



the connection

SUMMER 2014

Following God's Leading Friendship Evolves into Leadership Succession

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Following God's Leading

by David R. Landis

Our family's move from Pennsylvania to Alabama in the summer of 1999 came about as a result of a personal life-defining moment at the prison "Crusade" only five months earlier. During that week of ministry I felt God's call to make disciples among the 400 men who lived at J. O. Davis Correctional Facility. I had no idea what I was getting into at the time, but with a supportive wife, three young children, and one on the way, we walked away from the security of a loving family and church community, sold our house, and arrived in Atmore ready to begin a new adventure. Other than learning to know then-President Phil Weber and his family during a term at Rosedale Bible College the year before and meeting the We Care staff during an exploratory trip not long before our move, we were brand new to the South and its people.

Soon after arriving, Deb and I began to pray that God would lead us to a couple who we could get



to know, specifically a couple who might have interest in sharing together in a regular Bible study and prayer time. We were in a season of growth and wanted someone to walk with us in the journey, even if just for a brief season. In God's providence we felt led to ask Don and Phyllis Metzler, and they readily agreed to meet with us. A friendship was born that continues to be a blessing to Deb and me.

Two years later I was asked to serve as President of We Care Program. When the position of Vice President and Business Manager opened up, I thought of Don and asked him to consider serving alongside

of me. We have been working together ever since and have witnessed the hand of God over and over again. We Care Program would not be where it is today without Don's willingness to give of himself in a wide variety of ways. He was and continues to be a servant at heart.

Last year when I announced my resignation as President, Don informed the Board that he was not the man who would take my place. His wishes were respected, and a search process was begun. As time went on God began to do a work in Don's heart. Eventually he felt God asking him to at least consider the possibility. The rest is history, and on August 1, Don will become the next President of We Care Program.

My time at We Care has been filled with the richest of blessings. During my tenure as President, I have had the privilege to work with 110 staff persons and 1,556 Crusade/ReNew Hope volunteers. I, along with the team here at We Care, have benefitted from the generosity of 5,452 donors and countless prayer intercessors. I am so very grateful, and I praise and thank God for each one who has contributed in some way.

Now as I pass the baton of leadership over to my friend Don, I ask that you join me in supporting Don and praying that God will "do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Eph. 3:20) If the Lord tarries, I believe God will use Don and the entire We Care team to ensure that this organization continues and expands its efforts to "Proclaim Christ and Disciple Inmates" for many years to come.



Dave's first year with We Care Program was spent serving as a full-time assistant chaplain at J. O. Davis Correctional Facility. It was here with these friends that Dave received his "seminary" education and developed a heart for the "least of these" that eventually led to a total of fifteen years of prison ministry.

by Don Metzler

One of my earliest prison ministry memories is sitting in the basement in the home of Martin and Anna Weber watching a reel-to-reel movie about crime and law enforcement. From those early years in the mid 1970's when my father served on the Board of Directors for New Life Foundation (former name of We Care Program) until now, God has put a special place in my heart for prison ministry. How many teenagers do you know who want to go into prison? I was one who did, though it was for the purpose of playing softball with the inmates.

Looking back over my life I can see how God has been shaping me and molding me for the purpose to which He has now called me. It was God's guidance that led me to work in the office of a grain elevator and then a metal fab shop where I learned skills that I would use as the Business Manager of We Care Program. I can see His hand leading me through all those countless hours spent in the Faith Dorm at Fountain Correctional, mentoring men one-on-one (even before I was employed at We Care) and teaching all those classes on personal finances and peacekeeping (both before and after I came to We Care).

For the past 11 years, I have had the privilege to serve here at We Care Program under the leadership of David R. Landis. God has used our relationship and this work environment to stretch and grow me. Dave is gifted in leadership development, and he has not let me slip through the cracks. Dave challenged and encouraged me to develop my God-given talents and provided opportunities to grow in my leadership abilities as we led



this ministry together. I am grateful for all that he has poured into my life.

Because of the many ways God has led me to this point, I can look ahead with confidence and anticipation to my new role at We Care and know that the same God who led me thus far will continue to guide my steps as I depend on Him. I look forward to working with Stan Schrock and his wonderful team of thrift store employees and volunteers who are dedicated to raising funds for the ministry. I feel a sense of eagerness and excitement when I think of working with the person God will provide to be the next Vice President (still unknown as of press time). I am enthusiastic

about working with our current chaplains and associates as we together "Proclaim Christ and Disciple Inmates."

It is with great anticipation that I direct my focus to the future to see who God will call to join

this ministry and help us build His kingdom inside prison walls. Matthew 9:37b -38 says, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

What about you? Is God calling you to join the We Care harvest crew? Maybe He is asking you to pray for the ministry or to support the work with a financial gift. Or maybe, just maybe, God might be nudging your heart and letting you know that He wants you to use the gifts and talents He has given you to serve Him as part of the We Care team. However God might be leading you, I invite you to join me as I begin

this journey as the next President of We Care. Together we can take the love of Jesus behind prison walls and shine His light into a dark world.



Don with inmates he mentored at Fountain Correctional. Serving as a chaplain one half day a week at Atmore Work Center, he is able to still connect with one of these brothers currently in that facility.

We Care Program invites you to a Leadership Transition Celebration

Friday, August 1, 4:30 PM, Brooks Memorial Baptist Church, Atmore, AL

Meal to Follow – Everyone Welcome. Guests planning to stay for the meal, please RSVP by July 20.

Email noreen@wecareprogram.org or call 251-368-8818 for more information.

NEWS

BOARD MEETS



On May 15 and 16, the We Care Board of Directors gathered together with David Landis and Don Metzler at Fairhaven Ministries in Roan Mountain, Tennessee. The majority of the time was spent looking at the overall ministry of We Care Program and clarifying the top things that need to be focused on in the days ahead. Along with wading through normal business matters, the Board also gave the go-ahead for a new We Care Thrift Store to be opened in the Montgomery, Alabama area.

We are blessed to have an outstanding Board of Directors who are willing to sacrifice their time, energy and influence to provide leadership to We Care Program. Pictured are: (Back Row) Alvin Landis, Loyd Gingerich, Sherwin Wenger, Loren Wissmann, Marv Fisher; (Front Row) Richard Graber, John Yoder, Dennis Nolt, Lester Huber, Durell Orendorf. Not in attendance: Sam Jones.

NEW ARRIVAL

James Garrett was born June 9 to parents James and Charmaine Smoker. James joins Dexter, Isaiah, Ava, and Jacob. Daddy James serves as an assistant chaplain at Donaldson Correctional Facility.



James Garrett

NEW AUCTION LOCATION

After 30 years of steady growth, the Support for Prison Ministries Benefit Auction is re-locating to the Ephrata Business Center, 400 West Main Street, Ephrata, PA. This spacious facility has a large auditorium for the main auction, a room for expanded food services, and space for extra auctioneers as needed — all inside a comfortable setting.

Collector items, beautiful quilts and wall hangings, toys, valuable gift certificates, food, framed artwork, 3-D picture, hardware, tools and many more items will be sold. Proceeds benefit a number of prison ministries including We Care Program.

We invite you to support We Care by attending the auction and/or donating items to sell. For more information go to www.supportforprisonministries.org or call 717-625-0232.

ALABAMA CONCERTS

We extend a special “Thanks!” to singers Lynda Randle and John Schmid who joined us for three concerts in late April. In an effort to spread awareness within Alabama about We Care’s chaplaincy ministry in the state prison system, the events were held in Birmingham, Montgomery, and Atmore. We are also grateful to the planning teams, host churches, sponsors, and donors who helped to make the concerts possible.





Softball Outreach



For the seventh year in a row, We Care Program brought together men from the free world and men in prison who share a love for the game of softball. The 2014 Softball Outreach took place on Friday and Saturday, June 6 & 7. During those two days We Care sent 46 ball players into prisons across the state of Alabama. While the occasion centered around playing softball, the ultimate goal was to share the love of Jesus

with men who would not normally darken the doorway of a chapel. We were able to accomplish this goal in nine different prisons in spite of being rained out and turned away at the last minute at some facilities. The teams

played about 250 innings and were able to present the gospel message many times as well. Two inmates gave their hearts to the Lord, which made all the blood, sweat and sore muscles more than worth it!



“The thing that blessed me the most was when we would ask if any of the inmates would like to lead in prayer, we always had one or two guys pray very meaningful prayers. But the coolest thing that happened was at Frank Lee. The one inmate closed with The Lord’s Prayer, and the whole circle of 25 - 30 guys joined in saying the prayer. Super awesome in my mind and best experience I have had.” - Justin Ramer, PA



From the Field

Stories and Testimonies from We Care Chaplains

Frank Gossett

Holman Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL



Wow! I find it hard to believe it has been a year since started serving at Holman. In the past I never imagined my life as it is today. The connections I've made with the officers and the men in prison are nothing short of God's handiwork. I'm thankful for His favor in the way men have received my presence and the way they respond to my testimony of God's mercy and grace.

In February I taught an eight-week class on the Holy Spirit. God allowed me to experience the hunger and thirst these men displayed as they couldn't wait for the next lesson. Many times class ended with leaving the teaching series because they wanted to review and catch things they might have missed or were clamoring to tell me something they learned that couldn't be covered in the one-hour sessions. I was amazed to see unbelievers coming to the class. Even one who had turned from Christianity to another religion ten years ago came with an eagerness to hear—and began reading his Bible again!

Jeremy Miller

St. Clair Corr. Facility
Springville, AL



During a Kairos weekend at the end of March, several men participated who were very active in gangs within the prison. The weekend had a major impact on some of these men, one of whom described his experience this way:

"I have three Life Without Parole convictions. Justice demanded blood for blood and that I should be put to death, but God didn't allow it. I couldn't figure out why or what purpose He had for my life. Why would He keep me alive and in prison for the rest of my life? Even though I could feel God pulling at me, I wasn't ready to let go of the world and surrender to God. I was still young and had a fearsome reputation, choosing to follow a man instead of Jesus, though I knew in my heart it was wrong.

"Another brother encouraged me to sign up for the Kairos weekend. He shared that Kairos was the greatest experience he had ever had in 19 years in prison. Even after all I heard about it, I still wasn't expecting it to be one of the most awesome experiences of my life. This was the major event that allowed me to see God and experience love, caring and understanding. At closing on the last day, I cried like a baby even though I told myself I wouldn't. When I really thought about how Jesus died on the cross, giving His life for me because of His love for me, and when I experienced the love of God through other people, it was more than I could take."

Benjamin Zook

Fountain Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL



All believers want to be involved where God's Spirit is moving. If you were to ask me whether God's Spirit is moving and at work in the prison where I serve, I would say, "Absolutely." Every day I go into the prison, I am blessed to see His Spirit working in and through the lives of the inmates, officers, wardens, and chaplain.

"What is God doing?" you may ask. He is at work in allowing Blaine Copenhaver (another We Care chaplain) and me to go throughout the camp doing one-on-one discipleship and evangelism. God has given us an open door with the blessing of the wardens and the state chaplain to freely share our faith in Jesus Christ. He brought us a state chaplain who served through We Care earlier in his ministry and is discipling Blaine and me to be better ambassadors for Christ within the walls of this prison and outside in our communities. This very day I am writing this article I will go into Fountain and celebrate the public declaration of the faith of 12 inmates who will get baptized. God has also given us the vision and opportunity to begin reaching out to young adults with a special service designed around sharing Christ through inmates who have written songs, poetry, and skits based on the parables Christ taught. A special guest speaker will round out the program.

When the day is all said and done, I am reminded of the truth of 1 Corinthians 3:6, God is the one who gives the growth. I am simply His vessel to be used according to His purposes.

The Healing Power of Personal Testimony



Ramona Rosser • Associate Chaplain, Boaz City Jail

After my husband of 25 years died of cancer, I began to pour my heart out to God through journaling. A year or so later I realized I had written a whole lot of stuff that was both joyous and painful. At that point I asked God, "Now what?"

The answer was not at all something I expected. "Take your testimony to my most broken."

Like an innocent child I responded, "Where, God?"

His reply was like a Father, "To my daughters in jails and prisons."

My reply became like a frantic child, "Me, God? You want me to go into jails and prisons and minister? Me, God, Me?"

Once again He replied like a Father, "Yes."

Obviously, God won. The past four and half years of visiting a local city jail one night per week have been filled with many dynamics of lessons and blessings. This journey has been and still is revealing, transforming, humbling, joyous, thrilling, fun, exciting, tiring, exhausting, challenging, and just about any other descriptive word except boring.

Another trustworthy person usually goes to the jail with me. We spend time in prayer prior to entering and are also covered by a team praying for us and the women inside. The turnover at the jail is continuous, so we never know who will be there from one week to the next. Our only goal is the will of God. We share whatever we have received in spending time with our Lord. A few times we have had the honor to lead women to Christ and baptize them in the shower. The favor from the jailors is much appreciated as they always gladly provide the women with extra sets of clothes whenever this happens. One of the women who had stepped forth to give her life to Christ died in a fire the next week after being released. Our presence on the inside is vital!

Recently the women seem to be displaying an even greater hunger as we have begun to share more of our own personal testimonies. Sharing about grief, loss, mourning and how Jesus was a real man who was well acquainted with these feelings touches a chord with the women.

As we share our stories, the women also open up and share more of themselves because it literally gets to the root of their cyclic bad choices, pain.

For almost six years after my husband passed away, I allowed myself to mourn only just enough to survive. I turned my grief inward and showed a fake "I'm okay" front outwardly. Living that way caught up with me. I began to have what I call "grief attacks" where I felt the impact of all the losses in my life at one time. I called out to God and sought His wisdom. The answer was one I knew to be truth. I had become very good at stuffing and running and had medicated my grief with busyness. I took care of everybody else and never took time for me to deal with me. I had literally placed my grief in a prison, and it was now coming out in anger, hostility, outbursts of grief/mourning. God's word to me was simply, "Stop. Be still and know Me." When I recognized what was going on in my own life, I understood better than ever before the hearts of the women I was ministering to in the jail. I sought help, first in God, then in godly counseling, and I began to understand my grief and mourn my losses.

I'm not at all through this journey, but yet I've never felt more alive. As I am real and honest with these women about the pain of loss, they begin to open their hearts to Jesus. They begin to pray for each other and share their deepest pain. I have seen women in jail become free from their own prison of inner grief when the light of truth became known that Jesus knew very well their emotional pain.

We all share grief because we all experience loss. However, we do not all mourn. Sharing your personal journey, your testimony, will set someone else's journey of healing in motion. God has called you, chosen you, anointed you and appointed you to share yourself and your testimony to the least of these. You may literally hold the healing of another in your hands. Trust God and just move toward where He is leading you. He will open that jail door or prison door for you and show Himself as the One True God.

Thank You!

Deb and I would like to express our appreciation to each of you who have encouraged, prayed for, guided, worked with, and supported us during our last 15 years with We Care Program. You have enriched our lives in more ways than you can imagine. We will forever be grateful to have had a small part in sharing the Gospel witness through this organization which has touched the lives of countless incarcerated men and women since 1970.

As we transition into a new season of ministry, we covet your prayers. Deb and I would love to stay in touch, hearing from you and continuing to share what God is doing in our lives. If you would like to receive future ministry communications from us, please contact us at:

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To God be the Glory.



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