



the **connection**

DECEMBER 2010

By God's grace, lives are being impacted through We Care Program. Inside, hear from four whose lives were touched in 2010 through our chaplaincy, evangelism, internship, and re-entry programs.

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Chaplaincy

We Care Program places full and part-time chaplains in prisons to "Proclaim Christ and Disciple Inmates."

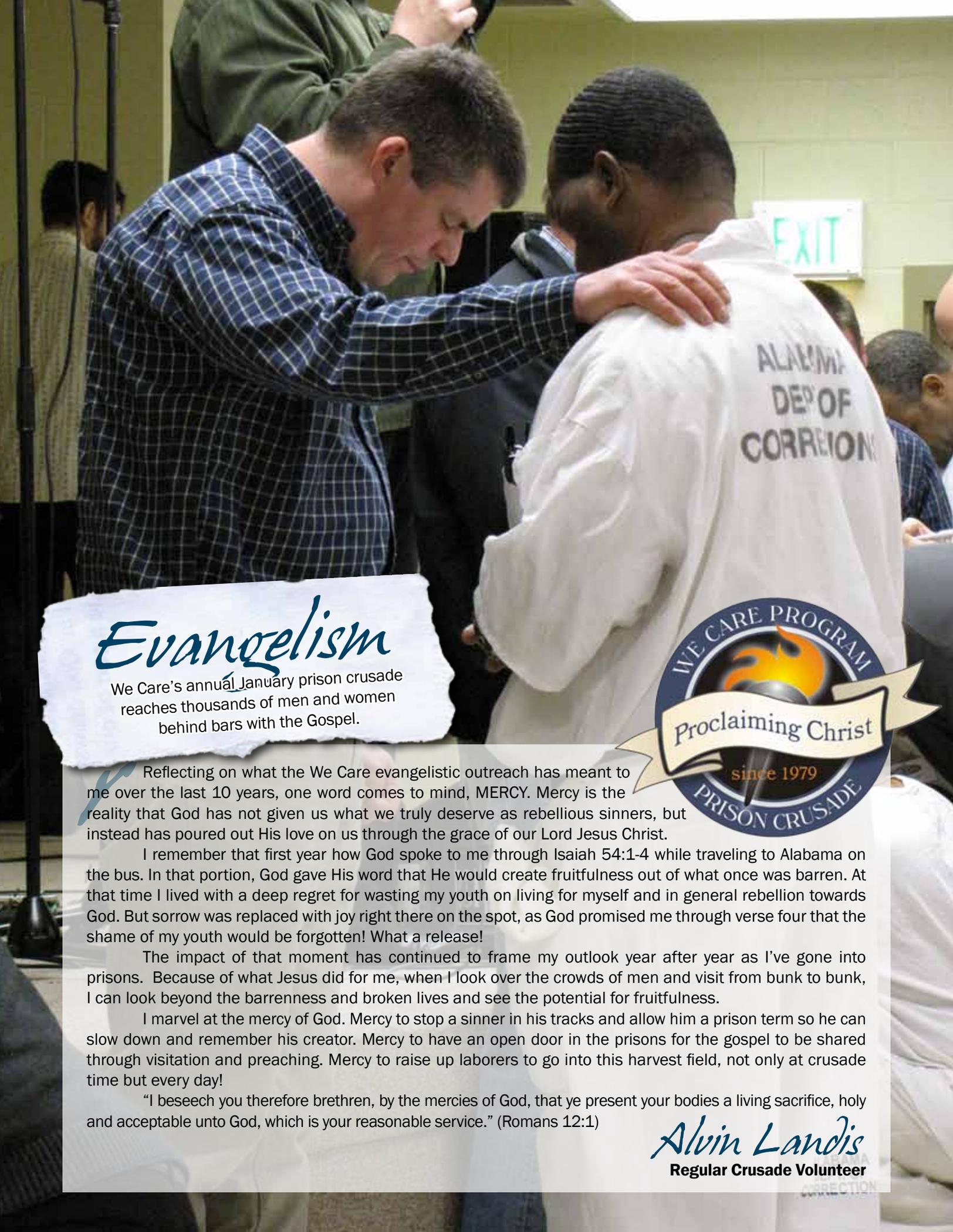


As Chaplain of Frank Lee Work Release, Steve Stoltzfus is committed and dedicated. To be in charge does not necessarily mean to control, but to have charge over. Chap is charged by the Lord to watch over and keep the flock. And he faithfully does so, even when the numbers are very few.

Chaplain Steve is an honorable man. To be honorable does not mean to be perfect; Chap is not perfect, but he is real. That is why I trust him to mentor me and speak into my life. Chaplain Steve calls me friend. I feel honored and privileged to be his friend. He holds me accountable and doesn't judge me when he confronts me. We all need accountability in our lives from someone who is genuine enough to speak into our lives and have our best interests at heart, and not simply some religious opinion. One way I can describe my relationship with Chaplain Steve is with the words of Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

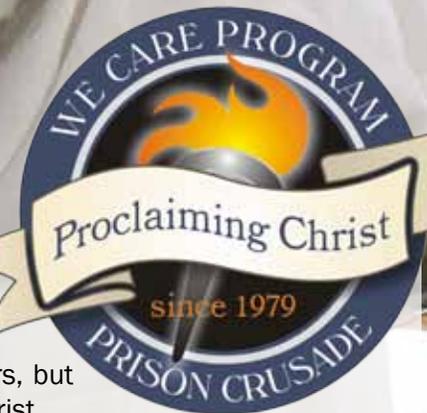
I truly believe that God intended our paths to cross, and it has been a pleasure meeting Steve along my journey. Together with his wife Carol, these are two of the most wonderful people I have ever met. And I honor them both for their dedication and commitment to serve the Lord and love each other and reach out to people like me. My life has definitely been changed as a result.

Jimmy Morris
Inmate, Frank Lee Work Release



Evangelism

We Care's annual January prison crusade reaches thousands of men and women behind bars with the Gospel.



Reflecting on what the We Care evangelistic outreach has meant to me over the last 10 years, one word comes to mind, MERCY. Mercy is the reality that God has not given us what we truly deserve as rebellious sinners, but instead has poured out His love on us through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I remember that first year how God spoke to me through Isaiah 54:1-4 while traveling to Alabama on the bus. In that portion, God gave His word that He would create fruitfulness out of what once was barren. At that time I lived with a deep regret for wasting my youth on living for myself and in general rebellion towards God. But sorrow was replaced with joy right there on the spot, as God promised me through verse four that the shame of my youth would be forgotten! What a release!

The impact of that moment has continued to frame my outlook year after year as I've gone into prisons. Because of what Jesus did for me, when I look over the crowds of men and visit from bunk to bunk, I can look beyond the barrenness and broken lives and see the potential for fruitfulness.

I marvel at the mercy of God. Mercy to stop a sinner in his tracks and allow him a prison term so he can slow down and remember his creator. Mercy to have an open door in the prisons for the gospel to be shared through visitation and preaching. Mercy to raise up laborers to go into this harvest field, not only at crusade time but every day!

"I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1)

Alvin Landis
Regular Crusade Volunteer



Internship

Discover is an annual eight-month (Sept.-May) internship experience that places young men alongside We Care's staff chaplains.

Looking back at my time with We Care's Discover program, I can't help but thank God for the lessons learned, the opening of my eyes, and the building of my relationship with Him. I have no regrets about giving up those months of my "normal" life to be exactly where God wanted me to be.

To say I was stretched beyond my comfort level is a huge understatement, but God used the stretching to show me His power and love as I had never seen before. Just to think of the experiences and people God brought into my life blows me away. There were days I questioned if I fit in the spot God gave me, if maybe He should have picked someone more outgoing, someone more gifted, but over time He taught me who I am is who He wanted and to be okay with it. God used my time with We Care to help me discover the gifts and talents He has given me and to show me how to use them.

I often think of my brothers behind bars and pray for them when God brings them to mind. Thank you from the bottom of my heart to all the people who have spoken into my life during my time with We Care, and thank you most of all to Jesus who makes life worth living.

Discover

with We Care Program

Levi Roop
Intern, '09 - '10

Re-entry

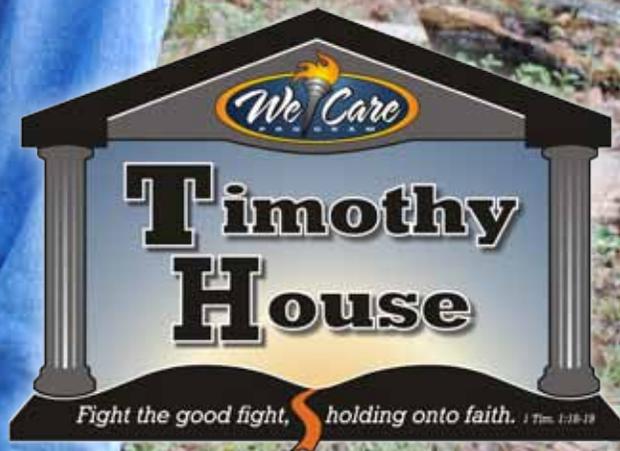
Timothy House is a place for continuing the discipleship process of formerly incarcerated men.

On March 31, 2010, I left Bullock County Correctional Facility to be a resident at Timothy House. Up until that point in my life I had never been to Atmore, AL. My closest relatives live 3½ hours away and I didn't know anyone here, but I felt like this is where God was leading me.

The staff and volunteers at Timothy House and We Care have made me feel like I'm part of their families. The love here is truly heart-felt, and I'm so blessed that God has placed each and every person here in my life. I have father and mother figures, those who challenge me, and those who encourage me. I praise God for Timothy House and We Care.

Like me, most of the staff and volunteers have families that are far away, but sharing the love of Jesus Christ truly makes us family.

Frank Gossett
Resident, Timothy House





Bob Depew
Holman Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL

Part of my work is overseeing and leading the Bible study correspondence courses offered at Holman prison. I love to see the men getting into the Word of God and growing in their understanding. A number of those who are doing Bible studies are in segregation for disciplinary reasons. During this isolation the men have time to think and reflect on their lives. This often brings them to a place

where God can speak to them. As I correspond with them, they frequently send notes asking questions about God or sharing a prayer request for themselves or their families. As I work with them and pray for them, I see God working in their lives.

Recently one of the men started asking for prayer about some struggles in his life. At the end of each of his notes he wrote, "Just another LOST soul." As I read his notes, I felt I needed to share that Jesus loved him, that he could be saved, and that through Jesus he could end his notes with "Just another SAVED soul." Since that time he has started his third Bible study course. Please pray that the power of God's Word will transform his heart and the hearts of the others who are taking these studies.



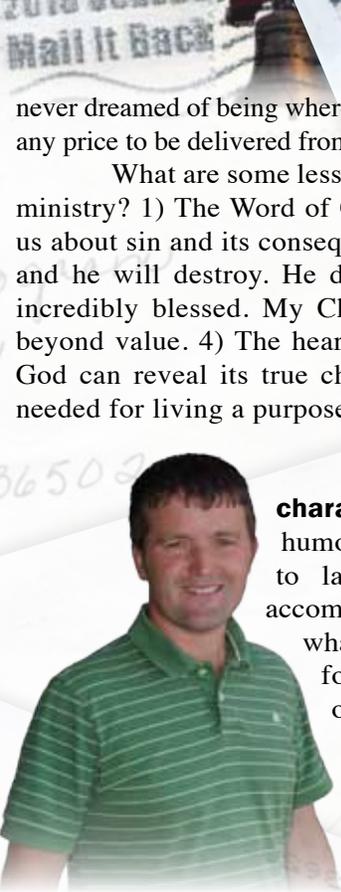
Richard Heatwole
Atmore Work Center
Atmore, AL

"Hot rolls, hot rolls!" Raising your hand or even gesturing in any way will result in having a hot roll thrown to you.

This is Lambert's Cafe, the home of thrown hot rolls. In addition to throwing rolls, the staff passes around lots of "free" food, free in the sense that you do not order it. It is so easy to eat more than you should.

This reminds me of the tactics of Satan. He throws at us so many things that have such good appeal. Who would not like a hot fresh roll? Will one really hurt? How can anyone resist free food? Most sin has a glamorous appeal, but the appeal is soon gone. The trap is set, and we find ourselves slaves to sin, helpless and in situations almost unimaginable to a sane mind.

The men I talk to in prison have fallen prey to the "free food and hot rolls" of Satan, and I have too. Many of them



James Smoker
Donaldson Corr. Facility
Birmingham, AL

never dreamed of being where they are today. Most would pay any price to be delivered from their last "free hot roll."

What are some lessons I have learned from prison ministry? 1) The Word of God is absolutely true. It tells us about sin and its consequences. 2) Satan is a deceiver, and he will destroy. He does not play. 3) I have been incredibly blessed. My Christian heritage is a treasure beyond value. 4) The heart is desperately wicked. Only God can reveal its true character and give the wisdom needed for living a purposeful life.

"Bill" is an interesting character who has a sense of humor, and when he gets others to laugh, he feels like he has accomplished something. Bill knows what it is to experience

forgiveness of sins but has an idol in his life that is keeping him from living the "abundant life."

One day he came to me to talk. He needed to tell me something, he said, and showed me some scars on his arms from doing drugs. He had enough; he was done, recognizing that the drugs were not accomplishing what he had hoped, providing escape from the pain of his circumstances.

Aware of his drug problem, the DOC sent him to see the prison psychiatrist who suggested he needs to see the mental health unit for treatment. But the problem is not a disease or sickness that can be cured by another drug. It is a sin problem, a problem of worship. Bill's heart had turned to another god to help him escape reality and deal with his pain, and it wasn't working.

As he saw his real need, we prayed that Jesus Christ would be Lord in his life and that he would find purpose and fulfillment even amid the reality of life in prison. I shared with him Ephesians 1:17, "keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better."

Pray that we as chaplains would have a spirit of revelation and wisdom to speak truth to those we are ministering to and that we also could "know Him better."

God delights in doing some amazing things to show He's totally involved in our lives and in control. "Libby" stopped in to tell me she's leaving next week and won't be there to complete the "40 Days of Purpose" class. She wondered whether there is any place "out there" where she could maybe finish it.

I told her a lot of churches were doing it 5-10 years ago, but I'm not aware of any now. However, a program available currently is the "Celebrate Recovery" program which deals with addictions and which, in her case, could be very helpful.

I knew I'd seen the big banners in front of three or four churches. I just couldn't remember exactly where those churches

were. The only one I remembered specifically was in a delightfully unique little don't-blink-your-eyes-or-you'll-miss-it town.

Most of our women come from Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Youngstown, Dayton, Toledo—the big cities. Almost apologetically, I told her I'd seen it outside a church in "a little place called Utica."

Looking at me with a totally quizzical expression, I just knew she was going to spit out "WHERE in the WORLD is Utica?" My mind was spinning, straining to think of a general-location answer that I could give her. My expression must have matched hers when she said, "You kidding?!?...I'm FROM Utica!"

"Chap, could you call the parole board to see if I made parole?"

This is a fairly common request. When an inmate's case goes before the parole board for consideration of supervised release, the anticipation is always a stressful time for him. Emotions run rampant, alternating between confidence and despair.

There is an 800 number I can call to find the outcome. This

small act may seem insignificant, but it can be a means of connection. It is always a joyous moment to hear "Parole Granted." On those occasions I share some parting advice and encouragement. "Parole Denied" dashes hopes, and I can see the man wilt in front of me.

Recently I made the call for a man that I have become close to and heard the dreaded words, "Parole Denied." My heart sank with his. Grieving with him, I was reminded of Paul's words in Romans 12:15, "weep with those that weep." Sharing grief can be a meaningful ministry. I was also challenged as he moved on from his grief and his biggest concern became for his family and how they would respond to the news.

Sometimes we forget the impact these small segments of ministry have on people. Several days later this man thanked me for the time I took to just sit and "weep" with him. And I thank God for that opportunity.

What do fatherhood and sonship, American heritage and history, and Biblical creation have in common? These are all topics I help present to men in prison.

A good father/son relationship is a strong help in life. What stands to be gained is two-fold. First, there is still a chance for restoration of relationships between men and their fathers and their children. Second, there is the forming of father/son type mentoring relationships in the prison. Recently an inmate expressed that he helps "father" other men's sons, young men coming into prison, in hopes that God will send men to help his sons in the free world.

Two classes have viewed David Barton's video series "American Heritage." As men hear the Christian history of the foundation of this United States, some have expressed that this is the best class they have ever taken. They have shared some very profound ideas about the future of our nation in light of a proper understanding of our history.

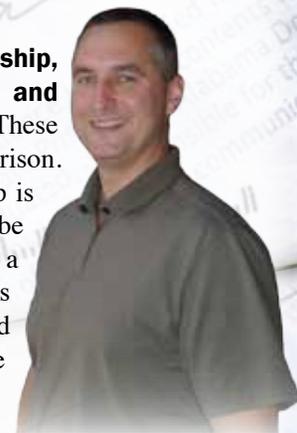
Biblical creation is perhaps one of the most threatened truths of our day. A Texas professor spoke the following heresy earlier this year, "Do humans have a purpose? Are we special? The answer to that is easy: No." He denied the Biblical account of creation and God's crowning of its goodness with the creation of man in God's own image. This type of heresy is widespread. In the prison, I lead classes teaching Biblical creation so that men will give glory to their Creator and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Classes on these topics are opportunities for men to learn and work together to use and promote God's truth and benefit from His wisdom.



Wilma Mullet
**Ohio Reformatory for Women
Marysville, OH**

in the Field



John Kurtz
**St. Clair Corr. Facility
Springville, AL**

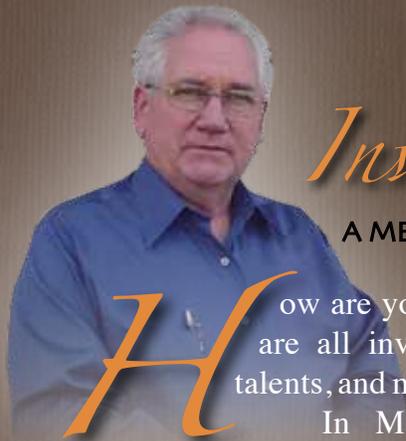


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Investing in Eternity

A MESSAGE FROM AARON MARTIN, CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

How are your investments doing? We are all investing our available time, talents, and money in one way or another.

In Matthew's "Parable of the Talents" (Ch. 25) one servant was given five talents, one was given two talents, and one was given one talent. Just as in this parable, I believe each of us is given different talents in life to invest. God wants to use those talents, whether they be many or few.

I'm grateful for the faithful workers at We Care who are sowing the seed and reaping the harvest. I believe the workers include those on the "front line" in the prisons, the office workers,

Economy Shop employees and volunteers, house parents, and yes, you the people who support We Care with your finances and your prayers.

First Corinthians 12:14 reminds us that the body is not one member, but many. We Care is no exception; we need ministers and supporters. One is as important as the other. So whether you are investing your time, talent, or money in ministry, let's look to God for returns that please Him.

Jesus said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32) Let's lift Him up this Christmas season and claim this promise. Blessings to all! 🙏

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