

Alpha Prison Ministries Newsletter

January 2010 Edition

"I was in prison and you came to visit me." Matthew 25:36b

What Do We Call This?

Unless you are very young, we seem to all share the common perception that the year 2000 does not seem like it was ten years ago already. Perhaps we say this about every decade, but really, where did that one go? Maybe it's because 2000 was more than a new year or even a new century, but a new millennium, and it's hard to believe we've completed the first decade already.

While there are plenty of questions people are asking as we celebrate this new year—with things like the economy and the changes our government is pushing for—my question is different and I don't hear many people asking it. What do we call this decade? Do we call it the "Ten's" or "Teen's" or what? Now we're here, and I still don't know what to call it.

Good thing I'm not confused about life. It was probably about 3 years ago that Proverbs 3:32 jumped off the page at me as I read where the Lord "takes the upright into his confidence." Wow, God Almighty, creator of the universe, takes **me** into **his** confidence! It wasn't new information, it was just a new way of thinking about the relationship we

have with God; when he reveals truth to us, he is placing trust in us and sharing confidential information.

2 Corinthians Chapter 2 is loaded with further insight. This is the place where Paul tells us, "God has revealed [his secret wisdom] to us by his Spirit." He goes on to say, "The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us."

Verse 14: "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

When you think about it, one of the things we're doing in prison ministry is helping men get connected to a God who *lavishes his love on us with all wisdom and understanding*. He takes prisoners into his confidence too, and transforms their lives. So whatever we're supposed to call this decade, it's an opportunity to keep fighting the good fight of faith.

See us online... www.alphapm.org

- ◆ With many prisons closing, the overcrowding of inmates is a definite problem. Pray that inmate missionaries will be a calming influence in prisons.
- ◆ Ask the Lord to grant an added awareness of his grace and favor on volunteers and inmates as they deal with effects from prison budget cuts. Pray the Lord's work will go unhindered by the circumstances.
- ◆ Pray for God to continue to raise up volunteers who want to work one-on-one with inmates, sharing the gospel and studying the Bible with them.
- ◆ Praise God for our volunteers, supporters, and those who pray for us.
- ◆ Thank the Lord that we are able to minister to several men who are residents of our Alpha House facilities. Pray that each of these residents will be successful in their faith and re-entry to society.

JANUARY 2010

Prayer Requests

Alpha
Prison Ministries

Please cut around these prayer requests and use this as a bookmark in your Bible.

ALPHA HOUSE

No Longer Self Reliant

Testimony from Jim, an Alpha House resident

I used to think that I can do it on my own. I did not need anyone. I knew of God, but I did not know God. I always thought, I don't need God's help. I am just fine. This was my way of thinking for the majority of my life. I was a loner. I did things the way I wanted to. I lived for my self satisfaction. I lived for my flesh, and I lived for the ways of the world.

God blessed me with a beautiful family, a successful job, and the meeting of needs. Yet, I gave Him credit for nothing....I did it on my own. Pride ruled my life. I was traveling the wide path that is stated in the Bible. The narrow path did nothing for me and I wanted no part of it. I always sensed something missing from my life. I did not know what it was.

In May 1996, God said enough is enough. I was leading into self destruction. I was arrested and placed in a jail cell. I lost every blessing God had given me. I felt alone. I had no one. Still I thought everything would be okay. After all, I always turned negative situations into positive ones. I will be okay, I thought, I can handle it. I was sentenced to prison in July 1996. Still no change in my way of thinking.

I attended a service sponsored by the Gideons, in prison, on July 23rd. It was at this time I experienced the feeling of a void in my heart. I said the sinner's prayer. I could sense my heart being filled with joy. For the first time in my life I invited God to be a part of my life. I no longer felt alone. I realized God was waiting for the forty plus years of my life to invite Him into my life. I felt complete as I was filled with God's joy, mercy, and love.

Following that day, I started reading the Bible and taking time to read it, meditate on it, and listen to what God is saying. I continued to have struggles. Yet, instead of dealing with them on my own, I placed them in the hands of God. Wow! What a difference it meant!

While in prison God introduced me to amazing Christian organizations

and people, too many to mention here, although several remain active in my life till this day. I was released from prison on August 23, 2009 after serving thirteen years. Thirteen years which saw a complete turn around in my way of thinking...I was now traveling the narrow path, not the wide path.

Mark and Teresa were two of the first Christians I met after being saved. They have been such a blessing to my life. They are always there with encouragement, support, and prayers. Unlike numerous people in my life, they have never turned their backs on me. Their letters always mean a great deal to me...like I know it does to the numerous other inmates they write to. God knew who to share with me...He gave me Mark and Teresa and I thank Him daily for them.

God also introduced me to Alpha Prison Ministries through a Bible study. Here I meant an amazing volunteer (Elroy) who continues to help me and encourage me to this day. In addition, God provided me housing within the Alpha ministry program where I am surrounded by sound Christian fellowship, support, and study.

I no longer feel I can do things on my own. I no longer feel I need no one. Pride, the flesh, and the ways of the world no longer control my life. I strive to bring God glory in all I do. I am far from perfect. But, I now have God in my life. I give Him praise for blessing me with the people and organizations He knows I need in my life. I thank God for never giving up on me. For if He did, I would not be here today sharing this with you.

I no longer belong to the ways of the world...I am a child of God and I travel the narrow path. What a peaceful and wonderful feeling. What an awesome, merciful, and loving Heavenly Father God we share. Without Him, we are nothing and we can do nothing!

Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want. 1 Peter 4:1-2 (The Message)

Alpha Prison Ministries is an **undenominational Christ-centered ministry** to prisoners and ex-offenders.

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