

## Called By Jesus Christ

by Georgie C.

**M**y name is Georgie, and after all the things I've done and the sins I've committed in my life, I find it amazing I can count myself among those who are called by the Lord to be His witness in this world. There is nothing special about me, except that I was a very bad sinner, yet, I was called and saved by the Lord, Jesus Christ, and for this I am forever thankful.

I am originally from the State of Michoacan, Mexico; I was raised in Catholicism by my devout Catholic parents who took me to Catechism school faithfully from the age of

six through twelve. I hated going to Catechism school, but I would go out of respect for my parents.

At the age of fourteen,

my parents brought us to California to live with some aunts and uncles, but since they all had to work they could not keep an eye on me and this meant I would go hang out with the neighborhood kids in the barrio. At first it was kids my age but then I started to hang out with older guys to prove I was tough, and that I could hang with the toughest and badest of them. I soon found myself immersed as a full-fledged member in the neighborhood gang, doing the terrible things gangs do, including drinking hard liquor and using drugs, fighting and shooting it out with other gangs and doing just about anything my big hommies wanted me to do. I especially liked carrying their guns. I was soon arrested for possession of a gun and taken to juvenile detention where I spent about six months. This was only the first of many times I ended up in juvenile detention. And it was there where I learned more about the tricks of the trade and became better at crime and even more rebellious against my parents and my uncles who tried to reason with me. I don't remember hearing the call of

**A Brother in Christ at  
California State Prison-Solano**

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## Forgiving Brings Forgiveness

by Ronnie S.

**I**'ve spent over half my forty years living in jails and prisons. Throughout these years I've heard many catchy names for these places. The one that fits best so far is, “the iron and concrete jungle,” a place where animals don't rest. As I sit and gather my thoughts I feel the madness of life moving around me. I hear the hustling voices of men trying to run their cons. I hear war stories interrupted by fits of laughter. I also hear cons asking other cons for advice trying to sharpen their skills before they hit the streets. There are good animals in the jungle, those who just made a bad choice, but unfortunately the jungle doesn't discriminate. Limited rehabilitation programs and strong doses of peer

**A Brother in Christ at  
Golden State-MCCF**

pressure make it hard for those who want to change and many men turn sour before release. I sympathize with these men and pray that one day they find the same love that has rescued me from the heart of the jungle.

Everyone thinks they know the meaning of love and I was no

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# Ministry Report

by Tim May

As a result of Assembly Bill 900, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation was required to develop and/or improve its existing rehabilitation program. California State Prison-Solano (CSP-Solano) was selected to demonstrate how this will be accomplished. The pilot program is titled CSP-Solano Demonstration Project and the



Reverend Timothy and Katie May

purpose is to develop programs for inmates who are being released back into society. The program is comprised of academic and vocational education, substance abuse treatment, work programs, and mental health care.

I have been asked to develop the Christian component of the faith-based program. My proposal includes a fifteen month Biblical program which includes educational classes, mentoring men, intensive relapse prevention programs for addictions and different aspects of dysfunctional lifestyles, communication skills, basic life principles, and family

related programs.

## First Quarter

*Joyful Expressions* ministered in song and Word at our regular weekly services to the men of California State Prison-Solano, and on a monthly basis, the *ebenezer* team ministers to the young men at the Sacramento County Boys Ranch in Sacramento. In addition, several of the team members were invited to minister at the N. A. Chaderjian Youth Correctional Facility in Stockton, California.

## Easter Tour

*One Voice Praise Choir* Freedom Tour ministered to the men of California State Prison-Solano and Sierra Conservation Center-Jamestown. We had the opportunity to minister to approximately 1200 men at these facilities with 123 men dedicating or re-dedicating their lives to Christ.

## Production Team:

Pastor Kim Moreno, Choir Director; Rudy Aguardo and David O'Guinn, Sound

## One Voice Praise Choir and Joyful Expressions Members:

Carolina Aguardo, Aiesha Apointe, Bill Barr, Janet Hartwell-Brown, Marlee Certini, Sandy Evans, Lynne Gallaher, Nancy Gould, Judith Handa, Ron Handa, Jeanne Havlicek, Lucille Lamb, Tim May, Judy Moran, Norbert Moreno, Larry Newson, Peggy Preece, Pastor Jolene Queen,

Verna Ringler, Jacqueline Robnett, Jeanne Schultz, Carolyn Sheehan, De Val Smith, Tonya Stanton, Daryl Stewart, and Kathey Van Buskirk

## Weekly Ministry and Outreach:

Pastor Alfred DeGree, Arquilla Conner, Pastor Russell Crooks, Grace C. Davis, Linda Fowler, Dan Gamel, John Haaf, Sol Irving, Pastor Kenneth Love, Katie May, David Michael, Antonio Saldana, Pastor Eddie Thomas, and Pastor Stuart Welch

## Churches Involved:

Abundant Life Christian Fellowship, Mountain View; Bayside Church, Roseville; Bread of Life Ministries, American Canyon; Calvary Community Church, Benicia; Family Bible Church, Vacaville; First Assembly of God, Fairfield; First Baptist Church, Vacaville; Mountain View Christian Center, Brentwood; New Community Church, Fairfield; New Hope Christian Church, Vacaville; Oasis Foursquare Church, Elmira; Open Bible Church, Vacaville; Parkway Community Church, Fairfield; Praise and Worship Church of God and Christ, Sacramento; Providence Community Church, Vacaville; Seventh Day Adventist Church, Fairfield; The Father's House, Vacaville; The Mission, Vacaville; and Valley Hi Covenant Church, Sacramento

# Small Worship Team Visits Youth Facilities

by Nancy Gould

In late December, a small group of singers from *One Voice Praise Choir* formed an ensemble of worship singers (pictured from left to right: Tonya Stanton, Judy Handa, Jeanne Havlicek, Ron Handa, Sandy Evans, Rohming Tai, Nancy Gould, and Judy Moran) to minister specifically at youth facilities in Northern California. As we prepared to sing some of the upbeat styles of worship songs the youth enjoy (Kirk Franklin,



Israel Houghton, Tye Tribbett, and others), we couldn't help but wonder what these young men would think of a group of people our age (all of us are well over 50) coming to sing for them. Our prayer was that they would see the love of Jesus in our faces, and not the wrinkles!

In January, this team made its "debut" at the Sacramento Boys Ranch, and an amazing thing happened...the young men responded with joy and gratitude! They were touched that such a group would come just to sing to them. They were able to enter into worship with great joy and thanksgiving. The songs were especially meaningful to them because of the message they taught them about their relationship with God, *I*

*Am a Friend of God, You Are Good, My Redeemer Lives*. The worship team was also touched by the young men, and cannot wait to return to the Boys Ranch.

In February, we were invited to N.A. Chaderjian Youth Correctional Facility (also known as CYA) in Stockton, California, to minister to the young men there. This is the State's highest security facility for young offenders, and in spite of this, the young men were blessed and very grateful to have us sing and lead them in worship. Songs such as, *I Am Not Forgotten* and *Brighter Days*, helped them to see that God has not forgotten them and reminded them to place their trust in Him. Dan Gamel, our speaker that day (pictured at the right), has been part of the team who ministers on a monthly basis at the Sacramento Boys Ranch for *ebenezer outreach ministry*. Dan is especially gifted to teach and preach to these young men, he works for the Department of Social Services and his caseload consists of young people who face many of the same issues. Every day he sees what the system does to these young men and why many end up incarcerated. Dan gave an amazing message that day on Ezekiel and his vision of dry bones, one third of the young men who attended gave their lives to the Lord!



This small group will continue to minister at the Boys Ranch and CYA in the months to come. Please pray for the young men in these facilities. Pray they will have an encounter with God at an early age and see their lives permanently changed by God's love, and *NEVER* end up in an adult prison! Also pray for more people to become involved in youth ministry, as this early intervention will not only change the youth's lives, but also change the communities they return to when they get out.

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*Nancy is Youth Director for ebezer outreach ministry; she attends Providence Community Church in Vacaville, California.*

the Lord during this time but I knew He was calling me because I was trying hard to ignore the voice of reason and the voice of truth doing all those crazy things I was doing.

Living this lifestyle of danger, violence, drugs, gangs, and sex (and ignoring God) could only end in disaster. By the time I was eighteen, I had gotten two girls in trouble, both had given birth to baby girls but neither time did I rise up to the challenge to be a real man and take responsibility. It was not in me. I didn't care. I was ignorant, arrogant and extremely proud and selfish. And what good could come of that? I got shot at many times, I got beaten severely a couple of times by rival gangs, and was left bleeding more than once. I was left for dead once. I gave as well as I took, although I probably was at the receiving end most of the time as attested by the plethora of scars on my head. Why I wasn't taken out cold then I don't know. I sure do know now it had to do with the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ who preserved me and kept me through all that madness in accordance with His plan for my life spoken of in Jeremiah 29:11.

Jesus had a plan for my life, He came to die for my sins that I may be saved, and I was saved by His grace but not before I finished messing up my life. You see, during my gang years which were from the time I was fourteen years old through eighteen, I had committed many crimes for which I was not caught or punished. I was still committing many other crimes when ironically I was arrested, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to fifteen years-to-life for a crime I did not actually commit. Six of my homeboys had gotten into a skirmish with another gang and one of the rivals was stabbed during the fight and died. I had been with them just prior to that skirmish and when they were later identified I was identified as being with them by witnesses, I could not prove otherwise during the trial.

This of course is not my claim to innocence. I am freely admitting and confessing just what a terrible and wretched sinner I was and how desperately in need of salvation I was. How glad therefore I am able to say that Jesus has saved me and made me whole. I was locked up, lost and feeling sorry for myself in one of the worst prisons in California, Pelican Bay State Prison, when I received Jesus as

my Lord and Savior. I was twenty-five years old, and it was July 1999, when I was born again, when I became a son of God by His amazing grace which I now sing. Praise be to God!

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It seems we are always trying to figure out what the Lord's will is for us.

We begin by putting our brain in gear, attempting to reason it out.

God's word says otherwise.

Knowing God's will comes only with surrendering to Jesus and abiding in His word. Thereby does the indwelling Holy Spirit enable us to grasp God's thoughts and will.

*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."*  
(Isaiah 55:8,9)

### WALK IN MY WAYS

So I continue to say to you today,  
"This is the way, walk in it."

Do not let your thoughts carry you  
away in another direction.

That path leads only  
to evil and destruction.

I would have you holy,  
just as I am holy, pure as a bride  
prepared for her husband.

I will come to gather you  
together with Me into  
My presence, with Me always!

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# Set Free

by Vince H.

**M**y name is Vince, when I was thirty-one years old I began attending church with my brother who is a sacred man. He would always share with me about this man called Jesus. One night, after attending a play with some brothers, I gave my life to Christ. It was on a Saturday night, I remember the next day was Sunday, it was Father's Day. I hadn't seen my daughter or heard from her in over three years. You see my brothers and sisters; God knows what is dearest to our hearts. The following Monday, I received a phone call from my sister informing me my daughter had sent a Father's Day card to her residence.

Right then and there God showed me He was real and the gifts He had for me. I learned how to pray and began reading the Bible; I learned how to go to church regularly. I began to fast and pray about what purpose God wanted in my life. I asked God to give me the strength to refrain from using drugs. God was speaking

with my heart constantly and told me I would be thirty-nine years old before I would not desire drugs anymore, He also gave me Jonah's promise. I had never read the book of Jonah and immediately began reading it, God showed me I would take a great city for Him. Father God also told me that I wouldn't be in the belly of the beast for three days, but I would be for three years. Wow!

After a while I slipped away from God and went back to the old habits of drug use and running the streets. I was in and out of church; you all know God wasn't pleased with my attitude. He being the forgiving God that He is, He lovingly kept His hands on me and I never forgot His promise to me. There would be times of doing good and periods of drug use in my life and you may be asking, "Why?" It was because I hadn't surrendered my all to Him.

I began driving trucks for a living and could feel myself changing on the inside but the drugs had a hold on me. I wanted to stop using so I began praying hard and reading my Bible every day. God was knocking on the door of my heart and wanted me to know I needed to stop using drugs and smoking cigarettes. I kept acting as if I didn't recognize the signs or the voice of my Lord Jesus Christ calling out to me.

I still ignored Him as I sat there with a needle in my arm running drugs into the temple of God, abusing God's holy place. The tears would stream down my face

because the conviction was setting in. Father God, I cried out, please help me stop. Because of my decision to continue using drugs I believe I started to lose my mind. I was hearing voices, hallucinating, running when there was no one chasing me. I had no idea what was real or unreal. I had abused the temple of God so much that even when I wasn't using reality seemed

far away from me. My brain was damaged; paranoia had set in and wouldn't

go away. The enemy was winning, or so I thought, I was continually crying out to God for mercy.

When I was thirty-nine years old I was rescued through my arrest. This was a placing that came from God because I wasn't being real with myself or Him. I appeared before a judge and was facing fifteen years of incarceration. You know my brothers and sisters; God has a way of getting our attention and I know I was now being prepared for my lessons in how to serve God. Things began to happen in my life I can't explain as I delved into the Word of God and began feeling closer to Him. One day I was riding the bus when it drove past a liquor store and on the side of the store the following words were written, "Whom Jesus sets free, is free indeed."

You can't tell a crazy man that he is crazy. To him that is reality. My family asked me if I was OK. That was the first time it dawned on me something was definitely wrong. When appearing in court

## A Brother in Christ at California State Prison-Solano

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exception. I spent most of my life thinking “I love you” was something I said to others, unaware of the action that was supposed to follow. This thinking or as I like to say, my best thinking, separated me from society and those who truly did love me. I didn’t understand that normal people didn’t hurt the ones they love and my actions expressed the shallowness of the love I knew. It was all about me; me, me, me. Thankfully, it’s not like that anymore. God has touched my heart, loved me and shown me how to love others. There is a song that says *“something beautiful, something good, all my confusion, He understood, all I had to offer Him was brokenness and shame but He made something beautiful of my life.”* I love this song because it’s exactly what God has done for me. He has shown me the Garden of Eden in the midst of the jungle, Glory be to God.

Don’t get what I’m saying twisted, life as a Christian has not always been smooth and learning how to love didn’t happen overnight. Actually, in the beginning, I was an off the hook Christian. My mouth was saying, “Yes Lord,” but my actions were showing the opposite. I believe this is because I didn’t know the full truth about God’s love and had yet to experience His divine power in my life. I knew of God but I didn’t have a relationship with Him. My selfish prayers weren’t being answered and I would read the Bible and learn nothing. Ultimately I fell in with

a bunch of guys who were more concerned with philosophies and doctrines than spirituality and God’s love. Thankfully God had a plan for me. With the help of my loving wife, Vicki, and Pastor Dave Baker, I was able to overcome these obstacles.

Dave patiently answered my many questions and encouraged me to search the Scriptures for God’s answers to my questions. He also instructed me to pray for understanding. His concern over my salvation was genuine and it showed through his actions.

My beautiful wife helped break the wheels off my denominational roller coaster with her loving honesty. It was our first family visit and I had over twenty plus months of religion under my belt. When we were finally alone I filled her up a huge plate of religion with Apolistic and Trinitarian views for dessert. I wanted us to go over these two views together, pick one, and then baptize each other in the family visiting unit. It didn’t go down as I had planned. You see my wife is a spiritual woman and I shook her up pretty good with my words. I remember her looking me in the eyes like it was yesterday and saying, “You don’t have a relationship with God.” I was shocked by her words and actually left the visit more confused than when I had come in.

When I went back to my unit I was still confused but somewhere deep inside I knew God had the answers I needed. Rather than go to someone else and ask them to interpret my feelings this time

I went straight to the source. I prayed the Psalms of David and asked God to search and clean my heart. I prayed and begged for a relationship with Him. With time my prayers were answered and I drew closer to Him by faith through prayer and reading His Word. Now His voice is a resident of my heart.

My wife and I baptized each other at our next family visit. The baptism took place in Family Visiting Unit One, December 2, 2003, at Corcoran State Prison. God also placed it on my wife’s heart to introduce me to a forty day devotional book called *The Purpose Driven Life*, written by Rick Warren. This book did in forty days what religion couldn’t do in twenty plus months. It showed me how to live a life that speaks God’s language. After all isn’t that what it’s all about? God’s language, God’s plan for us, having a relationship with our Lord and Savior, living a life that is pleasing to Him, sharing your message with others, and trusting God to meet not some but all of your needs.

God took a gang-banging, drug dealing, connection robbing, woman beating, idiot who hurt everyone around him and changed him into an icon. Was I brainwashed? You had better believe it! My brain was filthy and needed a good washing. It was saturated, soaked and scrubbed with the blood of Jesus. Once it was cleansed it was renewed by the word of God and like a cassette that has been erased and recorded over, I’m singing a new

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### **“Forgiveness”** continued from page 6

song with a rhythmic beat that flows in time with the Heavens. When I sit and reflect on the love and mercy God has bestowed upon me I am often overwhelmed with a feeling of gratitude. Just thinking of the needs God has already met in my life helps me appreciate the needs He is still meeting.

Jesus saved me from a life of sin and eternal condemnation and He can save you too. I know you might be a nice person with good morals but at the end of your life you will stand before the throne of judgment. If you don't have the blood of Jesus covering you, you will spend eternity separated from God—the second death—in a lake of fire made for the Devil, fallen angels and demons. I don't know about you, but I want to spend eternity in the non-smoking section.

Is there a difference between my sins and your sins? Absolutely not, without Jesus, we are all headed to the same place, eternal damnation and Hell. It doesn't matter if you're pegged at 120 miles per hour like me or cruising

in the slow lane, the road of sin always leads to one place, death. How do I know this? Well God is awesome and He thought of everything. He gave us Ten Commandments as a sin meter. According to God's meter, every human being is a sinner, yes, Romans 3:23, says, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.”* Try your luck at the sin meter: Have you ever told a lie? What does that make you? Have you ever stolen anything? What does that make you? Have you committed adultery? What does that make you?

I'm not going to go through all ten I'm sure you get the picture. You only have to break one of the Ten Commandments to be classified as a sinner. Romans 6:23 says, *“For the wages of sin is death,”* but glory be to God, we don't have to die the sinner's death because Jesus died in our place. Romans 5:8-9 says, *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall*

*we be saved from God's wrath through him!”*

Receiving salvation—deliverance from sin and sins consequences—is easy. It just takes faith in Christ Jesus, confession of being a sinner, and repentance—turn from sin toward God. Romans 10:9-10 says, *“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”* I'm praying you call on the name of the Lord and ask Him into your heart, to be your Lord and Savior.

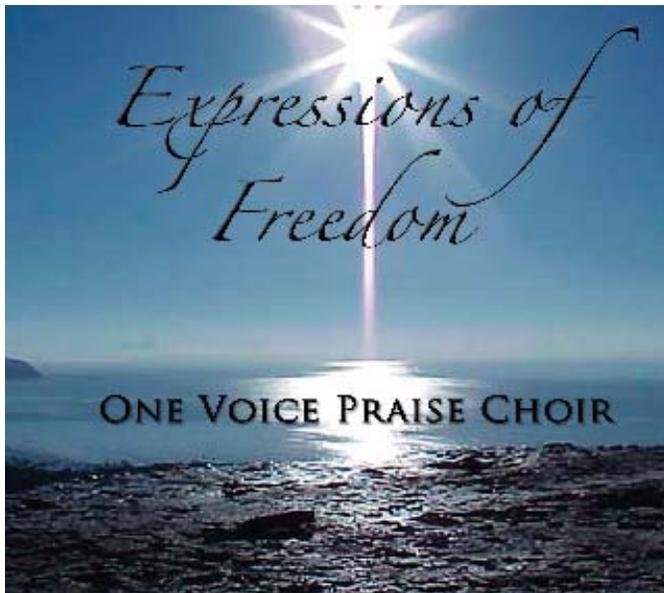
God has already met my eternal needs through faith in Christ Jesus. Today it is in Him, by Him and through Him all my needs are met. Start your journey today, right now, by praying the Sinner's Prayer. You can pray this prayer anyway you like as long as it is from the heart. Get to know Jesus and you too can experience the Garden of Eden in the midst of life's jungle.

**“Free”** continued from page 5

I remember my public defender telling the judge she wanted it on record that I was no help to her. I wasn't mentally capable of defending myself and was referred for a psychiatric evaluation. I was seen and diagnosed as borderline schizophrenic; I was told that if I was ever going to be normal it would take two years or more for my brain to heal itself.

That is what man said, there's a man named Jehovah Rophe and He's a healer. We all know the job of Satan is to make us feel inadequate and that we are not worthy or we can't change. After a year plus of being clean I still had mental problems, so I thought, because I was claiming it. I still kept going to church, praying and reading the Word of God. God was telling me through Scripture Jesus was waiting on me with His arms open wide; He said He wants to teach you. Clearly God's promises began to reveal themselves to me.

Just as God had said to me, I stopped using drugs at the age of thirty-nine, since that day I haven't indulged in drugs, alcohol or smoking cigarettes. It's been three years. Ask what you desire in my name, says the Lord. He delivered me from the shackles and chains of the world. Upon my release I would have been in the belly of the beast for three years, just as God said it would be. I've been teaching Bible studies for one year now. God said don't worry about what is wrong with you, trust in me and I will set you free. I am now a member of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd Choir at California State Prison-Solano and I was also told this months before I joined. God does exactly what He says He will do. His Word isn't null or void, "Whom the Son says is free is free indeed." Let us give God the glory; I'm serving God in my right mind.



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