



the **connection**

MARCH 2011

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL: HOPE FOR ADDICTIONS

Join with us in the following pages
as we celebrate God's work in our
lives... and in the lives of those with
whom we shared the Hope of Jesus
Christ during Crusade 2011.

Pictured: Jeshua Screws

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IMPRESSIONS

A blessed, encouraging, stretching and fun week. – Kristin Yoder, AL

I was moved by the magnitude of the need among inmates who are seeking God but not yet experiencing freedom from life-controlling bondages. – Dan Frustino, PA

I was thrilled to come down and experience the miracle of the “open door” in Alabama. – Alvin Landis, PA

I was touched by how God united us in one spirit. – Carl Strite, VA

Exciting, fulfilling, upbuilding, amazing! – Earl Eby, PA

I was incredibly challenged with the Christians in the prison. Their love for the Lord and their testimonies inspired and encouraged me over and over again. – Naomi Schrock, MO

My life was changed... – Jason Shelly, PA

It caused me to evaluate my priorities. – Eldon Miller, KY

I found out you can teach people with doctrine. You can encourage them with words. But you can touch them with love. – Joseph Hertzler, VA

...an eye-opener. – James Brubaker, PA

I can't wait to come down again! – Alysa Halteman, PA

I came to have more compassion on the men in prison! I realized more than ever how important a good family life is for healthy children. – Dale Halteman, PA

Challenged to know my Bible more! – Keri Copenhaver, PA

I have learned the value of humility and being willing to bow my heart to share my needs to the prisoners as well. – Darold Gingerich, TN

I can better understand why Jesus calls us so clearly to visit those in prison! – Ben Fisher, PA

ORIENTATION

Participants from 25 states and over 100 different congregations gathered in Wetumpka for a day of worship, teaching, training, fellowship, and special music. Special emphasis was placed on facing and repenting of personal “addictions” before reaching out to others who may be struggling. Volunteers were also challenged and trained to share the Gospel message. Volunteers then dispersed to Atmore, Montgomery, Troy, and Birmingham, AL, for what would be four days of intensive ministry.



ABOVE: Panel members Larry Skrant (OH), Bob Depew (AL) and Frank Gosset (AL).

BELOW: Daniel Pollard (NY) prays over respondents.



MORNING SESSIONS

Mornings in each region began with breakfast followed by worship, a devotional, and instructions for the day. Teams then left for their respective assignments in 21 different correctional facilities, in most cases not returning to the base until later that night.



Team leader Doris Bender (PA) prepares Tutwiler Annex team for ministering.

PRISON VISITATION

Usually entering the facility before noon, most teams gathered in the prison chapel for prayer and final instruction before being released to visit the men and women in the dorms, hallways, yards, visitation rooms, and chow halls (with some variation, depending on permission given at each prison). Volunteers handed out address booklets, discipleship materials, engaged in conversations, and invited inmates to the daily chapel services.



ABOVE: A friendly cell-block visit with Harold Good (PA) at St. Clair.

BELOW: Grace Wolfgang (PA) sharing God's Word at Birmingham Work Release.



ABOVE: Dennis Nolt (PA) visiting in the dorm at Kilby.

BELOW: Virginia comrades, Kenyon Slabaugh & Sheldon Histand, visit a friend at J. O. Davis.



EXPERIENCES

I thanked the guard for allowing us to come in. She said, "I must thank you. It makes a difference. I wish you came more often—in fact 365 days a year." Wow! It was so good to know how the guards appreciated the crusade.

– Pat Hertzler, VA

On Monday, I spent all afternoon in conversation with one inmate, and for the first time in five years, felt I was really able to connect and minister. Tuesday afternoon, I received word that she had very unexpectedly left the facility to be processed for release. It is awesome to think that God may have used that time to prepare her for living in the outside world.

– Doris Bender, PA

I was very blessed in meeting some inmates with the joy of the Lord on their faces.

– Abner Lambright, PA

When the girls were dismissed to come to the evening service, they poured out of the dorms, rushed along the sidewalk and hurried to the seats in the room. This sea of white will be etched in my heart and mind for a long time.

– Bev Wenger, PA

The first day many of the inmates expressed a desire to read the word with us—so that is what we did daily—sit in groups or one-on-one reading the scriptures and discussing the word.

– Sheila Helmuth, VA

My mom was struck by lightning 1 ½ years ago. Someone in prison saw my name tag and asked if I was related to those Yoders in Atmore that had a family member struck by lightning. I was able to share my testimony and testify to God's faithfulness to our family. It was just neat to see that Mom's death touched lives even in prison, and even a year and a half later her death is still being used to bring glory to God.

– Kristen Yoder, AL

One inmate who had wandered from his commitment to Christ had been praying for weeks for God to send someone to talk with him about his spiritual needs. What a blessing to find him out of a group of 1176 inmates this week. Luck? No way! God indeed is sovereign and He answers prayer!

– Dave Slabach, VA

We prayed that God would lead us to those he wanted us to speak to. As I walked into the dorm, a man came up and sat down and we started to talk and I was able to lead him through to Christ.
- Jaylan Martin, PA

It was so amazing to see inmates respond to a smile! One lady frowned all the first day. I told her it took more muscles to frown than smile. She got a small smile on her face and then I told her she was so beautiful when she smiled. From that day she broke into a smile every time she saw me. She responded one evening and now she smiles for Jesus!
- Miriam Strite, VA

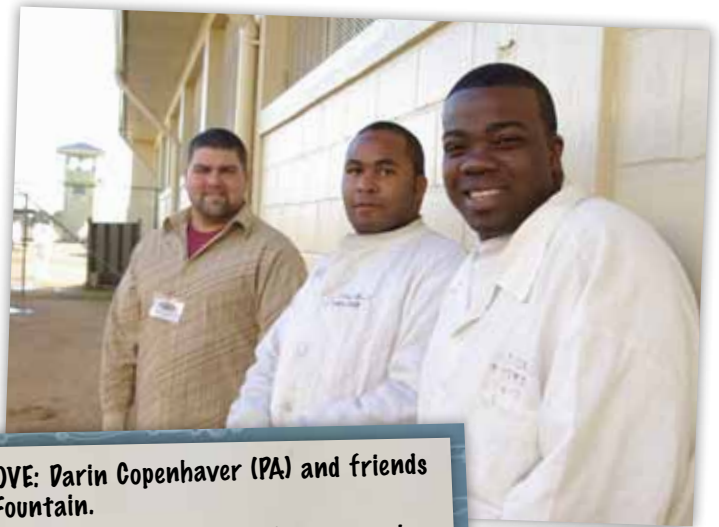
I met an inmate at Elmore who said that I was the one who prayed with him last year at Ventress when he was saved. He still has struggles but I could see the light in his face. It was encouraging for him to share that with me.
- Titus Landis, OH

Monday was a day of planting seeds. Nothing really stood out and I was wondering if I was making an impact, but you can't go on your feelings. On Tuesday, I had the privilege of praying with two inmates to receive Christ!!! Talk about feelings!!! Praise the Lord.
- Harold Good, PA

I had lengthy conversations with men who were hurting with issues I knew I couldn't fix....In each case, I could feel their pain and my response was "ask, seek, knock," keep crying out to Jesus until He comes!
- Sid Chapman, AL

I met Scott, who I first met 18 years ago at Red Eagle Honor Farm. At that time he was not a Christian and would try to argue with me about his false beliefs. He said he appreciated how I responded to him even though he never made any commitment then. He is now a true believer and plays in the worship team at Kilby and has a real glow that was missing before. That really blessed me.
- Dennis Nolt, PA

When some of our team were praying together in a hallway, I got several pictures that flashed through my mind that inspired me. First, I saw a group of women dressed in white prison garb milling around in a dorm room. Next, I saw some of these same women and others who had never been in prison dressed in white glowing gowns eating at the Supper of the Lamb with Jesus in heaven. Wow! What a thrill!
- Grace Wolfgang, PA



ABOVE: Darin Copenhaver (PA) and friends at Fountain.

BELOW: Kristin Yoder (AL) encouraging friends at Birmingham Work Release.



ABOVE: Bringing the Gospel to lockup at Kilby.

BELOW: Staton team



CHAPEL SERVICES

A highlight for volunteers and inmates alike, nightly (or afternoon) chapel services were held in each of the 21 correctional facilities throughout the state. A singing group and evangelist joined the volunteer teams for the special service at each prison, sharing the Power of the Gospel through Word and song. By God's grace, over 500 commitments of faith or renewal were made during the four-day event.



Joshua Bontrager of the Bontrager Family Singers (IA) and John Maxwell (FL) bring hope to the men at Bullock.



Volunteers Larry Martin (VA) and Titus Landis (OH) engaged in altar call ministry.

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CRUSADE 2012: JANUARY 22-26

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With
GOD

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NEWS

BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

On January 22, 2011, members of We Care Program voted to fill four vacancies on the Board of Directors. Sherwin Wenger (PA) was re-elected to a three-year term, along with Dennis Nolt (PA) who returns to the board after a one-year break. New to the board are Haskell Dunn (AL) and Richard Graber (KS).

Resigning from the board was J.D. Landis (AL), after serving for 23 years. Members affirmed Eli Yoder (KS) to serve the remaining year of J.D.'s term. A special "Thanks" to LaVerne Eash (NC) and Randy Bruckhart (ME) who served 14 and 3 years respectively.

TIMOTHY HOUSE

The Timothy House aftercare ministry was put on hold in December 2010, for further discernment and clarity of direction. Of particular concern were adequate staffing, available jobs, and on-going financial support for the work. While this is not what we had hoped and planned for, we trust that God's direction for We Care's involvement with aftercare will be revealed as we continue to wait on Him.

MOVING ON...

After serving in the bookkeeper position for the last three years, Jeanna Fox has returned to her home state of Pennsylvania. Thanks, Jeanna, for your professional and dedicated service at headquarters!

Also returning to Pennsylvania, Jesse and Christina Fox and family concluded two years of service with We Care. Jesse was serving as assistant chaplain at Staton Correctional in the Montgomery, AL, region. (This leaves an open door at Staton for someone else who God might be calling.) Blessings to the Fox family as you serve in new ways!

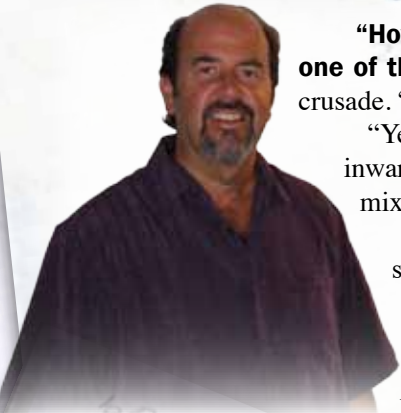
SPECIAL THANKS!

Several volunteers helped us greatly over the winter months at headquarters. Oren Horst (AL) returned for 2½ months to help us prepare for Crusade and a public relations tour. Richard and Wilma Graber (KS) volunteered a month of their time to help "where needed." What a blessing each of you have been to us!

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“How are you, Chaplain?” asked one of the volunteers mid-week of the crusade. “I can see that you’re tired.”

“Yes, I am tired,” I responded, sighing inwardly. “The crusade always brings a mixture of emotions for me.”

Overall, it is exciting and stimulating. Our participating evangelists for the week are very motivating. The talented music groups/families inspire us all (inmates, chaplains, and volunteers) to the utmost highest. Yet it is a draining experience.

Devin Martin
**J.O. Davis Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL**

The most rewarding aspect for me this year was to witness

how God brought together certain residents from J. O. Davis with the volunteers throughout the week. Following are some of the inmate testimonies:

- These people traveled all those miles to share with us. That is definitely a God thing.
- It gave me much joy and peace. The Spirit of God was really here. The volunteers prayed with me and encouraged me to persevere.
- The messages were explained so well and brought me closer to God.
- Sid (volunteer) listened to my story, then prayed with me and gave me scriptures that fit my situation.
- These volunteers are real men of God who really care!
- The volunteer minister shared his family’s needs and entrusted me to pray with him.
- Every message and all the musicians were a tremendous blessing to me!
- Chaplain, can we do this again next month?

And one inmate summed it up this way, “In one word, there was LOVE, so much love!” Wow! Thank You God!

Preparing to enter the prison one morning, I prayed for a divine appointment. Later I visited a sister that I had contact with before. As we talked, she shared how prison was hard but she also considered it a blessing. She has learned how to read and write and made great strides in other areas of her life. She has learned to value and love herself and to take good care of herself.



Anna Miller
**Montgomery Work Release
Montgomery, AL**

Growing up in an abusive and dysfunctional family, she lived in foster care for a period of time and at fourteen she ran away from home and got married. When I asked if she had ever forgiven her father, she responded that she thinks so. We talked about how she looks at God, and she said, “I know that He is different than my Daddy was.” I asked how she handles it when someone tells her that God loves her. Her answer hurt my heart as she cried and said that she does not know what real love is like. Having recently read a book about a little girl who was put into foster homes and suffered a lot of abuse, she told me how she cried and cried because she understood the pain. When I left, she said, “I am so glad you came and talked to me today.”

May we all be willing to be a listening ear, a word of encouragement, and one who can stand in the gap and say “God loves you,” and continue to say it by the way we live and give out of the love that our Heavenly Father has so freely lavished on us. Pray for me as I continue to minister to the sisters inside the walls.



Marvin Bender
**Fountain Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL**

This was my worst crusade ever. On the first day of the crusade, I wasn’t feeling well in the morning and grew sicker as the day passed. I spent nearly all of the next two days in bed with fever, aches, a bad cold, and a persistent cough. Occasionally I woke up and started praying, only to soon fall asleep again. As the week wore on, I spent less time in bed.

Why did I have to get sick? And why did it have to be the week of the annual crusade? Was this a spiritual attack from the devil? I don’t know. I do know that because of my recent involvement at Timothy House, I wasn’t given much responsibility with the crusade. God knew all that I would experience, made a way for me to bear it, and delivered me through it.

Now I have recuperated and spent some time in the prison following up with men who responded to the altar calls. While others planted and watered and God gave the increase, I still get to enjoy the “after-glow” as the Holy Spirit radiates through the countenance of transformed men. Whether we need God’s healing touch physically or spiritually, He is the ultimate healer. Let God’s “after-glow” radiate from your countenance. It will bless others!

From

AL 36502



Stan Schoock
**Century Corr. Institution
Century, FL**

Liberty Theological Seminary is coming into Century CI! This level of education is new here. I am excited about it, and the inmates seem to be excited too. Quite a number are interested in attending.

Our plans are to start with one subject, Old Testament Survey. This course will be completed in about 16 weeks, after which we will offer another subject.

The startup work for this is tremendous. Having initially received 30 applications, we were surprised when 67 men showed up for the introductory class. We have narrowed the class size down to 50, but still that means copying 50 syllabi and purchasing textbooks for the men to study.

The men really seem to be hungry for spiritual input. The schedule of security sometimes makes it difficult for the men to come to the chapel. Please pray for easier access to the chapel. Pray also for the spirituality of the inmates. Pray for us who work there that we may be able to fill these needs through Christ.



David Bucher
**Donaldson Corr. Facility
Birmingham, AL**

“Dear Lord Jesus, I am so tired! I am tired of running! I don’t want to run from you anymore! I want to give my life to you! I want you to be Lord of my life!” Kneeling beside “Andy” at the altar, tears ran down freely on both his cheeks and mine. Jesus heard his heart’s cry that day. It was a joyful moment on Tuesday of the 2010 We Care Crusade.

A notorious homosexual in the prison, Andy was looked down on as one who would or could not ever change. After the service, all the volunteers gathered around him for special prayer, and each man gave him a hug in Christian love showing the first steps of acceptance and affirmation he needed. The road ahead of him was not going to be easy.

in the Field

Andy showed signs and testified often of Jesus’ working in his heart. We chaplains met with him regularly to encourage him. Many Christian inmate brothers walked beside him. Skeptics began to see him as a changed man.

As weeks turned into months, he began to really struggle. In April he made the tragic decision to return to his old lifestyle. We chaplains and the Christian brothers felt much heartache at his decision. He says he doesn’t see change being possible while in prison, and he uses his lifestyle mainly as an excuse for financial survival.

We just came through the 2011 Crusade. Andy attended the services and was very touched by the messages. He reconnected with some of the same volunteers. He knows they are praying for him and the Lord still offers him victory. Join us in praying that this dear soul will come back into the fold.

One of the best things about the crusade is that once a year we can put on a different hat than the one we usually wear. My usual work is teaching. But at the crusade this year I got to be an evangelist. And I got to see God work in different ways than I usually do.

I sat on a bunk talking to a young man I will call “Zack.” He was bright, and smilingly brushed aside my attempts to tell him about Jesus, salvation, etc.

Finally I asked him if he ever prayed. He got a little more serious and said, “I don’t like to do that.”

The Holy Spirit lit a lamp. I replied very slowly, “You don’t like to pray because you know that if you did, Jesus would take hold of you.” His eyes got big. “You don’t like to pray because you’re having too much fun running your own life. You don’t want to pray because if you did, you’d have to let God in.”

“Maybe I’m sick of running my own life,” he answered.

“No, you’re not sick of running your own life. You like it.”

“Maybe it’s time I made a change.”

“What do you want to make a change for? Things are going just the way you want them to.”

“Maybe I ought to think this over.” He was actually witnessing to himself by then, and I almost seemed to be arguing the other way!

Then our time was up and the team had to leave. I gave him a tract and invited him to the services. He didn’t come on the one night I was there. But I work at Fountain. Zack will see us again. Zack and Jesus have unfinished business.



Mike Strehlow
**Fountain Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL**

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Power for Ministry

A MESSAGE FROM DAVID R. LANDIS, PRESIDENT

The Power of the Gospel: Hope for Addictions. Choosing a theme like this caused us as a staff to look beneath the surface a bit in the months prior to crusade as we prepared ourselves for leading and facilitating this event. In the process, God spoke to some of us about the idolatries of our own hearts. (It is easy for those of us in people-helping ministries to assume the role of “fixing” others when in reality we are dealing with personal struggles of our own.)

So as hundreds of volunteers gathered for orientation day prior to the crusade, I prayed that those with ministry “roadblocks” in their hearts would be able to recognize and take care of them before embarking

on an intense week of ministry in the prisons. Little did I know that God wanted to speak to me as well, and as Daniel Pollard shared the morning message, God put His finger on something inside of me. So up to the altar I went. Not easy when you’re the guy in charge!

I am finding that continuing repentance is the key to victory. As we increasingly understand our own depravity versus the holiness of God, our appreciation for the Gospel grows deeper and our faith becomes stronger. Hope begins to rise. And the more we find ourselves lingering at the foot of the cross in repentance and faith the greater God’s power can be manifested through our weakness. That’s when we’re ready for ministry. 🕯️

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