilty anywhere. He had ups, then downs. Yet God always lifted him back up. But in God’s time, not Joseph’s. I try to keep in my mind that I never know when God will choose to lift me out of prison, if at all. But I need to be prepared either way. I encourage any recent converts to read Genesis slowly, especially about Jacob and Joseph.

My thoughts and questions have dragged on now for many words. I briefly touched on many subjects and welcome you to pick one to address, or address them all. I more so encourage you to share what you’re thinking and feeling. Don’t be afraid to write them down and share them. You don’t have to be a writing expert, we’re just trying to help and encourage each other. I believe you’ll find many will be interested in what you have to share. I know I am. Thanks for listening and God Bless.

In His Name, Mark



A Message from Momm

The last few months have been very difficult in our village. We were flooded in January, flooded in March and flooded again in June. Over 600 families were impacted by the last flood, with over 120 families having to abandon their homes. As the cleanup began in July, inmates came to help with the cleanup efforts. Yes, it was a chance for them to get out for a while, but it was such a blessing to hear from the residents how hard the inmates worked to help clean up the mess caused by the flood. They put their heart and soul into helping our residents try to put this disaster behind them. Thank you to all those who worked tirelessly to help perfect strangers.

If the newsletter has been given to you by someone else, write Fishers of Men Prison Ministries, c/o Bethany Church, 5403 North Second Street, Loves Park, IL 61111. Include your name, number and address, and you will be added to the FOM mailing list. Our request is that when you finish reading your newsletter, please pass it on to someone else for their enjoyment and spiritual food. If your family wants to learn more about us, tell them to visit our website at: www.fishersofmenprisonministries.com



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