



Missionary Evangelism to Corrections

Sharing the gospel & Christ's love

with those in corrections since 1982

Memorial Day and Spiritual Warfare

May 31, 2016 Newsletter

MEC Spotlight



Listening to Florence, one of the residents at the assisted living where my mother is, talk about her family's experience in the war was difficult, but helped me know her better. Fortunately for them, her loved one was ill which caused him to be unable to march with his unit when it was wiped out. Friendly fire is weapon fire coming from one's own side, especially fire that causes accidental injury or death to one's own forces. My mother (also Florence) lost her brother, George, through friendly fire when one of his comrades did not follow safety protocol in the bunkhouse.

In remembering those who have given their lives in war I start thinking about the war we fight on a spiritual level. Even the words spiritual warfare or spiritual battle can be misunderstood. At one apartment where a prayer session was posted as spiritual warfare, one woman who was

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Do you know how many people woke up in the Hennepin County Jail today? There are anywhere from between 600 and 800. They are all created in God's image. Maybe they've heard the gospel; or a distortion of it. Maybe they think Jesus is just a swear word. I talk to all of them. They're lonely, lost, confused, scared and they're ready to listen. They are allowed to have four books in their cell, hopefully one is a Bible, and hopefully one is *More than a Carpenter* by Josh McDowell that I bring in to share with the guys.



Back in 1998 I heard a sermon on Matthew 25.... "Then the righteous will say, 'When did we see You hungry,.. Thirsty,.. a stranger,..without clothes,. Sick,..or in prison, and visit You?' "And the King will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.' " The Holy Spirit really convicted me ...that I needed to be part of the solution instead of the problem. So I ...took the Prison Fellowship training. I only work three blocks from the Hennepin County jail, [but they were not taking volunteers then, so I prayed about this periodically for year and a half. When the new jail was built, I started volunteering in August of 2001. They threw some tables and Bibles in

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unfamiliar with the term thought that the group met to support the war effort. Spiritual battle involves a lot of the basics of the faith. We need the weapons of Salvation, truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, God's word and faith. Perseverance in Prayer is vital (Eph. 6). Many believers approach it through times of fasting and prayer. At other times there is a need for rest and trust. Sometimes it is recognizing that the arrows of Satan are lies. Sometimes these can be doubts which are intellectual or emotional. Often they can be thoughts against ourselves or other believers.

Thank you to Josh Soderlund for making our new sign!



Intellectual doubts can be addressed by apologetics or defenses with such as the historical accuracy of scripture being the most substantiated history book we have, archeological evidence and the fruits of Christian labor such as many academic and health intuitions. Emotional doubt can be addressed with hymns, learning more of the Character of Christ, deep honest fellowship and heartfelt prayer using Psalms and other scriptures. Christianity is true when it is put into practice. As we practice it, it is more fully developed in us.

Satan is a deceiver and an accuser. If he can get us to believe that we or the other person deserves to be cut off through blame or harsh correction; it causes a rift in relationships. Beliefs that we or they are unloved or unlovable are lies that need to be replaced with God's truth of love, care, admonishment and encouragement. (1 Thes. 5, Heb. 3 & 10, Eph. 4, 1 Thes. 5, Col. 3) If, in our correction or interest in protecting truth, we say another believer's theology is heresy, we are making an accusation which needs examination. If in the process of

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the old lineup room. [After getting cleared and an orientation] I walk in and there are all these guys in the orange jumpsuits. I asked if I could wear the panic button which is used in case of a crisis. ...

The time flew. They seemed very grateful that I was there. Bible study is optional in the jail, you don't have to come. You get guys there that maybe they just want a change of scenery, maybe they just want to check out this visitor, or maybe they really want to learn; I don't know; that is up to God. So something I never thought I could do ... God did through me.

As weeks went by I stopped wearing the panic button. We jumped around, discussing Nicodemus, The woman at the well, Zaccheus, the Prodigal son and [other topics]. Sometimes I would say ... let's turn to such and such verse ... and many times the guys would say "Hey man we were studying that this morning and we have some questions on that." I would be glad I went that day.

There are many inmates I can tell you about.

The first inmate that really sticks in my mind is a guy named Walter; he would give me his prayer requests and take notes during the Bible study. He seemed so eager to change, to ask Jesus to change him. ...

There was a guy the size of Shaquille O'Neil. He came to a number of Bible studies and after the last one and he said ... "Hey Steve thanks so much for coming. I'm going to Stillwater next week - what should I do when I get there?" ...

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You've heard about Mike in the news ... He had a very disastrous upbringing. He had fetal alcohol syndrome and an intellectual learning disability. He tried to self-medicate his pain away and he accidentally killed someone. He came to 4 or 5 Bible studies and as I was leaving the last one he came run-

One guy came up after reading the story of the Prodigal Son and said to me "Steve I'm that Prodigal. My dad's funeral is Friday, I won't be there because I'll be in jail; will you pray for me?"

For me it's just a lunch hour. I go back to my office after some of these visits and put things in perspective with emails and voice

mail. There are guys three blocks away who need help, who need a hand up. We're God's hands and feet to minister to these guys. There are always openings, and it crushes my heart, I mean

where are we? I'm not meaning to lay a guilt trip on anyone; God has called me to do this. [Is He calling you?]

Steve Benjamin

Problem Thinking & The Lords Healing: **Sentimentality**

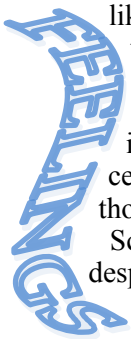
Sentimentality noun ,sen(t) əmən'talədē/ plural sentimentalities Excessive tenderness, sadness, or nostalgia. Sentimental, (adjective) showing, or resulting from feelings or emotions rather than reason or thought; appealing to the emotions especially in an excessive way; strong feelings of love, sadness, etc., that may seem foolish or excessive.

The topic of sentimentality on the list of criminal thinking is perplexing. We like to think in categories and to combine sentimentality with criminal and addictive thinking feels contrary. Looking at the definition is helpful in understanding it.

Having strong feelings of sentimentality about their mothers, animals, people in need and religion allows a person to feel better about them-selves and helps them believe they are good people. Criminals do have that little voice of conscience but they block it out. Thinking of these good things can be used to increase the concept of victimization or vindication and used as an excuse or justification for the wrong committed. When trying to understand this, I thought of times when I have given a lot and am overtired. Then if someone asks me to do one more thing, I can feel like lashing out is justified. Criminals also have a strong sense of right and wrong, they just exclude what they are doing from the wrong category. Hurt and anger are used regularly as a reason to deviate from relating responsibly.

Sentimentality can also be used to block out guilt, conviction and negative feelings so that hurt and destruction they are causing themselves and others is less accessible in thought and action. Criminals can sometimes have compassionate thoughts and do small acts of kindness to their victims.

Scripture tells us that "The human heart is the most deceitful of or above all things, desperately sick, weak or wicked, and beyond cure, incurable, or incurably bad. Who can understand it or really knows how bad, how deceitful it is? (Jeremiah 17:9) Jesus refers to callous hearts, closed ears and eyes, hearts that will not understand. (Mtt. 13). Other scriptures such as Mark 7, Romans 1 & 7, and Ephesians 4 point out our old or sinful nature and our need to turn to God for Salvation, which involves true forgiveness and change. So if it so bad, where is the hope of changing it? The hope is still in the scripture. Verse 10 says God knows and He brings justice. Then, Jesus brings healing. He said that "it is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick." (Jer. 17:10 & Mark 2)



To be continued
next newsletter

guarding the truth, are we neglecting Christ’s commandments, to Love God with all of our heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves? (Matt. 22, Mk 12) I was encouraged when I read an online apology from a public speaker who recognized that the words he used to describe another believer’s teaching were not words he would have used if they had been sitting at lunch together. I believe that asking for clarification can reveal semantic differences and open our minds to learning from each other.

Paul wrote letters which confronted deep sins and defended himself. He also expressed love to those same people in the form of longing to see them, greeted many of them by name, urged people to get along, prayed for them and wanted to experience deeper relationships with them. (I Cor.1, II Cor. 2 & 13, Gal. 6, Eph. 4, Phil. 1, Col 4, I Thes. 5)

As we remember those who gave their lives to fight and die for freedom, we can also be thankful for those who give their time, energy and lives to fighting for spiritual freedom from sin and shame by sharing Christ’s love with others. Thank you to all MEC volunteers and followers of Christ who do so.

Karen Selby

Ministry Friends

We know that we are not alone in **Ministry**. This month MEC’s shout-out is to **Freedom Works**

The FreedomWorks program is a post-prison ministry helping former offenders reconcile to God, family and community . A 6-to-9 month process designed for men who are trusting Jesus to change them through the comprehensive, life-long aftercare that transforms ex-offenders into courageous peacemakers, hardcore criminals into upstanding citizens, and absent fathers into loving dads.

Myfreedomworks.com

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.” -Galatians 5:1

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Pray for our state and country. The Southwest Metro Drug Task Force in MN includes 3 counties – 10 cities. The SWMDTF has seen a
14 % increase in Heroin
242% increase in methamphetamine
54% decrease in marijuana
3274% increase in cocaine use

As of Mid-March 2016:

- ◆ Heroin was responsible for 7 deaths and more than a dozen non-fatal overdoses over the past few weeks.
- ◆ Heroin seizures by the Violent Crime Enforcement Teams in 2015 reached 18 pounds –125% increase since 2011.

Minnesota Department of Public Safety—Minnesota Fusion Center & March 2016—Bureau of Criminal Apprehension

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