

‘Forgiven Ministry’ Reunites Prison Inmates With Children

Scottie Barnes, after spending her entire life visiting her father in prison, started an organization in 2002 called Forgiven Ministry to reach imprisoned men and their families.

Since then, Forgiven Ministry has connected hundreds of incarcerated fathers to their children through its One Day With God program held by various churches across the country. Raleigh (North Carolina) First Assembly of God has hosted One Day With God for the past three years.

“One Day With God is all about reconciliation between the inmate and God and the inmate and his children,” says Chad Harvey, teaching pastor at Raleigh First Assembly.

Around 100 volunteers from Raleigh First Assembly facilitate the One Day program. After their extensive training and through coordination with Wake Correctional Center in Raleigh, about 25 minimum-security inmates are bused to the church’s fellowship hall on the Friday afternoon before One Day With God. During that afternoon and evening, the men are instructed on godly fatherhood through teaching, prayer and discussion.

The next morning, the fathers return to meet—some for the first time—their children and for a day full of activities together.

Bill Woodworth, community outreach director, and Brian Dickerson, prison ministry director for Raleigh First Assembly, note that during the day fathers and their children play interactive games, pray, listen to speakers, sing, make crafts and eat together.

One particular activity has fathers on the floor competing

while their children cheer them on and then the children competing while the fathers cheer for them. All the activities are designed to strengthen the father-child relationship.

At the end of the day, a speaker presents a gospel message. Many fathers and children have given their hearts to the Lord. Upon leaving, after many tear-filled good-bye hugs, a photo of father and child goes home with each participant.

Dickerson leads a Bible study small group at the prison each Monday evening and is able to follow up with many of the men from the One Day With God.

"If you look at some of the greatest movements of God in history, often they start from reaching the broken and hurting," Harvey says. "We are reaching these men for the Kingdom and also seeing their lives and families restored."

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