SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER



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2536 Rimrock Ave., Suite 400-171 Grand Junction, CO 81505 970-24-3351



CHAPLAINS CORNER

Free and Free Indeed





Journeys from sin's wilderness to prison sanctification!

Upon thinking about my walk with Christ, I marvel at the many poor choices I made despite possessing the biblical knowledge regarding teaching otherwise.

Misconceptions about becoming a disciple of Christ and the ensuing biblical tenets range from aspects of can and can't do's and no-fun social restrictions. I also hear many of these misconceptions and deceptions throughout the jail such as "I have my own relationship with God and I don't have to go to church or read my bible because he knows my heart."

But there is also another side and that is gained wisdom. I liken wisdom to a fine wine in that the more a person reads over time and earnestly applies biblical principles into their life, the more it becomes enriched and fortified over time.

Wisdom as a Fine-Wine!

Subsequently, inmates learn that biblical commandments are really meant to teach, lead, and protect us from the deceptions, temptations,

and sinful nature of the world. I believe today's generation is being bombarded with various forms of cultural and social perspectives in regards to not only what is legal or illegal, but also moral and righteous in the eyes of God.

"God causes everything to work together for good for those who love God"

As a result, sinful acts and immoral mindsets are not necessarily recognized as morally decrepit but rather as simple lifestyle and even necessary options within society. That is, many inmates have never known anything different, or for that matter, they have never known a loving God of grace and goodness.

But accepting Jesus as Lord, reading the Word of God and earnestly seeking its promised wisdom within every aspect of life, allows the Holy Spirit to groom and prune a person's life in immeasurable



ways. When a person trusts God, the Holy Spirit will dictate important aspects of a person's life, such as marriage, financial decisions, family and personal relationships, ones response to life's trials, and even one's personal demeanor and countenance. Consider then how different life could be when the creator of the universe goes before and after you within everything you do and within every relationship in your life!

The antithesis of this intentional lifestyle is what the Bible describes as being blown to and fro. An example of this is running your life by simply putting your best worldly foot forward, living your life according to your best intentions, wielding your best skill set, and rolling the dice of the world on tailored faith and fortunate coincidences. The Bible addresses this in Ephesians 4:14; Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.

Sadly, many inmates believe that God cannot possibly forgive them given everything they've done, be it legally

Unfortunately, most inmates eventually realize that life will only be as good as it's going to get when their best shot at life stems from, "a broken and spiritually blind best shot."



or morally. This type of moral and spiritual self-defeat makes it all the more easy to live a life of compromise as there is seemingly nothing to lose.

So what can life look like to an inmate released into the community? Romans 8 tells us that "God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God..." I oftentimes tell inmates that the best can be yet to come, and I support these words of encouragement with this verse.

The question then is how can we as the church community, love, accept, and absorb a population that is so easily forgotten and oftentimes misjudged upon their release, despite the fact that they have accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior? How do they need to be loved? How would we want our community to love these sheep if they were our children or loved ones?

Perhaps these answers lay within the Word of God. From



"You put your faith in Christ and were given the promised Holy Spirit to show that you belong to God."

this perspective, Romans 8:1-2 reads, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."

Ephesians 1:13 specifically describes those freed from bondage; "Christ also brought you the truth, which is the good news about how you can be saved. You put your faith in Christ and were given the promised Holy Spirit to show that you belong to God."

Is it we then as a society, who are continuing to impose an element of shame, guilt and condemnation over those who have been forgiven as we have been forgiven? How then do we love those whom many may consider as being the least of these? Might these be aspects worthy of prayer and personal-consideration?

Until next time...

Chaplain Michael michael.hernandez@mesacounty.us



Board Perspectives

Hope Defined! - by Ellen Woods

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

~ Romans 15:13

But how exactly does one define hope? I can only describe it as a confident expectation of glorious things to come that God places in the hearts and minds of every believer of Christ. Jesus Christ is the only lasting source of hope that we as broken beings have in our quest for true meaning in life. Without this kind of holy hope, life will invariably lose its meaning.

I have been thinking about how hopeless life would be for me if I were incarcerated (without) the truth of the Gospel. Think of it! Individuals who live these spiritually broken lives desperately need to hear the good news of the gospel in order to experience any sense of eternal hope. What an opportunity and honor we truly have as jail volunteers, to be able to share this holy eternal within this population.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"

The Bible instructs us in Romans 12:2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind". While I understand this verse, I can't help but wonder how easy it has been for the men and women in jail to conform to the world when the world is all they have ever known?

I have been coming into the jail to facilitate Bible studies for the ladies at the Mesa County Detention Center since 2014. I am filled with such an indescribable joy and deem it as such a privilege to serve within this capacity. Countless times, I have witnessed tears flow down the faces of inmates who have experienced the power of God's presence within the jail walls.



The Bible says in
Jeremiah 15:16,
"Your words
were found and
I ate (spiritually
devoured) them, and
your words became
for me a joy and the
delight of my heart."

ellen Woods

As food is to the body, the Bible is truly the food of the soul. Feeding the spiritually starving with God's Word is such an honor and I am the one blest!



ock Phot

To quote the words of an inmate which I feel speaks volumes, "If it wasn't for my time in jail and with those associated with the Mesa County Jail Ministry, I would likely have not found God".

For as long as I am able to serve, I will proudly do so within this ministry as I have witnessed firsthand, inmates experience the life-changing power of the Gospel. Although inmates have lost their legal freedom, they gained so much more when they accepted Jesus Christ, by trusting Him as Lord and Savior!

Praise to our gracious God! Ellen Woods Mesa County Jail Ministry Board Member

The Day is at Hand

Amidst the uncertainties of these times, there is one thing you can know for sure! God loves you and has a plan for your life.

Our culture is a smorgasbord of ever-changing values and beliefs, in which sin is celebrated and compromised by liberal tailored values and convenient intentions. These blurred biblical concepts are grooming our society to believe that various acts of sin are acceptable and even encouraged.

The bible warns us to not be deceived. God knows the plans he has for you; plans to prosper you and not harm you; plans to give you hope and a future. Jesus said, "I am the way the truth and the life. No man can come to the Father but by me." The only question then is, have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not, today is the day to do so! Simply pray this prayer...

Lord, I confess and admit that I am a sinner. I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and ask you to come into my heart. I believe you are the son of God who died and rose again on the third day. You are the Savior of the world and now the Savior of my soul. Forgive me of my sins and lead me as Lord of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, the bible says you are now saved! Find a strong church that teaches exclusively from the Word of God (the Bible) and get to know others who can spiritually strengthen and journey with you as a new believer of Christ.

your journey begins now...

We're Back!



Mesa County Jail Ministry Annual Banquet Celebration! Fall - 2022

- Date and Venue to be Determined-

A Cup of Coffee With A Friend

For the cost of a cup of coffee with a friend, you can make a difference by helping us supply Bibles and other Gospel materials. Your recurring tax-deductible donation of just \$15 a month, or as you feel led to bless, would go a long way in supporting our ongoing efforts to share the Gospel.

In our quest to also reduce inmate recidivism, we remind everyone within our community that most of our inmates will be re-acclimated within our neighborhoods, local businesses, and church community. What an awesome opportunity we have then to preach the Good News so that our inmates can depart from incarceration differently than how they arrived.



Chaplain Michael A. Hernandez would be delighted to meet with you, your church pastor, or local business owners to discuss ways we can work together. Simply go to our website; mesacountyjailministry.org and click on the Donate button.

Thank you in advance for prayers and faithfulness in supporting our efforts within our local jail ministry.

~The Mesa County Jail Ministry

Inmate Expressions

Love Arrested

Who am I but a lowly visitor within this generation and even within that I am one who has lost her freedom maybe justifiably so

but I gained a freedom I never knew in my quest for true freedom

I gave up... My Heart My Body My Mind My Hopes My Sacrifices My Dignity My Reputation My Innocence My Values My Dreams Every part of me...

and in return I received, judgment, social rejection, pain and disappointment, a false version of freedom



But I rejoice even yet in that what I measurably lost... I gained in wisdom I gained in hope I gained the value of me

by accepting the one who first gave up His freedom for me and also for they who took and trampled the finest parts of me

still, my eternity awaits as does the gained wisdom in my heart that I may hear the words, "well done my good and faithful servant!" ...Inmate Anonymous

2022 The Journey Continues...

One definition of time as stated online is: "the indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present, and future regarded as a whole." Upon examining this particular definition, I wonder by whose measure the word indefinite was defined?

We are almost arrested within time in that our goings are typically measured, be it from sunrise to sunset or during our working hours for example. With this said, every aspect of our lives can evolve into nothing more than a tailored worldly agenda.

Upon considering all aspects of life, can our social and economic responsibilities become a common deception? That is, are we being lulled into believing



that we have at least a statistical lifespan of time within our western culture?

The Bible clearly states, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." These are thought-provoking and sobering reminders as one may take their tailored plans for granted, be it within today or over the course of a lifetime.

Time is an aspect that becomes a very real factor for jail inmates. While time with loved ones or leisure activities may be limited, the awareness of time allows inmates to ponder deeper issues such as love, mortality, and especially ones values.

Volunteer spotlight

Friends of the Ministry - By Paul Von Guerard

"I guess there are never enough books."

-John Steinbeck

American Author, Literary Nobel Prize Winner

Perhaps John Steinbeck's words ring true when maintaining 13 book shelves for 450 plus inmates in the Mesa County Jail.

Given the many anonymous donors, one local group in particular, Friends of the Mesa County Libraries has consistently supplied our ministry with a steady supply of soft-cover books for the inmates.

It takes a jail volunteer at least a week each month to manage book donations, stock and rotate books in each jail pod, and fill book requests from inmates.

That said, the Mesa County Jail Ministry's library makes an impactful difference in the day to day living of jail inmates.

Reading is one of the primary ways inmates occupy their time. Some have soft-cover books sent in to them by friends and family, but most rely on the books donated to our ministry. Books are rotated at least once a month. Requests for specific books are filled as titles or authors are available. Books requested include novels by John Grisham, Dean Koontz, and Toni Morrison, for example. Science fiction, westerns by authors such as Louis L'Amour, as well as books in Spanish; and religious readings are also widely requested. Self-help books on topics ranging from marriage, parenting, addictions and healthy relationships are also popular reads. Educational reading on topics such as obtaining a GED, math and writing skills improvement are also popular requests as some inmates aim at fortifying their



Stock Dhy

educational skillset. Still, the most requested book by far is the Bible. Hundreds of bibles in various versions are distributed annually. While some Bibles are donated, using funds donated by ministry supporters, the Mesa County Jail Ministry purchases the majority of Bibles distributed. Inmates themselves have come to recognize and appreciate our library selection. One particular inmate stated, I tell a story about receiving a copy of Johann Wolfgang

"I have never read so much in my entire life. I have leanned more about myself and my relationships through daily reading within my time here."

von Goethe's, Faust which was just unpacked from a box of donated books. Placing it on the shelf of classic books, I wondered if this book was the only copy in the entire Grand Valley. To my surprise, minutes later, a request was received from an inmate for a copy of Faust.

One inmate was particularly fond of books by author Janette Oke and made regular requests for her books. Upon release, he returned a few weeks later with two bags of books to donate to the Book Ministry.



Over the years, the MCJM has developed an invaluable relationship with Friends of the Mesa County Libraries

Friends of the Library are found in many communities nationwide. Here in the Grand Valley, there about 20 faithful volunteers committed to putting books in the hands of the community.

The Friends organization supplies the majority of the books maintained for the inmates. In addition to the Jail, the Friends donate books to Catholic Outreach, teachers, Youth Summer Reading Programs, nursing homes and others as requested. Carol, a local library volunteer mentioned that Friends support

library programs by raising funds through book sales. Recently, the Friends organization committed to raising \$10,000 per year for the next three years (\$30,000) for the new Library in Clifton. Books are sold at library branches and during their annual October Book Sale.

Books are also sold weekly at the book warehouse in the back lot of the First Congregational United Church of Christ located at 1425 N. 5th St. Books are on sale Friday and Saturdays from 9 AM to 2PM. Children's books are 25 cents; Paperbacks are \$1 and hard back books are \$2. Check them out at mesacountylibraries.org/aboutus/supportus/friends/

Paperback books are always in demand within the jail. We ask that donated books be in good condition. Books such as westerns (especially Louis L'Amour), English dictionaries, addiction and recovery, biographies, health, history, studies in the Bible, books on world religions as well as books by mainstream authors such as C.S. Lewis, Koontz, Frank Peretti, Max Lucado, James Patterson, Janette Oke, and J.R.R. Tolkien are especially appreciated. We are in particular need of books in Spanish. That said, the Holy Bible is always needed and in demand, especially study bibles. The success of the Book Ministry at the Mesa County Jail is truly a community effort.

If you would like to donate or contribute to our book fund, please contact Chaplain Michael A. Hernandez at 970-244-3351 or email me personally at paul.von-guerard@mesacounty.us

MCJM Bible Fund

Please consider supporting our ministry's Bible fund.

Your monthly recurring donation of any amount will allow our ministry to purchase Bibles and distribute them to countless of inmates. You can be a part of spiritually witnessing to a population within our community who are spiritually open to receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Check out our website at mesacountyjailministry.org and click on the donate button to do your part and make a difference for the kingdom of God.

"Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them" Hebrews 13:3

Life After Incarceration

A Father's Unconditional Love... A Son's Redemption

... You are my son and it was my time! Remember, you are never alone"

My father was on his way to pick me up from jail. Nine months served this time. It was nothing new as I had been in jail several times. I told him I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior as I planned to do things differently now. I knew he would be happy because my father loved God.



I waited for his arrival. I was finally out of here. But my father never arrived. It was a car accident. I knew something was wrong when my brother showed up to the jail to pick me up. I struggled to accept that my father's time had come.

We drove to the scene of the crash. His car was upside down in a ravine. I made my way down still believing somehow everything would be okay and that this was all a magnificent mistake. It wasn't.

His things were strewn about within the upside down vehicle. Everything in that car reflected who he was. His Bible was opened on the

inside ceiling of the car. I grabbed it as it was now a keepsake. There was his old coffee-cup about twenty feet from the car and a jacket I asked him to bring.



I also found my father's journal which he has kept for a number of years. It too was thrown out of the vehicle. I couldn't help but to read the last entry only because my name was under the date of my discharge.

It read, "Lord, I have envisioned the approaching figure of my son. My only son. I think he has found you Lord. Give me the wisdom to not only love him but journey with him within his walk with you. I doubt he knows how much I love him. Lord help me to faithfully reflect you. Today begins anew."

I take comfort in knowing that my father's last breath on earth was followed by his first breath in heaven. I felt both humbled and yet guilty in believing that I was part of his purpose within his journey. Was his accident and subsequent death because of me? I swear I heard my father's voice quickly interrupt my thoughts, telling me, "you are my son and it was

I take comfort in knowing that my father's last breath on earth was followed by his first breath in heaven"

Continued on Page 10...

my time! Remember, you are never alone. There is nothing you can ever do that will change my love for you." Despite these words, I suddenly felt so alone.

I questioned life. I questioned death. I questioned God! Why would he bring me this far then have me lose the one person who never gave up on me? I so yearned for 5 minutes back within my 23 years of life. How I wasted my time having spent countless days and nights with those I will likely never see again, at least not intentionally. They too were lost. This was yet again my second chance (dozens of times over). But this time I was left to remember all those lessons ignored.

The teachings and legacy of my father's wisdom couldn't end in vain. I felt like his legacy now rested upon me.



Who am I? I must be more than just a jail frequent flyer. And so I overcame these doubts, my failures, my hopelessness and myself as Jesus proclaimed I could do by trusting Him.

That was four years ago. Within this time, I learned I could sing as I am now a member of my church's worship team. I'm also a manager at a local restaurant. The General Manager gave me a chance. Thank you Mr. (Jones) for believing in me. Ironically, it is the same restaurant my father and I would frequent when I was a boy. I wish we could have that cup of coffee now. I wish he knew that I finally understand. Life is not about me. It never was. Not my will but God's will be done. Even if it means a son losing his father and coming full-circle within God's plan.

~Former Jail Inmate



Thank you to our supporters

And then there is God.

Is God not the one who dictates and governs time within creation? After all, Psalm 90:12 teaches that "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

But what about those who deny or do not love God? What about those who indifferently concede that while there may be a divine heavenly being, they do not believe or subscribe to Jesus Christ as Messiah or his biblical tenets.

Within my biblical teachings, these types of open-ended considerations and ponderances typically spawn one to consider the very limited and unique opportunity we have to love and serve others and not simply gaze upon the temporary goings of life. 2 Peter 3:8 reminds us; "To the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day." Either way, for us finite beings, our lives will run its course.

As we continue to venture into the unknown within 2022, please "remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself." Is this even a plausible consideration for some of us as our jail population can be one that is so easily forgotten?

God encourages us in Jeremiah 29; "For I know the plans I have for you...plans to prospect you and not harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." Even inmates. Even you and I.

Please prayerfully consider supporting our ministry. Check out our website at mesacountyjailministry.org to learn more about the work we are doing within our community.

Ask If you are interested in submitting a question to *Ask The Chap* please email chaplain Michael Hernandez at: michael.hernandez@ mesacounty.us

Dear Chaplain,

I read an article in your newsletter and found myself easily relating to the anonymous writer, In Love with a Stranger. She was the woman who could no longer relate to her boyfriend who became saved in jail. My fiancé, whom I will call Gary, is currently incarcerated.

My situation is different in that our time apart has allowed me to examine my life apart from him. Since Gary was arrested and incarcerated, I was forced to start my life over again. My household income had now become a single income as well as a single parent to my six-yearold daughter who is not Gary's biological child. After Gary was arrested, I became incredibly lonely and lost. I hadn't realized how much I depended on him for everything.

I have a neighbor, "Jill," who watches my six-year-old daughter. She is a Christian who has always invited me to her women's church group. I never went with her because Gary was absolutely against me going stating that I didn't need to be "brainwashed by all those crazy Jesus fanatics."

Recognizing that my situation had become desperate, Jill once again invited me to her women's group. I hesitated because I thought I would be judged, gossiped about, and misunderstood. As it turned out, nothing was further from the truth! The women at the group are amazing!

After a couple of months, I accepted Jesus Christ as my soul Savior! I felt like a heavy weight of sin and worry was lifted off my shoulders! I no longer felt alone and afraid. Over time, I befriended one of the ladies from the group who became a mother-figure to me. She referred me to the company she works for, and I got hired making an hourly rate far more dependable than my fluctuating part-time job as a waitress.

I still keep in touch with Gary as he depends on me to send him money. I have a lot of mixed feelings about him and seriously doubt God wants me to remain in the sinful lifestyle I was caught up in with him. Despite the fact that I send what I can to support him, I've noticed that he has never once asked about my daughter or her well-being. Also, my daughter recently heard us talking and in tears, she told me that he would threaten to beat her if she complained about anything or if she told me about his threats. I was angry and devastated at the same time!

My question is, how do I break off my relationship with a man I used to love so dearly? Everything in my being is telling me to run but I am afraid.

Signed, Afraid to Go Back

Dear Afraid to Go Back,

From what I am hearing, it sounds like you already know what to do as it pertains to Gary. I am also certain that the women in your church group also likely think the same thing.

Change is difficult but it's especially difficult when one doesn't see it coming. In this case, change can be as easy or as difficult as you dictate. Having said this, this is not to say that breaking things off with Gary is going to be easy...confused yet?

Trust in the one you now call Savior! As you trust God and rely upon His wisdom and strength, His Word tells us that He will never leave or forsake us. God loves you and has a great plan for you and your daughter. Trust in Him with all our heart and not lean upon our understanding. Stay faithful to God's leading because your sworn soul-enemy is going to fight you! That is, you may at times feel guilty, confused, and led to feel like the easiest thing to do is to return to who and where you were (before Christ).

Remember, God also has plans for Gary, and I seriously doubt His plans for him is to live with you in sin despite both your good intentions. I don't believe this is what you want to represent in his life. Remember, when you take your eyes off God and rely upon reasoning, good intentions, and human promises, sin will make sense! And Satan will keep you there for as long as you allow. Pray for wisdom. And pray for strength.

Also, God gave you the gift of motherhood. Is this the fearful and dependent lifestyle you are justifying as acceptable? Because your daughter shared her fearful heart with you regarding Gary's threats to harm her, what you do with that makes you solely responsible for her healing and if you don't correct this, over time as she grows older, she will resent you for not protecting her.

I hope this is the confirmation you are seeking. Anytime a person departs from their sinful lifestyle, obedience will yield blessings beyond your fears and even your hopes. Trust God and be obedient and he will do the rest. I am praying for both of you! - Michael "Chap" Hernandez





Remember those who are in prison, as if you were their fellow prisoner ~ Hebrews 13:3

As Hebrews tells us, we are all called to remember the incarcerated population, an aspect of our community that are so easily forgotten. Please prayerfully consider supporting our ministry and our ongoing work. Our ministry provides Bibles, facilitates weekly church services and Bible studies, as well as provide reading glasses and books and religious supplies as we are best

Your support would greatly help us support the work we do, not only within the jail walls, but within our community.



THE POWER OF PRAYER!

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.~1 John 5:14

Let us know how we may pray for you. We would love to hear your heart as we continue to love those not only within the jail, but also all of those within our community.

Feel free to submit your prayer requests or questions and comments to michael.hernandez@mesacounty.us Please also check out our website at mesacountyjailministry. org or check out our Facebook page; Mesa County Jail Ministry.

SUPPORT & DONATIONS

If you are interested in supporting Mesa County Jail ministries financially, through prayer or volunteering; scan the gr code to the left or contact us at michael.hernandez@mesacounty.us 970.244.3351 | Mesacountyjailministry.org