

MAN AT HIS WORST AND GOD AT HIS BEST

It is exciting to me to know that the same life changing God we read about in the Scriptures is the same God we serve today. Every time I enter a facility to proclaim the Word of God, I expect God to do something supernatural. Salvation is of the Lord, and I thank Him that He has just allowed all of us to be a part of what He is doing in the lives of men. I love prison ministry because it is a place where you can see firsthand, **MAN AT HIS WORST AND GOD AT HIS BEST.**

The last execution I was asked to witness was that of an ex-prison guard who, in an act of rage, had killed five children and yet he had become a new creature in Christ and an exemplary Christian on Texas death row. Truly a case of man at his worst and God at His best!

The first service I held this year was so packed that there was no place for the men to sit. The officer that brought the men to the chapel told me that it was the first time he had ever seen every man in a cell block come when he called for church. The inmates that have come to the Lord in our services have been going back to the cellblocks and inviting their cellmates to come see for themselves what the Lord is doing in our services. Nothing thrills me more than to be in a room packed with inmates whose lives have been devastated by sin and are now coming to see if there is any hope for them to change.

What a joy it is to be able to share the same message that transformed me from a self-centered drug addict into someone who wants to glorify the One who died for me. There is no greater proof of the power of Jesus Christ and the validity of the Scriptures than a transformed life.

My message will remain the same this year, and it is summed up in I Timothy 2:4-5 where Paul said that it is God "who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

THE BEST CHRISTMAS I WILL EVER HAVE

No group of inmates has been more of a challenge and more of a blessing than the juveniles that I minister to every week. These are the juveniles that have been certified by the state of Texas to stand trial as adults because they have committed a violent crime. Many of them have taken the life of someone and are facing life in prison.

One such young man started coming to our service every Wednesday and would just sit and stare. It wasn't long before the love of God captured his hard heart and he gave his life to Christ. He has become the brightest light in the entire cellblock of these knuckleheads.

In our last service before Christmas, I asked if anyone wanted to thank the Lord for anything. It is always hard to get these kids to say a word. One young man who led a violent gang stood up and said, "I thank the Lord He sent Father Downs to bring Jesus into this place." I have told him many times he can just call me Chaplain Downs but his background gets the better of him. Then the young man with a capital murder case that I mentioned before stood up, turned to his peers, and said, "I want to thank the Lord Jesus Christ for dying for my sins and for coming into my life. This will be **THE BEST CHRISTMAS I WILL EVER HAVE** because now I really understand what Christmas is all about." Here was a fifteen-year-old boy who knows that in all likelihood he will never spend Christmas outside again saying that this was going to be his best Christmas.

Of course I lost it and all those youngsters wondered what Chaplain Downs was crying about. I do not have the words to tell you what I have seen God do in the lives of these teens who everyone but God and mom has given up on.

WE NEED THE LORD ON THIS FLOOR

In one of the facilities I work in there is one floor that is designated as a psychiatric floor and another floor that is designated as a substance abuse floor. I have been holding services on the psychiatric floor and working with the men that are there because of attempted suicide. Recently some of the officers refused to pull the men out for church because they felt it was too "high risk." When I appealed to the officers who were in charge they overruled and said, "These men need to be with the chaplain."

One of my greatest desires has been to bring the message of Christ into the substance abuse program on the ninth floor but was told that because it was a state program the chances were slim. Last week, I went onto the floor and began to talk with the man who headed it up. When I told him that I had sat where these inmates are now sitting, and that I had been drug free for over twenty years, he sat up and asked if there was any way I could help them in their program. He picked up a handbook the state had put together and told me it was the only book they used. I told him I could and would help if I would have liberty to point the men to a relationship with the Lord and use the Book that had changed my life. At that point he said, "**WE NEED THE LORD ON THIS FLOOR.**"

It was refreshing to hear the head of a state-run program invite the influence of the Lord into their program. I am very excited about another door that God has opened.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR US

When we started this ministry in 1997 I knew we were touching the closest thing to the heart of God. I also knew that it would not be without opposition and trials. Anyone who is a student of the Word and is involved in making a difference in lives knows that we are promised to face times of testing. Someone has well said that our trials do not ruin us but rather they reveal us. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR US** as we seek to obey our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and do his will.

~ CHAPLAIN JOHN DOWNS