

'I Was in Prison and You Didn't Visit Me'

When Jesus says on the Day of Judgment, "I was in prison and you visited me (Matt. 25:36 NLT), what will you say?

A couple months ago a letter from a reader, David Bradford of New Mexico, caught my attention. He wrote to say he had been sending a subscription to *Charisma* for years to a friend in prison in Huntsville, Texas. His friend is an on-fire Christian, leading Bible studies and growing in his faith while serving his debt to society for breaking some serious laws regarding business ethics.

"Your magazine not only goes to Bill, but also is passed around to hundreds of inmates who are hungry for the Light of the world," David wrote. He went on to say that he and his wife continued to buy their subscription even though he had been laid off. He challenged me to send magazines to prisoners and offered to help.

We give subscriptions when asked. But we could do so much more by partnering with ministries like that of William Bumphus, who was featured on the cover of *Charisma* years ago. We supply William with books and magazines and help his prison outreach in other ways. His is an example of a ministry that can give us lists of names of many prisoners who would be blessed every month to get a copy of *Charisma* in the mail. Yet we know there are countless others we're unaware of who would also love to receive the magazine.

 That's why we have developed the Charisma Cares Prison Outreach. With the help of readers like you, we can send thousands of *Charisma* subscriptions to prisoners.

Through our non-profit partner, Charisma Cares, your tax-deductible gift of \$10 pays for two gift subscriptions, \$15

pays for three and \$100 pays for 20.

We get requests every week asking for free subscriptions. Of course they have no money to pay, so we send them a subscription and have been doing that for years. Most of the letters we get are just asking for a free subscription, but sometimes we'll get letters commenting on articles they've read or telling us about their lives. Some of them break your heart.

One such letter was from a man also named David who was incarcerated in Arkansas for 20 years for rape. He had been moved by reading an article called "A Home for Stella" from several years ago highlighting Stella's House, a home in Moldova that rescues orphan girls from human trafficking. (Often prisoners comment on old articles because older issues of the magazine are circulated in prison for many years.) David said he was glad to read that teenage girls who age out of Moldova's state-run orphanage system and quickly trafficked as sex slaves are instead given hope and a home in a Christian environment.

"I am glad I am serving time because I hurt someone physically and mentally," he wrote. "[It] has cost me my daughter and 20 years of my life. I don't care that I'm doing time. I just want help too. Is there any help for me?"

It grieves me to think of the hopelessness men like David feel—especially around Father's Day, when few are remembered by their families, often because of the trail of broken lives these inmates have left.

For the past few months we've organized a network of prison ministries that will give us the names, addresses and inmate numbers of prisoners who want to read *Charisma*. To avoid contraband getting into facilities, prison regulations require that magazines be mailed through the post office. That's easy for us to do; we mail issues to people's homes anyway. We just

need to know the recipient's name, either from a request from the prisoner or from a chaplain. If you know a prisoner you want to bless, send us their information with your own subscription information and we'll handle it as we would any gift subscription.

These subscriptions are actually tax-deductible through our nonprofit partner Charisma Cares, a part of Christian Life Missions. You'll receive a tax receipt, and our company makes the issues available at cost—\$5 each, which covers paper, postage and fulfillment costs. Give any amount and Charisma Cares will apply 100 percent to this program with nothing taken out for overhead.

Jesus said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40)—and that includes serving those who are incarcerated. Isn't this an investment in the lives of the prisoners Jesus asked us to visit? Think of how a single copy can get passed around to inmates eager to read something from the outside world. What a witness!

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