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PRISONER POWER

*A Prisoner's
Declaration of Purpose*



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PRISONER POWER

A Prisoner's Declaration of Purpose

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Church Starts International
Henrietta, TX, USA
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Study 1

Prisoner Power

Potentially, the most powerful people in the world are in prisons today. All that follows is a demonstration of that fact accompanied by a practical guide-book by which any prisoner can become a powerhouse to change the world from the inside out.

Some will remember Gandhi who was carried again and again into British colonial prisons in India. From his cell, his pen and voice stirred the hearts of the masses of the world's second largest nation. And, out of the cell, he led them to freedom and independence from the foreign power that had controlled his people and nation for three centuries. Curiously, he never sought or held public office. That was for the politicians who had been more enamored by the trappings of the "free world" outside the prisons. Gandhi knew that real power is not political nor is it monetary. It is the invincible power of a man who knew that his life was poured out for his people and whom God used to awaken a people that languished in modern servitude. Only a short time ago died Nelson Mandela, a small black man who spent 27 years of a life sentence in prison, much of this in solitary. This was his down payment on the price of freedom for his people. He emerged, finally, from prison to become the father and first president of his nation, South Africa.

The great potential power of prisoners is spiritual – a power that is sharpened on the strop of prison privation. Many of the greatest men in history were honed in the school of suffering that only the prison can offer. Most prisoners will lament and quietly cry in their terrible misfortune, but men and women of wisdom and faith will accept their enrollment in this unique school as an opportunity to become something they could have never achieved outside.

The Bible is a unique prison treasure, speaking more clearly to prisoners than to the great majority of people who wander in life outside prison walls. Prisoners who find spiritual power from that great Word do not wander, once they are released. They march with the certainty and cadence of soldiers who know where the real battles are and hurry toward them, for the liberation of their families and their people. The Bible is a prison book, telling of many whose school for greatness was behind cruel bars.

Joseph, son of Jacob, was one such person, given a life sentence because of a woman's lie. While others swore and languished in prison, Joseph gave his life to serving God by serving his fellow prisoners and the prison authorities. He entered prison as a despised foreigner accused of attempted rape and was called out of prison to become the most powerful man of Egypt, after the pharaoh himself (Genesis chapters 37-50).



Saul, also called Paul, was a frequent inhabitant of Roman prisons. In chains, he wrote some of his greatest Epistles, treasures of New Testament revelation. He proudly identified himself as a "prisoner of Jesus Christ." At the end of his last imprisonment, he was led to a heavy sword that severed his great head from his well-worn missionary body. However, other than Jesus Christ himself, no man in history has had such enduring influence over Christianity as his. In like manner, John the Elder wrote Revelation, the last great book of the Bible, on the Alcatraz of his day, the little island of Patmos. There, he had visions of Jesus Christ and of the climactic events of world history, closing with the words, "So be it. Come, Lord Jesus."

The greatest prisoner of all was Jesus Christ himself. He did not languish for months or years in prison. Beaten nearly to death, he was rushed from prison to a kangaroo court that sent him immediately to the hill called "Skull" (Calvary) where he was brutally nailed to a bloody cross, dying in great anguish. He accepted such a death to free forever those who trust in him for complete forgiveness, pledging their lives to him. At his side on Calvary were two thieves. One, typically, ridiculed Jesus and died in his own darkness of soul. The other prisoner demonstrated more faith than all who were gathered around the cross. The Apostles, Jesus' mother, family members, and followers believed that all was tragically ended at that place and hour. But the bandit who was at Jesus' side said, "Lord, when you receive your kingdom, remember me." Jesus, greatly heartened by such a voice of faith answered, "Today, you shall be with me in Paradise." And, so it was!

Many Christians have rightly asked what they can do for prisoners. Somehow, prisoners have a special place in the hearts of Christ's followers, something seen in few other people. But the greatest hope and power for prisons is not from those who come from outside, bearing words of encouragement. It is in the power of God that explodes in the tight confines of prisons through the lives and hearts of men and women whose lives unfold there day and night, year after year.

Most prisoners should never forget, however, that prison is not where their lives shall end. Prisoners return to every village, town and city in the world, with a sense of freedom that others cannot appreciate. Those who dwell with God in prison can return to their people with a power that few others know. In direct proportion to their growth and influence in the prison will be the measure of their transforming power wherever they go afterwards. Potentially, the most powerful people in the world are in prisons today. All that follows is a demonstration of that fact accompanied by a practical guidebook by which any prisoner can become a powerhouse to change the world from the inside out.

The following lessons are for those who are ready for God to do such a great work in their lives.

Study 2

Saved from Death to Eternal Life

No great work can be done inside or outside of prison by those who are spiritually dead. Many suggestions will follow in this manual on how to set in motion a spiritual tsunami that can sweep through a prison, bringing life instead of death. Every plan and method, however, is dead and useless without the light of God burning brightly in the hearts of men and women whom God will use. When Jesus said, **“Ye are the light of the world,”** (Matthew 5:14, KJV) he spoke only of those who had died to their former sinful lives and who received glorious life from above, life which comes from having the Holy Spirit in one’s inner being, life that is eternal.

Before thinking about one’s spiritual ministry in the prison, in the home, or any other place, it is necessary to be sure that you have spiritual life as the Bible describes it. Spiritual life is to be dead to self, to genuinely belong to God, to have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling within you. It does not speak of perfection, but it does mean that you have truly been “born again” as Jesus commanded. **“You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’”** John 3:7 This study is given to help you to be sure that you have been born again, and if not, to help you experience that promised spiritual transformation.

It is tempting to rush ahead in the next lines and tell the readers how to experience such a life. However, it is not an experience that one person can give to another. It must be the work of God in the heart of each person. God must reveal Himself by means of His Word and His Spirit, and each person must personally hear, consider God’s truth and decide the course he or she will take. The following pages unfold the truths of God part by part and they call on the reader to choose the answers found in his or her own heart. No other person can choose for the reader. Some may think they are too spiritually advanced to benefit by the trail that lies just ahead, but such a thought is proof that they must not miss a single turn in the path ahead. **Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.** Proverbs 3:7, 5-6

Jesus described his ministry in the world with the following words, **“The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.”** Luke 19:10

How do you understand these words? (Mark your answers.)

- Jesus did not have to come looking for me—I was never lost.
- In different ways, I have felt that he has looked for me.
- I believe Jesus came to find and save me.



Many people may believe they are good enough for God and that they are certainly much better than others. However, God’s Word flatly states: **There is no one righteous, not even one.** Romans 3:10

How is this verse to be understood?

- The verse is mistaken, many of us are righteous.
- I am proof that this verse is wrong.
- My experience tells me that none are righteous, certainly not in the sight of Holy God.

If in God’s eyes, none are righteous but all are sinners, what are the normal consequences of our sin? Paul gave the terrible answer, but with the answer he gave a wonderful word of hope: **The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.** Romans 6:23 (KJV)

What do you conclude about the wages of sin?

- “Wages” are what we deserve or earn for our actions.
- No worry, we will never have to pay for our sins!
- Death, both physical and spiritual, is what we earn by our sinfulness.
- I have a clean conscience and don’t have to worry about this.
- According to the Bible, death is what I deserve because of my sin.

The word “but” in this verse is beautiful, because it offers something instead of death: **The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.** Romans 6:23 (KJV). This is the good news called “the gospel.” Men and women may receive their just WAGES of sinfulness, which is eternal death. Or they can receive, instead, God’s outright GIFT of eternal life. Consider the first group, who, according to the Apostle Peter, will get what they deserve:

You must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 2 Peter 3:3

How do you understand this verse?

- In the last days, there will be many who scoff and do not believe God will punish them.
- Scoffers include those who refuse to listen to the warnings and the promises of the Holy Bible.
- Those who scoff are people who are determined to follow their own evil desires.
- God overlooks scoffing and sin; it is not important to Him.
- This verse leads me to believe that we are already living in the last days.
- Woe is me! I am a scoffer!
- God save me from being a scoffer and give me an open heart to Him!

Does God take notice of those who reject His Word and live sinful lives? Peter speaks of this in the following manner: "... **the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.**" 2 Peter 3:7.

What is your opinion about this warning?

- The present heaven and earth are going to be destroyed by fire.
- This will happen on a single day – the day of judgment and punishment of ungodly men.
- "Ungodly men" speaks of those who reject God's Word and live as they chose to live.
- We don't have to worry. We are all children of God and will go to heaven.
- We can live according to our own evil desires as long as we are baptized or go to church or belong to the right religious group or church.
- This evidently is what is meant by "the wages of sin is death."

When will this day of judgment come and what should each of us do now? Peter speaks on: **With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.** 2 Peter 3:8-10

Think about this Scripture and what it means to you:

- Two thousand years have passed since Peter wrote this, but, on the other hand, Jesus could come in two more days!
- We can count on God keeping His promise of a sudden flaming end of this sinful earth.
- God has shown His patience for 2000 years. How much longer will he wait?
- The smart thing to do is keep on living without God, there is still a lot of time to repent.
- God doesn't want anyone to perish, but time is running out.
- God will enjoy punishing all sinners.
- Our answer to judgment is to repent, to turn away from our sinful life and trust Christ to forgive and save us.
- The last day will come by surprise, like the unexpected visit of a thief.

The verses we just read were written by Peter when he was an old man. However, they sound much like the first message he ever preached, when he was still a young man. This happened on the day of Pentecost when he preached to the very people who had crucified Jesus. Listen to him then:



"Let all of Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other Apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Acts 2:36-37

What do you see in these great verses?

- The people of Israel had publicly rejected Christ, crucifying him.
- God showed Jesus to be Lord of all, Christ and Savior, by raising him from the dead.
- The people were not worried about what God might do to them.
- The people wanted to know if there was any hope for them.

Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38

What did Peter say the people should do that very day?

- Repent, turn away from their sinful rejection of Christ and selfish lives.
- Raise their hands and say they agreed with his message.
- Show their sincerity by being publically baptized in water.

Opinions: What two things would result from their repentance and act of faith?

- God would forgive them of all their sins, including even the sin of crucifying His Son, their Lord.
- God would let them go on living as they had before.
- God would give each one the gift of His Holy Spirit to begin changing their lives from the inside out.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22

What does the Bible tell you to do about its message?

- The main thing is to study and understand it.
- The main thing is to do what the Bible tells me to do.
- We like ideas better than action.
- Unless we obey what the Bible says, we are only kidding ourselves.

Consider again Romans 6:23, looking this time at its great promise: ***The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.*** What does the last part of this verse mean to you?

- Eternal life is God's gift to us, given through Jesus who died for our sins.
- As a gift, there is nothing we can do to earn it.
- Others may receive it as a gift. I will, instead, earn my salvation.
- If I must earn salvation, it is not true to call it God's gift.
- To own a gift, I must accept it from the giver in good faith.
- I receive this gift with much gratitude. I want my life to please God.

In the following study, you will be assisted to pray in a manner by which Christ can convert you into a genuine son or daughter of God, a person whom God forgives, fills, blesses and uses.



Study 3

Surrender Yourself to God in Prayer

God is ready to receive and transform the life of every person on earth, including, of course, your life. For His work to be effective, He must have you completely in His hands. Jesus said, ***If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.*** Matthew 16:24 (KJV) Christ becomes the Lord and Savior only of those who give themselves up to him. They are people who “deny themselves.” The cross was an instrument of death, and to “take up your cross daily” is to consider yourself dead to self but alive to Jesus Christ who comes to fill your life, giving you eternal life.

How does one surrender self to God? It is done by sincere prayer, in which you make your commitment to God. This commitment should be based on what the Bible itself teaches you and not on your own personal opinions. On the pages that immediately follow, you will be given key verses of the Bible that will help you to know how to pray. The verses will be followed by a prayer. You can use your own words, but they should include all that is found in the sample prayer that is printed here. The prayer is divided into seven different parts. It is a prayer that can enable you to come to God and receive eternal life from Him. Ask Him now to lead you in this.

The Saving Prayer of Faith

Know that without God’s forgiveness, you are lost: ***All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*** Romans 3:23

Prayer of Faith: *Great and Holy God, I confess that I have sinned and I fall very short of your glory.*

Know that with all your sins, eternal death is your rightful end: ***The wages of sin is death.*** Romans 6:23 ***Be sure your sin will find you out.*** Numbers 32:23 (KJV) No sin is hidden or forgotten by God. If you continue without Christ, you will have to pay, forever.

Prayer of Faith: *Holy Lord, I know that I deserve eternal death as the just punishment for my sins. I know that all my sins, including my worst sins, are not hidden from your sight.*

Know that Jesus Christ took on himself the punishment due to every sinner: ***But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*** Isaiah 53:5-6

Prayer of Faith: *Precious God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for sending your Son to take my just punishment on the cross. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for bearing all my iniquity on yourself.*

Know that you can only have eternal life by receiving it as a free gift from God, a gift paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ. ***The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.*** Romans 6:23 (KJV)

Prayer of Faith: *Great Lord and God, I thank you for the gift of eternal life that you give to me in Jesus Christ, who came to be my Lord, my Master and Savior.*

Know that God gives his gift of eternal life to those who trust in Christ’s power to save them and who repent, turning away from their sinful lives: ***Now he commands all people everywhere to repent.*** Acts 17:30

Prayer of Faith: *Heavenly Father, I receive Christ as my saving Lord, and turn away from my sinful selfish life to serve and honor him.*

Know that to receive Christ in this way is to become, in this very moment, a new-born child of God. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ***Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*** John 1:12-13

Prayer of Faith: *Great Lord Jesus, I receive you with all my heart and accept the gift of eternal life, becoming, through you, a child of God. Amen! So be it!*

Testimony of Faith: Have you accepted the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as the due payment for your many sins? Have you repented, turning your back on sin with the purpose of following Christ? Have you received Jesus Christ with all your heart, being born again as a child of God?

What to do now: Readers respond differently to this spiritual pathway. Many will have responded with faith and full confidence while others remain with certain doubts. Both kinds of readers should continue reading to receive help.

Those who pray trustingly: You prayed following each one of the six progressive steps of faith that lead to salvation and adoption as a pardoned new-born child of God. You can now reaffirm that decision with the following prayer, using your own words to express these ideas: *My dear God and Father, I thank you for giving me full forgiveness, salvation and eternal life in my Lord Jesus Christ who paid the price for me. I am now yours forever. Direct my life as you choose, because I am your loving child. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*



Seal Your Salvation with Your Public Declaration of Faith

“Secret Christians” do not prosper in their life of faith, and your public declaration of faith is one’s launching pad into the world as a new person in Christ. Jesus announced, ***Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.*** Matthew 10:32 If a person entrusts his or her life to Christ, he will gladly announce it to others. Until this announcement comes, there is an evident lack of faith in the person that Christ has given forgiveness and salvation. There may be a fear of failure and shame, and that is to disbelieve that Christ has saved or that he is fully able to keep one saved and acting that way. It is like choosing not to marry a person for fear of later regret or failure in marriage. “It is better just to have an informal agreement,” people think. Jesus, however, does not save on the basis of an informal agreement with him. Without formal marriage, we lack commitment in forming a home. To be able to save us, Christ requires our strong faith that he saves us and will keep us saved and that our purpose is to not deny him by our words and acts. Any faith short of announcing one’s commitment and trust in Christ is unlikely to transform the sinful life into eternal life in Christ. Our public commitment to Christ is to put our lives on the line for him. It is not to say that we will never fail him, but that we know he will never fail us and that our purpose is strong and sincere and we are unashamed to say we belong to him, by his grace and generous forgiveness.

Baptism, in the Bible, is the public demonstration of our trusting commitment to Christ. As we are lowered into the water, we declare, “I have died to my old self-centered life.” And as we arise from the water, we are testifying “I now have a new life in Christ.” (See Romans, chapter 6). Baptism was changed across the centuries by men to mean something else, but Bible baptism by immersion in water is the new believer’s public declaration of living faith in Christ.

On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon all believers in Christ, Peter preached, ***“Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*** Acts 2:40-41

Comments: What does this tell us about receiving God’s salvation?

- It is to turn away from and run from, the evils of our generation.
- We must turn from sin to Christ gladly and not reservedly.
- If we mean business, we will be baptized quickly.
- Baptism as a believer had little importance for Peter and the Apostles.
- To turn from sin to Christ and be baptized is to become a part of the church.



Those who struggle with doubt: Others have carefully read the Bible truths and the suggested prayers but do not yet have trusting certainty about them. You may have important unanswered questions, or you may sense that your heart is cold and not fully open to God’s voice—to His great promises and commands. Many popular religious teachings developed by men never affirm these truths and may even contradict them. What can you do?

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28 Here, Jesus speaks to you. He understands your unsettled mind and spirit and it is He who will give you rest. Pray, then, as follows: *Heavenly Lord Jesus, I am weary and burdened and uncertain of the way. Give me, Lord, your rest and guide me into your way. Amen.*

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29 A yoke is worn by two strong animals that together pull a plow. They are actually fastened together by the yoke and must pull together. Jesus tells you that he loves you, wants to be with you, and will walk beside you with gentleness and humbleness. Do not give up or turn away from Jesus. ***Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*** Romans 10:17

Final Words of Encouragement and Warning

What can you do that your faith may grow if you still have not trusted your life to Christ? Read your Bible, especially to see Jesus and to hear his teachings. Read Luke and John in the New Testament as good beginning points. Be with people who trust in Christ and show a joyful faith. Talk with them; listen to them, question them. God will open your heart and change it because Christ promised to be with you if you accept his yoke and learn from him. When you feel your trust has grown, go back to the Prayer of Faith with its six steps, and pray your way through it now with saving faith. The Lord awaits you and he will say with you, “Amen!” when you finish the prayer. So be it!

Three great dangers face every reader of this study who has not yet turned away from sin to receive Christ:

Danger of Procrastination. The easiest and most dangerous answer to the truths which you have just now chosen to believe is to say that you will “think about it later.” ***The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*** Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV) None of us is helped by our heart of hearts, because it is fundamentally selfish and sinful and leads us away from God and His salvation. Procrastination is its deceitful answer to God’s call. Listen to His tender voice: ***Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*** Isaiah 55:6-7

How do you interpret these words?

- I may seek the Lord when he can be found, when he is near to me.
- Most of my life, I have felt far from God. I know what it is to be “lost.”
- God is working in my heart now. I pray for wisdom to respond to him.
- If I turn away from God now, I might lose my one opportunity to be saved.
- I, for one, do not need God’s mercy or pardon.
- I receive God’s gift of pardon and eternal life in Christ, and am ready to tell others about this decision.

Danger of Spiritual Coldness. Until we repent and receive Christ, our souls are naturally cold and unresponsive to God’s voice and call. We are helped when we find ourselves in dangerous or desperate condition and we may call to God. Otherwise, we go doggedly on in our own closed inward way, blind to the dangerous reality in which we live. If spiritual coldness is your fatal problem, pray constantly, daily, that He will have mercy and open your cold heart to Him. God speaks to you: ***Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.*** Isaiah 55:3

Danger of Religious Pride. Those who most resisted Jesus were the most religious, and they were of the one right religion at that time, the Jewish faith. Religion, based on the Bible, is important. The danger, however, is to be very religious but never turn from your sins and place your life in the care and command of Jesus who alone can give you complete forgiveness and make you right before God. This study is not to urge you to change your religion, unless you find it to be contrary to the Bible. Instead, it is to invite you to receive salvation from the hands of God as He offers it.

Jesus has the last word: ***Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. . . . I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*** John 10:7-11



Study 4

Start Your Personal Journey of Faith

How does one begin their personal journey of faith? Jesus' words to Matthew were simply, "**Follow me.**" The result? **And he arose, and followed him.** Matthew 9:9 (KJV).

If you have turned your back on your former sinful life and declared your faith in Jesus Christ as your new Lord and Savior, it should be said of you, "**And he arose, and followed him.**" But where will Jesus lead you? What are the first steps you will take? Your spiritual journey is not a matter of geography... it is not where you will physically go. It is to march forward in life-changing ways. As you take these steps, your faith power grows and you become stronger and stronger in the Lord. The Bible itself explains the steps you are to take:

Step One: Tell others about your decision.

Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. Matthew 10:32 This is how the Christian life begins—telling others that you now belong to Christ. For some, it is easy to do and for others it can be very difficult. Begin by telling people who are near you, and then move on to inform other important people in your life about your decision. For most prisoners, this means writing letters to family members and close friends. At the beginning, you may or may not give many details. You might describe it something like this: My life is being changed for the better by Jesus Christ, whom I have taken to be my Lord and Savior. I hope that you will be able to recognize these changes in me in the time to come and will thank him for his mercy in my life.

Jesus explains how important it is to tell even your family about your decision to follow Christ. He also states that your faith can be a cause of even greater separation, at least at the beginning. Here is how he states this: **Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.** Matthew 10:32-33

What do you understand Jesus to be saying?

- It is not important to Jesus whether or not I tell others that I now belong to him.
- If I do not acknowledge that I belong to Jesus, my faith is not a saving faith and Jesus will deny me before his Father.

Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Matthew 10:37

How do you interpret these words of Jesus?

- It may be hard to tell one's parents about your faith in Christ.
- If you love Jesus most of all, you will tell them so.
- If you decide not to "hurt" close relations about the coming of Jesus into your life, you are showing that you are not worthy of him.
- Probably, the only way your family can ever come to trust in Christ is to know more about your experience. To keep it a secret is no favor to them.

Family members may be disturbed to think that you are "changing your religion" when you receive Christ as Lord. Jesus here does not talk about one's religion, but one's dependency on him. If you were an atheist, an agnostic or of some non-Christian religion, this would represent a change in your religion. However, if you are from a Catholic or Protestant background, you can explain that you have done what your religion asks, which is to turn your back on a sinful life and give it to the Son of God who, you believe, died for your sins. This is a basic Christian doctrine and not a strange new doctrine.

Step Two: Find Christian Partners

Jesus promises to be with you wherever you are: **I am with you always, to the very end of the age.** Matthew 28:20

How do you interpret this promise?

- Jesus is with me in both good moments and bad moments in my life.
- Others may break away from me, but Jesus promises to stay with me always.
- Jesus is with me temporarily, at least.
- Jesus is with me through thick and then, now and to the end of the age.

You need to know that Jesus is always with you. But you also need to have people whom you can see and touch to be with you in your spiritual life. Jesus, for this reason, gathers Christians together. This may be in large meetings, but it is also in small gatherings, even of just one or two other Christians. **For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.** Matthew 18:20



Study the meaning of this verse:

- This speaks of an intentional getting together of fellow believers in Christ.
- Jesus is happy to be with little groups of his followers.
- This is hard to believe, that Jesus wants to be in such a group.

Seek real Christians and avoid false ones: You may be approached by religious people who claim to be the only ones who have the truth, but they say little or nothing about the power of Jesus Christ to save. Many love to argue and prove they are spiritually wise. However, they prove, in this way how foolish they are.

Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. 2 Timothy 2:14-17

Here, the Bible warns about certain attitudes: (Mark "T" or "F")

- _____ Avoid quarreling about faith in Christ and beware of silly and foolish arguments that are based on quarreling about words.
- _____ Such people are not praising Christ for his saving work, but enjoy "godless chatter"—religious talk that does not please the Lord or his followers.
- _____ No worry, false teaching is not dangerous.

How can a young Christian know who is a fellow Christian worthy of fellowship and who is a dangerous teacher of falsehoods? One of the easiest ways is to examine the life-style of the person. Is the person one whose life is clean and trustworthy? Does the person emphasize the need of repentance and faith to be saved, or does the person insist on other things apart from Christ? Is the person one who is constantly thanking and praising God and His Son Jesus Christ, or is the emphasis on certain religious teachings that have nothing to do with salvation that is given as a gift from Jesus? You can ask the person: Do you have eternal life right now only by the grace of God? These who are false will almost always say that it is not possible to know this during this life, and they live with terrible doubts. They want to convince others of those same doubts. Most of them, likewise, do not believe the Bible alone is the full revelation of God's truth. Jesus warned us and said,

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Matthew 7:15-16

How do you understand these instructions? (True or False)

- _____ Jesus is warning me that there are plenty of false teachers around.
- _____ These false teachers try to look innocent and friendly.
- _____ There is no way to tell false prophets from true Christians.
- _____ False teachers will try to cover their faults, but time will show you that their lives are not giving good fruit.

Opinions: Put a TC next to statements to describe True Christians and put an FT next to those that describe false teachers:

- _____ They are humble, knowing that they were saved by God's grace alone.
- _____ They emphasize the salvation made possible by Christ's death
- _____ They love to read the Bible, more than their religious books.
- _____ They emphasize things that have little to do with Christ.
- _____ They twist certain verses of the Bible, but do not like to study longer passages of the Bible.
- _____ They may belong to groups or sects that claim to be the only way to God.
- _____ They emphasize certain religious rules and practices rather than the Lordship of Jesus Christ over their lives.

Step Three: Become a Wise Bible Student

Your reason for being a Bible student is not to be able to argue successfully with others about differences of religious opinion! It is important not to be so ignorant of the Bible that you can be easily misled in your faith, but the real reason for Bible reading and Bible study is to be able to grow up as a Christian. ***Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.*** 1 Peter 2:2

There are many religious books in the world as well as many radio and TV preachers—many of which speak about the Bible. Many of these are good but many are evil and deceptive, trying to divert your faith from Jesus Christ to foolish arguments. Here, Peter urges you to crave "pure spiritual milk."

Opinions: What is "pure spiritual milk" in your understanding?

- It is the writings of different religious thinkers in the world.
- It is the opinions of all radio and TV preachers
- It is the Bible, the Holy Word of God



Christian writers can help you in many ways. However, before you read the ideas of others, it is important for you to go straight to the Bible and learn from it. If you have read especially much of the New Testament, you will not be easily deceived by false teachings of others. False teachers will often quote Old Testament verses to prove their erroneous doctrines. The Old Testament is God's word, but it is the Old Covenant by which Israel was made right with God before the coming of the Savior. Christians are people of the New Covenant, a covenant that is based on the blood of Christ being shed for God's people. It is a covenant of salvation given freely to all those who turn away from their sinful ways, turning to Christ and trusting him for complete forgiveness of their sins. The New Covenant is one in which God's people are able to obey and serve Him because of the power of the Holy Spirit Who has come into their lives. It is not a covenant of rules and regulations that make people right with God. Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:11) is the simple statement of our faith—He has bought us, we belong to him, and our purpose is to serve him as our Lord and Savior.

Discussion: What is meant when we say that Christians are of the New Covenant and not the Old?

When you read books that speak of the Bible or of the Christian life, be sure they are Christian books and not the books of some sect or false religion or popular false "prophet". If you find the book to disagree with what you have found in the Bible, throw it away immediately! The same thing is true of messages you will hear on the radio or on TV. Many preachers today, who claim to be Christian, actually do not preach Biblical messages but from their own views and "revelations" that are counter to the teachings of the Bible. Many of them can be identified because they promise riches to those who follow them. Jesus did not promise us riches. Instead, he said, ***If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*** Matthew 16:24 (KJV) They will mention Bible verses, but only to "prove" things they believe. But their teachings and the teachings of Jesus are very different from one another. If someone claims to be a prophet or an apostle, you can be sure that he is neither, but is a voice of the devil, though many may follow him. Jesus warned us: ***For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time.*** Matthew 24:24-25



Most of the study you hold in your hand consists of Bible passages and asks you to think and decide for yourself what you understand to be the Bible truth. When you study the Bible, ask yourself questions as you read and then take time to answer them based on what you find in the Bible verses being studied. ***Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*** 2 Timothy 2:15

There are excellent Christian Bible studies that you can use to guide your group in Bible study and for you to study alone as correspondence courses. Possibly the best correspondence courses for individuals are those provided by Emmaus Correspondence School, PO Box 1028, Dubudue, IA 52204-1028. Their distributors in Texas are the Write-Way Prison Ministries, PO Box 461582, Garland, TX 75046-1582. They offer many Bible studies free of charge to prisoners, in as many as 80 different languages. Ask for their list of courses, indicating in what language you want them. They are valuable and trustworthy studies, requiring the student to learn how to understand the Bible for himself or herself. They have provided advanced Bible training for hundreds of thousands of prisoners.

Avoid courses that are offered by sects, even if they claim to be churches. Such courses teach that only their group has the truth of God, and, while they will give some true Bible teaching, they will also lead you away from the gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ. According to them, their religion is the only one by which God saves.

Mark up your reading Bible generously. Underline important verses or put a border around them. Write your spiritual discoveries in the margins of your Bible. Read the entire Bible, and give special attention to the books of the New Testament and to such Old Testament books as the Psalms, Proverbs, Genesis, Exodus and Isaiah.

Quiz: What are the three things you should quickly do as a new Christian?

- Tell others about your decision.
- Find people with whom you can argue about your religion.
- Find Christian partners for mutual encouragement.
- Become a wise Bible student to grow as a Christian.

Study 5

Your Path to Nobility

If you have taken Christ as Lord of your life and your Savior from sin, God has put you on the path of nobility, as a member of His chosen royalty. Perhaps you do not feel like royalty. That is an error you must quickly overcome if you will serve the Lord with divine power. Writes Simon Peter, ***But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*** 1 Peter 2:9-10.

What do you understand from Peter's declaration to the people of God?

- We are God special "race" of people, different from all others.
- We are God's royalty and His priests at the same time.
- We are less important to God than the kings of this earth.
- We are the holy nation of God, with Christ as our glorious King.
- God calls us his "own people," because He bought us at the cost of His Son's blood

What is the special mission we have been given as God's priests?

- We are to brag to others how holy and great we are.
- We are to tell everyone about the wonderful deeds of God.
- We start by telling how God called us out of deep darkness into His marvelous light.
- We are the heroes of this story.
- God is the Hero of this story.

What does this say about our spiritual history?

- We were changed from being nobody to become God's own people
- Before knowing Christ, we had not received God's mercy.
- We hope we shall receive God's mercy
- We have already received God's mercy, and it has changed our lives.

Jesus' way of life is completely different from the way of the world. In the world, greatness is measured by your authority over others and the ability to bring others to serve you. Jesus warned his Apostles not to fall into the world's error about true greatness: ***You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become***

great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Matthew 20:25-28

What did Jesus tell us about true greatness?

- To seek to rule others is a "Gentile" or pagan ambition.
- Jesus is our example of humble service.
- Christians who want to be great must make themselves the slaves of the others.
- The greater you are, the more others should serve you.
- The better one serves others, the greater he or she becomes.

What did Jesus explain about himself?

- He did not come to be served.
- He came to be a servant of God and of the people
- He inspires me to tell other people what they should do for me.
- He came to be our best example of humble service.
- He came to give his life for us that we might be "ransomed" from our sins.

What is your opinion?

- I recognize that Christ served me by coming to die for me on the cross.
- God sent Jesus to the world to serve God and man, He can send me to the world for the same reason.
- I need the mighty presence of Christ in my life to be a real servant.
- It has always been easy for me to put others first in everything I do.

Answer God's Call to Service

A wonderful theme for the Christian life is "Saved to Serve." But how should you serve, and where can you begin? The Apostle Peter gives us our first instructions in this: ***Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*** 1 Peter 4:10

How do you understand this verse?

- My special strengths and abilities give me an Idea what God intends me to do.
- I should use the gifts and opportunities God has given me to serve others.
- I cannot serve others because I have no "gifts" or abilities from God.



Peter continues with the following words: ***If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.*** 1 Peter 4:11 How do you interpret this?

- Whatever I do for God in serving others, I should do with all the strength God provides.
- It is important that people recognize what I am doing and give me credit for this.
- I am truly successful if what I do causes people to praise God and not me.
- There are different ways Christians can serve God wherever they are.

We know we can serve God best by using the special abilities or opportunities he has given us. When we examine our abilities, we are like a workman who is given a box of tools by his boss. If the tools are for plumbing, his work surely has to do with water pipes. Carpentry tools tells him that his work is to be with wood. Mark abilities you believe you have been given, realizing that these abilities indicate God's plans for ministry:

- I find it easy to talk and explain things to others.
- I tend to be a good encourager of people who are discouraged.
- I like teaching, and when I teach people enjoy learning from me.
- I am a person who loves to pray because I know God answers.
- I have a deep feeling of concern for people who don't know God and fall into so many kinds of trouble.
- I have special training that enables me to help others in special ways.

As you begin to serve God, you will begin to feel God's special call to you for special ministries. This may slowly become a conviction in your life or it may come suddenly through some experience with God. The young prophet Isaiah had a vision of God one day he was visiting the Temple in Jerusalem. He, alone, heard the voice of God saying "***Whom shall I send and who will go for us?***" Isaiah writes, ***And I said, "Here am I. Send me."*** Isaiah 6:8 (KJV). From that day on, Isaiah became a spokesman for God and the book of Isaiah tells his story and his message.

God rarely speaks aloud to people, but he is constantly speaking to us from His heart to ours. This comes from reading His Word, talking with Him in prayer, seeing the world around us in the same way He sees it. Do not think it strange if you believe God is calling you to do certain things to serve others and to honor Him. On the contrary, be surprised if He does not do this! He paid for you with the life's blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. You are much loved by Him and He paid a terribly high price for you. Expect Him to lead you into a special ministry for Him. Usually, He will do this step by step, and you must be attentive and ready to obey Him in every opportunity. Gradually, you will begin to understand His master plan for your life and you will be on your way to becoming a great man or woman of God, filled with faith and rewarded with much fruit for your faithful efforts.



Start Now, Where You Are

God undoubtedly has wonderful plans for you once you are released to go back into the world. Meanwhile, your ministry place is where you are living. Your ministry in prison or jail is part of your training for your life and ministry afterwards. It is time that you must not waste!

Prison offers many opportunities you will not find outside. For one thing, normally, in prison people are not as busy and distracted as people who are out in the world, where they must try to earn a living, care for the many needs of their family, or be drawn into terrible habits and practices that make it almost impossible to listen to any word from God and His Word. Slavery and prison were schools for Joseph, the son of Jacob. In slavery, he learned about the agricultural reality of the Egyptians. In prison, as head steward, he learned about public administration and the practical workings of the Egyptian government. When he was suddenly released, he became the head of a great governmental program in which his knowledge of Egyptian agriculture was essential. Not a day of Joseph's life was wasted, even as a slave and then as a prisoner. Every day in your life is likewise very important to God who is working out His perfect plan for your life.

Unless you learn to serve others where you are now, you will never learn to serve others in other places. There may be no other group in the world that needs the help of others as much as do prisoners, so you are in a perfect place to learn to serve as Christ wants you to serve. Because there are so many opportunities to serve others in prison, prison is a place where you can become a great servant of God for the benefit of many others.

Jesus Shows You the Way

Jesus is our Lord, our Savior and our Way. ***I am the way, the truth and the life***, he declared in John 14:6. As our Savior and Lord, He shows us the way, first, through the example of his own life and ministry. If we follow him closely, we will not go astray or make harmful errors. What can we learn by his perfect example? In Matthew 9:35-37, we learn much about the secrets of Christ's ministry. These are secrets that should become a vital part of our own lives.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. v. 35

What do you see happening in Jesus' own personal ministry?

- He was a missionary, always reaching out to more and more people.
- He was a teacher, helping people to understand the things of God.
- He raised money wherever he went and became wealthy.
- He took over the civil authority of the towns and villages, becoming a dictator.
- He publically announced the gospel, the good news about his saving rule in the lives of those who trusted in him.
- He brought healing and comfort to those who were sick and in pain.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. v. 36

As Jesus went out to serve the people, he could see pain and sickness that was not physical. What did he observe in the people who surrounded him?

- They were harassed and troubled by many issues in their lives.
- They could fix their own problems.
- They were helpless to save or cure themselves
- Their sad condition stirred his compassion for them.
- They were like sheep who needed a shepherd, but had none.

Opinions: How do you think Jesus interpreted this problem?

- He had no idea what could be done for the people.
- He saw that no one was caring for them like a shepherd.
- He wanted to be their Savior and Shepherd.
- He also wanted to send his disciples to serve as shepherds among them.

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." v. 37-38

What special needs did Jesus see when he saw the crowds of spiritually helpless people?

- He saw they were potentially a great "harvest" for the Kingdom of God.
- He saw that the main problem was the lack of workers out in the fields.
- He saw that the main problem was political.
- He saw that the main problem was financial.
- He saw that the main problem was spiritual.

What did Jesus tell his disciples to do, first of all?

- Hurry out into the fields and go to work.
- Volunteer to go out and do the job.
- Ask God to send out His chosen workers to the harvest field.

In Mathew 10:1 and the verses that follow, Jesus calls his twelve disciples to himself and sends them out into the harvest field. The same men who prayed that God would send out His servants were the men Jesus called and sent out. Those who are powerful workers in the harvest fields are those who recognize that the Lord has called and sent them. The Lord alone should receive the credit and praise for the harvest they are privileged to gather.



Study 6

Find Your Little Flock

If we are wise, we will begin our ministry where Jesus did, as he gathered and cared for his “little flock.” Although he would preach to and teach thousands, he never lost sight of the little flock that gathered around him from the beginning. ***Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom*** Luke 12:32

How do you understand Jesus’ words in this great statement?

- He was proud to call them his “little flock.”
- They were to be courageous and full of faith, never afraid.
- They should be courageous, because they were, with him, made co-owners of the Kingdom of God in which they were full citizens.
- All the great resources of the Kingdom of God were given to them.
- Though they came out of lives of sin, it pleased God greatly to give them this honor and treasure.

Study in the Gospels and see how Jesus called his first disciples. Twelve of them were to be called “Apostles”—men he would send out to the harvest field. Women were also among his first disciples, and they followed him all the way to the cross and to the empty tomb. Apparently, these men and women felt they were poor and without importance in the world, and could easily feel they were victims of the world instead of being princes and princesses of the Kingdom of God. When Jesus called them, they became royalty. In prison, they are God’s royalty, dressed in prison garb!

Jesus saw the crowds were harassed and helpless, needing shepherds to care for them and begin to gather them together in little flocks. He has such a “flock” for you. It will consist of those who are closest to you and to others God will draw to you. It may include members of the family and dear friends who are outside the prison, but it will certainly include fellow prisoners who live with you every day.

How to Find Your Little Flock

Jesus found his little flock as he ministered out in the world. He ministered to many people, and called them to follow him, but God Himself would choose those special people who would be his “little flock.” Many are invited, said Jesus, but few are chosen. Matthew 22:14 Our task is to invite, but only God has the right to choose. He will speak to the hearts of his chosen ones, as a result of your earnest prayers for God to do so. You

will be able to tell who is chosen by the response of those you invite. You can never know whom God will choose until He reveals who they are. Remember that Jesus invited many to follow him, such as the “rich young ruler.” Many, like him, quickly turned away. Then, consider Matthew. All we hear Jesus saying to him was ***“Follow me.” And Matthew got up and followed him.*** Matthew 9:9b We do not know if Matthew had heard Jesus preach or if the two had spoken together before, but we see Matthew giving proof of God’s call when he got up right then and followed Jesus into history.

The story begins by saying that ***Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth.*** Matthew 9:9a. Jesus began by seeing Matthew. This was surely more than a hasty glance. Jesus was a careful observer of men and women. He saw Matthew in his unhappiness, in his dissatisfaction with life. He also saw Matthew in his great potential. Remember, this man was to write the first great Gospel we encounter in our Bibles! Jesus did not start by giving Matthew a “plan of salvation.” He simply invited Matthew to follow him. In due time, Matthew would discover Christ as Lord and Savior. We should not try to rush those who become our “little flock.” Jesus was patient, prayerful, loving, always modeling and teaching his little flock. The Father would bring these men to decisions that were life-long, that would take them to the ends of the earth.

Opinions: What does Jesus’ ministry show you about gathering your little flock?

- I must be a careful observer of those around me, knowing that God has special plans for some of them.
- I must be a person of prayer, begging the Lord to call and gather workers around me.
- I must love those around me, even those who are great failures in life.
- I must show myself friendly to everyone for I am the Lord’s servant.
- I must, at the right moment, give people the opportunity to find out more.
- I must show my confidence in sinners, that God can call them to great tasks.
- I must quickly give the “plan of salvation” to everyone.
- I must teach little by little, as others show their interest in deeper things.
- I must trust the Father, not myself, to choose people for His Kingdom.

Your Compassion Will Open Hearts

Wherever Jesus went, he ministered to the people. The Father gave him a special gift of healing and even of raising the dead. He used this gift, not as a show or to gather a crowd, but in compassion for the sad condition of the people he found on his pathway. He taught people in every town and village and was most known as “Teacher.” He always encouraged people and helped them to put their faith in God. He opposed



pride, but had compassion on those who had fallen into many different kinds of sin and moral weakness. He was bitterly opposed by religious men who “kept all the rules” of their religion but despised the “sinners” who did not. **“Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?”** asked the self-righteous ones. **“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,”** Jesus answered. Luke 5:30-32

If Jesus, being totally without sin, could be so loving and compassionate with ugly sinners, how much more can we, who are likewise “ugly sinners” have compassion on those who are around us! We begin to find our “little flock” by loving those who surround us, in spite of every ugly thing that may be seen in their lives. The farther others are from God, the more greatly do they need our compassion and help. When they are finally saved, they will show most dramatically the power of Christ to convert what was ugly into something of great beauty. Just one such conversion can awaken a great crowd to realize the truth of God’s Word and Salvation.

As members of Christ’s Kingdom, we have many precious things we can give those who surround us, starting with love and compassion. Only we are able to experience in our own souls the love of Christ for them. It is a love without self-interest, and comes straight from heaven into our hearts and, from them, into the lives of the desperately poor ones who surround us. The second thing we can give others are our prayers.

Opinions: Why do you think people known to be sinners were the people most drawn to him? Why do you think Jesus had special interest in them?

Your Priestly Prayer Ministry

The second thing we have for those who surround us is prayer. We must pray for people before we can teach them. Our prayers will begin to draw them to God and to open their hearts to Him. Our prayers will make people hungry for God and for His divine work in their lives. Peter said, **You are ... a royal priesthood.** 1 Peter 2:9 The greatest privilege of a priest is to come straight into the presence of God and speak to Him for the people. We are the priests of the God and King of the Universe, and our greatest privilege is to step into His presence at any moment and speak to Him. It is interesting to see that people seem to recognize that we have this special privilege because many people will tell us, “Please pray for me.”

We live in a sinful world, surrounded by people who are far from God. Sin, however, has just one good quality: it brings pain, sometimes great pain. When people feel this pain, they become more open to finding relief. We are in the world to **declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.** 1 Peter 2:9 We start by telling what God did in our own lives to give us relief, to bring us out of darkness. Then, we ask if it is all right for us to pray for them. If they show great interest, we might pray for them out loud right then and there, especially if others are not listening. If they show no interest, we offer to pray for them or members of their family any time they may ask. If they show interest, we promise to pray for them during our prayer time, and tell them that we will want to know how God is answering our prayers.

Each one of us, as priests of God, must keep a list of people for whom we pray regularly. This is a list of your “Little Flock.” If they mention a specific need, write that need next to their name. Ask them regularly how things are developing, assuring them that you continue to pray for them. If there are changes in their situation, you should write that down next to their name. As you pray, expect God to work both in their difficult situations and also in opening their hearts to His Holy Spirit. Little by little, build up your prayer list for fellow prisoners and their needy families. Pray for each one at least two times each week. About every third or fourth week, ask about how things are developing and if there is something more you should pray for.

The next step to take is to invite those who are grateful for your prayers to meet with you as a group to pray or, if they prefer, with your group when you are studying the Bible. If there are Christians in the group, invite them to help you with the prayers. Teach the other Christians to start making their own “Little Flocks,” praying for them. Let non-Christians in the group know that God wants to bring them into His family also so they can pray directly to Him, but do not rush them in this. With those who show interest, you can begin to teach them personally, or as a small group, this very same booklet, having them to read it aloud, from the first to last page, and letting them answer all questions as you proceed through the booklet.

Besides praying for others, always be alert to ways you can help them. Be known as the servant of all—that is Jesus’ formula for greatness.

Opinions: How can Christians best find out what others are deeply concerned about in their lives? How does knowing these needs make it easier to offer to pray for these persons? Why is it so important to keep a list of those for whom you are praying. Why is it also very important to ask them every three or four weeks about how things are developing?



Study 7

Make Disciples and Train Them

In Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), his very last words spoken on earth, he commanded us to go out into the world and make disciples, students, of everybody we can. As he was best known as "Teacher," so we are also called by him to be teachers. We only teach those who are open to this, and we only teach as much as people are able to receive. ***Do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.*** Matthew 7:6 Jesus is not calling people "pigs" but he is telling us something about our work with people. What do you understand this to be?

- Pigs don't care at all for pearls, but they love garbage!
- Many people do not yet have an appreciation for the Lord or the gospel
- Many will reject both us and great Bible truths we want to give them.
- We should immediately give the plan of salvation to everyone around us.
- Many see the gospel as being something cheap if we insist they take it.
- We should help people to grow in their faith, waiting for the right moment when they can begin to consider entrusting their lives to Jesus Christ.
- We should always be sensitive to people who start to show interest in the things of God.

Teach Those Who Are in Your Little Flock

When you see signs of real spiritual interest, offer to teach people in very simple ways. You can use the guide booklet **Our Daily Bread** to read them a devotional and have a short prayer in a quiet time (RBC Ministries, PO Box 2222, Grand Rapids, MI 49501). Don't rush their participation; be patient and caring. You can show them a Bible story that applies to their current life needs. If this series of studies, called **Prisoner Power**, has made a difference in your life, you can use it to teach others who are interested. Share only the first chapter with them at first to find if they are spiritually sensitive. If they ask to study more, help them personally with each lesson. If they do not show interest, back away from them, pray for them, and wait for the day God opens their hearts to his Word. Moments of great sadness are often the moments of greatest spiritual opportunity.

Prisoner Power is also available as a small tract that you can give to many prisoners. Those who are most stirred by it may ask you for a copy of this entire booklet and may also be open to your studying it with them. You may request copies of the tract from the same source that provided you with this booklet.



Also, when others show spiritual interest, you can invite them to study the first lesson in **People Who Knew Jesus**. Have them read aloud the lesson and answer the questions aloud. You simply encourage them as they discover the gospel for themselves. When they do that, they will not argue with you—it is their opinion that is important, not yours. Most people taking lesson one will be interested in continuing all six lessons. Then, you can invite them to study **Faith Power** that is based on six stories in the Acts of the Apostle. If they receive Christ during this time, lead them through **First Steps in Christian Discipleship**—a series of lessons you, yourself, should take. All these are available to you as a prisoner from the same source you received this booklet.

When a small group of prisoners begin to show interest, invite them to a life-issues study using the Bible Events series that deals with practical life issues, such as **Stress Survivors, Overcoming Loneliness, Where Is God When I Need Him?** and many others. If they respond well, invite them to daily Bible studies in a formal group. But do not insist that they join the group for their first Bible studies... those can be one on one.

Your little flock consists of those for whom you are praying and witnessing to and hopefully, some of these are willing to study the Bible at your side. The Philippi Bible studies are used as a tool to teach the Bible interactively. Your role, as teacher, is to guide the group to read the studies aloud and answer the questions. If there are questions or doubts, you should help in the measure you are able to do so. If you begin without Bible study guides, you run the danger that others may come and take over the group, teaching them their religious opinions, which may or may not be sound ones. Therefore, get a list of Philippi Bible Studies and show the others the different themes that are available. Let them help you choose the titles they most want to begin to study. As the group matures spiritually, you can also introduce the Philippi Missionary Institute courses.

When you have a good understanding of the Bible and its doctrines, you can give Bible studies without the use of printed discussion questions. For example, you could invite a Christian group to study a book of the Bible together. It would be wise for you, or whoever might be the teacher, to have first taken the Emmaus correspondence course on that book of the Bible. (See this is Lesson 4.) When you teach, do so as much as possible by the asking of questions, as you have seen done in the printed lessons. This creates great interest among the students and helps them to learn how to read and study the Bible for themselves.

With Others, Seek a Spiritual Awakening in the Prison

Although you might have begun your ministry in prison as a single individual, your goal should be to contribute to a spiritual movement of salvation and hope in the entire prison. This cannot be the work of a single person, but of many. Therefore, the secret for your maximum success is to help create a multiplication of Christian workers in the entire prison as well as the number of people praying and studying the Bible with them. This strategy must be functional in the prison. It should also have a direct application to the work of released prisoners who will contribute to the work of churches they find in their communities or, who will start new churches there.

The “Philippi Ministries” refers in part to the ministry of a prisoner-support organization that seeks to work through Christian organizations that visit the jails and prisons. However, “Philippi Ministries” also refers to combined efforts of the Christian prisoners in any given prison. To do so, it is 1) necessary to have the permission of the prison authorities and 2) to be in accord with the strategies, faith and disciple-making materials of the movement. The Philippi strategy for prisoners is to build upon three progressive ministries:

The Three Philippi Ministries of the United Christian Prisoners

Little Flocks. Every active Christian in the prison should have his or her own personal ministry with a little flock. This consists of the people for whom one is praying and of those who are being personally taught. This could be simply one prisoner teaching one other prisoner. It could also be a Bible study group formed by the prisoner. Two or more Christians can also join their efforts to have a combined group for Bible study.

ROCKs. This is the combined group of Christian workers in a “pod” or other small unit of the prison. (Every Christian should be a worker.) Each ROCK should choose a very mature Christian to gather and guide the group in its meetings. These are not for Bible study. Instead, they are to pray together and to encourage one another in their Bible teaching ministries with their little flocks. A ROCK can also be used to create a Philippi Missionary Training Institute, training its members through its study plan and text books. The ROCKs, in summary, provide the leadership base for the advance of the Gospel in every part of the prison.

Christian Church. Most prisons permit those who are interested to meet and have services every week. In some cases, those services are under the administration of some church from outside the prison. In other cases, the church is administered directly by the Christian prisoners themselves. In this case, the prisoner congregation should be of accord about the doctrinal basis of the church and chose its leadership. It might choose a denominational identity or a non-denominational one. Regardless of what might be such a decision, if the members agree to follow the disciple-making strategy of the Philippi Ministries, they can also identify the church as a “Philippi Great Commission Church.” This identifies the congregation as a disciple-making church.

If the prisoners are already organized in different ROCKs in the prison and have a mature Christian leader in each, those ROCK leaders could represent the Christians throughout the prison in the church’s planning committee.

Some trained prisoners, when they leave the prison, will be called of God to start new churches in their communities based on the same system of disciple-making. They can add to the name of their church the expression “A Philippi Great Commission Church” if they continue to follow the norms of the Philippi Ministries. It would be hoped that this would attract other prisoners as they are released, together with their families and others who are disciplined in the same manner.

Prepare for Your Ministry Outside of Prison

For most prisoners, prison is a temporary experience. Every day in prison should be spent preparing for life after prison. For the Christian, this also means to prepare for one’s ministry outside of prison. The training offered by the Philippi Missionary Institute can prepare any prisoner to serve effectively in a church outside of prison. Many prisoners will even feel called to start new churches, perhaps for elements of free society that are left untouched by most existing churches. The studies in the Missionary Institute are similar in content to those of many seminaries, although on a more basic level. These studies can be reinforced by one’s thorough study of the Bible and extensive reading of important Christian books. The most valuable preparation any prisoner will have will be his or her experience in ministering to fellow prisoners. Your faithful ministry on the smallest scale is your best preparation to serve God on a grand scale for the rest of your life.

May God bless and use you mightily for his Kingdom and people.

