

# INNER COMMUNITY TIMES

The Church Behind the Prison Wall

Issue 1 2009  
Vacaville, California

## Undeserved Compassion

by Jon

Seventeen years ago, I was twenty-seven years old and thought I was living it up. I had just been discharged from the military and had received a substantial amount of money. Looking back, I wish I had taken the money and returned to my family. At that time however, I was away from my church upbringing, all I wanted to do was be materialistic and live in my fleshly desires. And I did.

During this time, I met a woman and thought I fell in love with her, she was a beautiful woman. We both seemed to fall for each other pretty quickly. I knew I was acting outside the will of God, she was not a Christian. Her family were decent people but they did not believe in Jesus Christ.

Even though I was sinking deeper and deeper in sin, I always felt the weight of my conscience. I knew enough about God to know I was way off the correct path. Since I was a little boy, six or seven, I went to church regularly; in fact I belonged to a nice congregation in the town where I lived. The people were wonderful, praying people; the mothers were especially kind to me. I shall never forget their compassion and their Christian example.

My life choices led me down a horrible path. One night, after a horrific argument, I committed a homicide. I am guilty of this senseless act. This young lady did not deserve to die, I was wrong. I am sincerely remorseful. I was sentenced to fifteen years to life and the depression, loneliness, guilt, shame, and anger hit me like a ton of bricks. It was at this time I remembered what my grandmother used to say, I started to pray, again. So many wonderful people helped me over the years. I had to work through my issues but I can honestly say that God has been with me all the way.

God is a merciful God, I deserved much worse, but God showed me mercy, and He still does. Through the four prisons in which I have been housed, I can see the hand of God carefully guiding my feet. I can't express enough of how God's love for me, despite my crime, has never wavered. I fell short, but never has God given up on me.

A few years ago, I felt impressed to write my victim's family. You must understand I knew them, spent time in their home. I began writing them expressions of

remorse. I had done this for three years. The last time I wrote a letter I asked them to forgive me, I also asked them not to have lives filled with hatred for me.

The next year I was preparing for the parole board and came across a letter written by my victim's mother. I read the letter and I could not contain the rushing flow of tears falling down my face, I was floored. Her mother wrote that she could not forgive me, yet,

that alone was overwhelming. So when I read that none of her family hated me and

she even stopped their friends from "taking care" of me, I was in shock. After all the pain I had caused, this mother still stopped some very influential people from taking revenge on me. I attribute this to God. What could make a grieving mother show undeserved compassion to the man who took her child from her? Only the God I serve could do this.

Today I continue to serve Jesus Christ. He has done so much for me.

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

# Advancing the Word

First Quarter Ministry Report

**D**uring the first quarter several programs at California State Prison-Solano were completed. Two classes totaling 300 men attended Self Esteem by Gods Design, taught by Dr. Larry and Gail Day of **Imagebearers International** <http://www.larrydayministries.com>.

The class Passport to Purpose (the Vessel), taught by Carol Davis was completed with 120 men finishing the requirements. Comments may be viewed on her website, **Mission of Grace Foundation** <http://www.missionofgrace.org>. Also, Going for the Gold, a Prison Fellowship class which prepares men for release from prison, was taught by several volunteers from **2nd Wind** <http://secondwindnetwork.org>.

Our **Spanish Outreach** ministered at California State Prison-Solano on Facility 3, Julliam A Macias, ministered in song and delivered a powerful Word with Dina Zamora-Alexander providing English translation. Several men dedicated or re-dedicated their lives to Christ.

Linda Fowler and Nancy Anderson responded to an invitation from **Daughters of Destiny**, <http://impactlife.org/index.php?id=60>, to minister at two women's prisons in Chowchilla, California; Valley State Prison for Women; and Central California Women's Facility Prison. This was a two-day event held on the yards of both facilities featuring Ron Brigmon, a Volunteer Chaplain at the Bartlett State Jail in Texas, who utilizes a unique blend of Christian jazz and rap to reach out and touch inmates. The event was well attended and nearly half the women came forward to receive the Lord and/or prayer.

**One Voice Praise Choir** ministered to the men of California State Prison-Solano on all four yards with our Easter Musical; we had the opportunity to minister to approximately 600 men with 85 men dedicating or re-dedicating their lives to Christ.

**Joyful Expressions** ministered in song and Word to the men at the main chapel on two occasions at Folsom State Prison, Represa. This is in addition to the regular weekly ministry services in the chapel and the Joseph Project at California State Prison-Solano. On a monthly basis the *ebenezer* team ministers to the young men at the Sacramento County Boys Ranch in Sacramento.

**outreach ministry** provides weekly preaching, individual counseling, and assists with coordinating the CSP-Solano Demonstration Project as part of the Joseph Project featuring special rehabilitation teaching programs and guest speakers.

## **Production Team:**

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

## **One Voice Praise Choir and Joyful Expressions Members:**

Carolina Aguardo, Nancy Anderson, Paula Caddy, Marlee Certini, Sandy Evans, Lynne Gallaher, Judith Handa, Ron Handa, Jeanne Havlicek, Lisa Lamb, Tim May, Regina McCollam, Janell Michael, Judy Moran, Norbert Moreno, Timothy Negrete, Janet Nichols, Verna Ringler, Jeanne Schultz, Richard Sheber, Carolyn Sheehan, De Val Smith, Silvia Smith, Carol Switzer, Tonya Stanton, and Daryl Stewart

## **Weekly Ministry and CSP-Solano Demonstration Project:**

Pastor Richard Atchley, Victoria Berhel, Brett Braidman, Paula Caddy, Pastor Russell Crooks, Carol Davis, Chris Davis, Pastor Alfred DeGree, Ernest Echelberger, Edward Fogle, Tom Forrester, Ervine Ray Fowler, Linda Fowler, Dan Gamel, Loraine Gonzalez, Jay Grover, John Haaf, Ron Handa, Sol Irving, Herman Littleton, Pastor Kenneth Love, David Michael, Ramon Molina, Christopher Mullen, Pastor Darren Paulson, Pastor Daniel Robertson, Robert Rogers, Robert Silva, Pastor Eddie Thomas, Erik Trantum, and Pastor Stuart Welch

## **Churches Involved:**

For a complete list of the churches involved with this ministry, please visit our website at: <http://www.ebrock.org>

# “Good Rockin’ at Midnight”

by Thomas M.

Sitting at the breakfast table a few weeks ago with three other Christian brothers, I excitedly began to tell them about a study I had just finished through the Men of Purpose correspondence Bible study program, about two men of God named Paul and Silas. It was the story about two men who went to Philippi in Northern Greece, to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They were followed and tormented for several days by a demon-possessed woman who had brought much fortune to her master with her divination and soothsaying. Paul became grieved with the woman and cried out in the name of Jesus, for the demon spirit to come out of her, and it did.

The woman’s masters, once they saw that their gains and profits were lost to them, wrongly accused Paul and Silas of being Jews, and of disrupting the city, throwing it into confusion. They were taken before the magistrates and, without trial, their clothes were torn from their bodies, they were beaten and thrown into prison.

Now here comes the part I like; in Acts 16:25-26 it says, “*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake, the foundations of the prison were shaken. Immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains were loosed...*” For some reason I became fascinated with the hour of midnight. The theme of the message I’d like to give is, “Good Rockin’ at Midnight.”

You know, throughout history there have been many books, songs, and fanciful notions written about the hour of midnight. Many years ago in the secular world, there used to be a television program called “The Midnight Special,” and on it a rock-n-roll singer named Wilson Pickett sang, “I’m gonna wait ‘til the midnight hour, ‘til my love comes tumbling down...” In the Bible there are several references to the hour of midnight. In Exodus 11:4-5, Moses told Pharaoh what the Lord said would happen at the hour of midnight if he didn’t let His people go; about how the lives of the firstborn of Egypt, including the firstborn of the captives in the dungeon to the firstborn of the cattle

would be taken. And that’s exactly what happened as related in Exodus 12:29, when God passed over Egypt at midnight. Pharaoh’s foundations surely must have been shaken and rocked by the Lord at that hour.

In Matthew 25:6-12, Jesus taught about the parable of the ten virgins, how at midnight, five foolish virgins weren’t ready when the bridegroom came, and were shut out. They begged to get in, but Jesus said to them, “*I know ye not...*” and finally, in Luke 11:5, Jesus told the parable of the persistent friend. It’s the tale of the friend coming to the other at midnight for a few loaves of bread. The one friend kept refusing him, saying he was in bed with his children, the door was shut and locked, and not to trouble him. He used any excuse he could think of not to get up. But his friend continued to ask and though he would not get up for friendship, he nevertheless got up because of his friend’s persistence. That’s how Jesus instructed the disciples to pray.... without ceasing. For in Luke 11:10 it says, “*...For everyone that asketh receiveth and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened...*”

There may be other examples in the Bible about the hour of midnight, but these were the only few I could find in my studies at this time; I just wanted to share with you what I’ve found so far.

In closing I’d like to say to you, Jesus is knocking at your hearts right now; when He knocks, don’t refuse Him, don’t lock Him out. You don’t have to wait until the midnight hour for His love to come tumbling down...it’s already there. It’s just waiting for you, and He will shake the shackles loose from the bonds of sin that hold you. His “midnight special” is open twenty-four hours a day. Don’t end up like Pharaoh and be shaken and struck from the Book of Life, like all the firstborn of Egypt. Don’t be left out when the bridegroom comes. Fill your lamps full with oil now and be ready when He comes; be persistent. Don’t lie

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# Enjoy Retirement

I would like to thank my friend, Tom Vanides, as he heads into retirement as our webmaster. Tom was the driving force who developed, designed, and maintained our website from its inception in 2004, to the present. I sincerely appreciate the knowledge and expertise Tom has offered to me in developing the business aspect of this ministry, as well as being a positive influence in my personal life. Tom and his wife, Connie, will continue to develop and design the English and Spanish calendars we have provided to hundreds of inmates throughout the years. Although Tom is retiring, I will continue to seek his vast knowledge and consider it an honor to call him my friend.

## **The Inner Community Times**

is a publication of:

***ebenezer outreach ministry***

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# Crossroads

by Ronnie R.

My life, before I accepted Jesus, had become unmanageable with failed relationships and ruined friendships. I was unable to love because I was unhappy with myself (the man in the mirror) feeling ashamed that I had let my family (mother and brother) down. Basically I had been in prison, existing, not living.

I realized I needed Jesus in my life when in January 2008; I reached the crossroads of my life, while serving a twenty-six year to life sentence. I received a phone call telling me that my mother had passed away. That news, along with having replayed my life over and over in my head, left me a broken and humbled man. You see, it is not like I never believed that Jesus is the Son of God or that the way to the Father is through His Son. My life had been choices and decisions I had made on my own. I thought I had the strength to get through anything. I was wrong.

As I fell to my knees, tears flowing like waterfalls, I asked Jesus to help me by taking away the pain, and to help me be a child of God. Since that day I have committed my life to Jesus, to follow God's Word and direction. I am committed to daily Bible studies in order to learn and better understand God's Word and to find out what my true purpose is, which God has for me.

Receiving Jesus into my life has already made such a big difference. For the first time in my life I am able to look at myself in the mirror. I was also able to share with my brother about a promise I had made to my mother, that I would take care of him, and I was able to forgive myself.

Finally, I'm looking forward to the journey I am taking because the choices and decisions will come from God. I want to encourage anyone who feels they have reached the crossroads, to know that you are not alone and that it is never too late to ask Jesus to come into your life. I ran away from God for over forty years and came back, by His grace.

# Building Community

by Carol Davis

PASSPORT



to PURPOSE



*To fellowship, worship, and give hope to others.—Larry R.*

*To be organized, respectful, and free to help those who are motivated to excel in life.—Mike P.*

*To teach and preach the word of God in order to encourage the lost.—Julian I.*

*To help others who are where I once was—to help, serve, and restore hope to those who are hopeless.—Keith E.*

*To encourage, motivate, and communicate compassion and love to the abused and drug-addicted youth God places in my path.—Jesse R.*

*To teach, change, and guide myself, family, and others with everything it takes to push forward to make a positive change.—Toby O.*

*To love, encourage, and extend the goodness God has given me to those who God places in my path.—Kevin*

*To uplift and encourage those who are alone and forgotten, to spread the grace and mercy of Jesus to the lost.—“Hound Dog”*

*To counsel, teach, and carry the value of Christ’s love to my family, the homeless, and the hopeless.—Felipe L*

*To build, practice, and teach, sustainable living, environmental stewardship, and reconciliation with God.—Peter S.*

*To teach the deceived and lost to know and discover the truth of God’s word.—Darrell C.*

The above are just a sampling of the mission statements written over the past couple of months by the participants in the Passport to Purpose program at California State Prison-Solano (CSP-Solano).

In the summer of 2008, over 150 inmates at CSP-Solano in Vacaville, began the one-year journey to intentionally seek God’s purpose and plan for their lives as part of the faith-based portion of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation CSP-Solano Demonstration Project. The men volunteered to participate, beginning their journey by attending a 40 Days of Purpose program, based on Rick Warren’s best selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life*. Pastor Tim May, of **ebenezer outreach ministry**, guided them through the 40 days, which introduced the men to principles of purposeful living from a Christian perspective (to read participant comments, go to <http://www.ebrock.org>). Immediately following this class, the men moved right into

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# Experiencing Peace and Joy

by Vladimir A.

I used to think I was the only one who was in control of the world around me, that I knew best. I grew up in a Christian family of six with good parents who loved the Lord and only wanted us kids to love and worship Him too. Being the second youngest boy at home I was often told what to do every day. First by my parents then by my siblings and as I got older I felt like I didn't always have to listen to anyone. I had my own ways and ideas about how I should live my life. You could say that I was a very rebellious teenager.

Before long I was drinking and using drugs every day and lying to my parents all the time. I stopped going to church and focused on always staying high and soon completely turned my back on God. But

## A Brother in Christ at California State Prison Solano

God didn't turn His back on me and I had praying parents. I got older but never seemed to get any wiser

and before I knew it I was in trouble with the law.

Jail became a revolving door for me drugs and alcohol is what kept it going. As the cycle of arrest and release kept its course I kept telling myself that at least I'm doing what I want to and not what I'm being told to do. I was that blind and foolish that I actually thought I was having fun.

As time went by I progressed into using heavier drugs and drank constantly but I was never truly happy. The so-called good times always left me empty and alone. In time I became depressed and when I didn't think it could get any worse my father lost his battle to cancer. I felt like my whole life was being torn apart and I drowned out all the pain, as well as good judgment, with alcohol and drugs so it came as no shock that I ended up back in jail. This time looking at hard time. Now I know that jail saved my life.

While in jail I sobered up and came to realize what a failure I had become. I had become a slave to addiction, thinking that I still had control, and now I was really going to pay for it. I knew I was guilty of the crime but I was still trying to somehow find a way out and plead my innocence to anyone who would

listen. After all I was a skilled liar by now. So when the jury found me guilty I tried my hardest to find someone to blame for ruining my life. I tried blaming my attorney, the police, even the jury, but in the end I realized that I had no one to blame but myself. I did this to myself. That was hard to accept.

One day a fellow inmate came to me and invited me to the group Bible study they were having that night. He said that he had found peace and joy in his life and thought that I may benefit from coming with him. At first I declined to go but after giving it some thought I did go. After all my friend did change and had been acting funny lately, always smiling and stuff. That incredible decision would forever change my life.

Everything the chaplain said that night felt like it was just for me. The words that he read from the Bible cut through me like a sword. I felt so convicted of my sin and guilt that I was ready to fall on my knees and let it all out. I realized how much of a sinner I had become and all I wanted to do was get rid of the sin in my life. The Holy Spirit must have told the chaplain to pray for me because he looked right at me and said, "Young man, if you want complete freedom and peace in your life, I will pray with you, but you have to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior." After having prayed with him and accepting the Lord into my life I felt the weight of my world lifted off my shoulders and knew that my life would forever be different.

I experienced the peace and joy that the prodigal son must have felt when his father took him back with open arms. I felt forgiven and loved! I was no longer depressed and alone. The peace that surpasses all understanding came over me that night and has been with me to this day!

I still have a lot of time to do but I am never alone anymore. Jesus is with me, watching over me and I have total peace and a joy that's better than any high I've ever experienced before. I know that Christ is my Master and is in control of my life and I wouldn't want it any other way! With time and daily fellowship with my Lord my life has been restored to above normal. My family and friends that I thought I lost are now back in it and I praise my Lord Jesus every day because He is patient and His mercy endures forever!

# By One Word

Antonio M.

I have attended church as long as I can remember and like most kids my age, choice not to attend was not mine to make. It wasn't until I was eleven years old that my mother began regularly attending church, giving her life to Christ and becoming a member of Liberty Church of God in Christ, West Pittsburg, now Bay Point, California, under the leadership of Pastor Dan Slaughter, Senior. After a time, I became acclimated into my church environment (home), becoming involved, even learned to play the drums after spending time watching the pastor's son, Fred, play.

As a young boy, each time an alter call came for those who wanted to accept Christ was conducted, I was encouraged (told to) get in line. As I stood in front of the pastor, before he laid hands on me, I can remember being asked, "Tony do you accept Christ as your Lord and Savior?" I didn't understand the significance of what I was being asked, although it was a topic thoroughly covered, however, for the sake of my family and the on-looking parishioners, I knew yes was the expected answer, so that's what I gave them. It was much later in my life that the reality of my need for Christ to take control of my life came alive in me, this took place on a prison yard in 2003, seventeen years into a twenty-five year to life sentence, however, this is not the testimony I'm sharing today.

As God began to change my heart towards Him, He placed

three brothers in my life that He allowed me to observe and learn from; Brother Seam, Brother Traivon, and Brother Andree. Even with this training I was what I heard described as a "safe Christian." I wasn't embarrassed of Christ; this was evident by the many evangelistic outreach presentations I've participated in as a coordinator, musician, and solo artist. I've just never been one to go up to people and tell them about Christ. What kept me from speaking to people about the love of Christ was my own fear that I may tell someone something that wasn't correct. I thank God for my fiancée, Nakuia, who through the leading of the Holy Spirit helped me get over this.

I knew God was working on me in this area of my Christian life; my witness was constantly on my mind. It wasn't until January 2009, that I decided I wanted God to use me and this required me to trust His leading in my life. I shared with Brother Andree that I wanted to get involved, get busy evangelizing the yard ministering the Word. Not long after that conversation I spoke to my fiancée's pastor who ministered to me, encouraging me to begin spreading the Word of God on this yard and watch God work.

The following Tuesday as the men entered the chapel, Brother Andree asked me, "Tony, do you have ten minutes in you?" He wanted me to open the service up with a word of encouragement

that evening. I was excited and frightened all at the same time but I accepted the call trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit. After that first time I was looking forward to the next. I told Andree several days later I was ready to step out again he simply said, "You'll get used." Before the next Tuesday service came around Brother Andree was moved to one of the other yards and my thought was who is going to step up on Tuesday night? Well, no one stepped up but someone was certainly appointed.

That Tuesday, following his departure, I went into the chapel ready to participate in the service and found myself leading the service after being asked again, are you ready. Talk about a stressful situation, I now find myself in a position I wasn't applying for, I just wanted to get involved and now I find myself leading the service. Don't misunderstand me, I'm loving how God has and continues to use me. Now, here comes the part I really wanted to share.

It was on a Monday, I was praying and reading my Bible, seeking God for direction in His Word for Tuesday night's service, believing we had service the following day. As I was studying Mark 16, the spirit of God spoke to me, "Tell them of the great commission." On Tuesday morning, I was all fired up, outside exercising, praising God openly,

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verbally, and with outstretched hands with my Gospel music playing. To the left of me, there was a group of Southern Hispanic inmates, the Spirit said to me, “Go tell those men Jesus loves them.” You can guess what happened next. My speech to God at that moment was everything but, Yes Father! It was, Who Me? Not me Lord! I’ll be rejected Lord.

I love how God dealt with me. The first thing He did was remind me of my own statement made to Brother Andree; I wanted to evangelize the yard. The Spirit said, that is the yard, I said okay Lord, but I still wasn’t moving, so the next thing God told me was this, “How are you going to go into the chapel and tell those men about the great commission and when I tell you to speak you won’t.” My head dropped and I said, “Yes Lord.” While I was having this exchange with God, I’m walking back and forth, so after that last reminder by God, I walked over to the group and said, “excuse me guys, you’re going to find this really strange, but as I was over there working out, God placed on my heart to come over here and tell you, Jesus loves you.” I went on to say, “I am so far outside my comfort zone but I have to be obedient to the Spirit of God and tell you that Jesus loves you.” They nodded in acceptance of what I said and I went back to exercising.

Later that night, as I was preparing myself for service, I found out that it wasn’t our Tuesday. What I immediately acknowledged was that God wasn’t finished preparing the message in me. The ending to the message was that testimony.

In closing, there are times when I think, God is this you, and He just confirms Himself so clearly. Usually the person bringing the word of encouragement opens the services up in prayer. This night, I called on one of the brethren, who during his prayer said something right out of the word God gave me, “By one word.” I used Jonah as an illustration of this, “Yet, forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” With those eight words, an entire city repented. I thank God He allowed me to plant the seed with those men outside by telling them that Jesus loves them, that He may give the increase later. Of course, the message God prepared in the guest speaker confirmed the message He prepared in me.

Desperate times call for desperate measures.  
But God answers the desperate heart that calls out  
to Him in faith with a total surrender to Jesus.  
He knows how best to handle all our cares!

*“...whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him  
will never thirst.*

*But the water that I shall give him will  
become in him a fountain of water  
springing up into everlasting life.”*  
(John 4:14)

## ASK IN FAITH

By faith will you know who I am,  
as I reveal more of Myself to you.  
I respond to your questionings  
as you move ever closer to Me.  
Like a thirsty person seeking water  
to drink that he might live,  
so I am here as Living Water,  
cleansing your soul, purifying  
and filling that you may never thirst again.  
You need not question how this can be.  
For with Me all is possible.  
The healing you need is Mine to give.  
Receive it then with the joy I also give.  
I am more willing to give  
than you are willing to even ask.  
Do not hesitate to ask.

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May 2, 2009  
[www.Godcares.org](http://www.Godcares.org)

# Expanding God's Kingdom Requires Raising Up New Leaders

by Nancy Anderson

Many new small-team ministry opportunities have been opening up for *ebenezer* outreach ministry in the past few months in youth facilities and women's prisons. As a result, God is also rising up new ministry leaders to "step up to the plate" to expand His kingdom work. During the past year, many of the youth ministry's small worship team members have been responding to God's call on their lives to step into a leadership role, and have been able to participate in many of these new opportunities.



## *Boys Ranch Update*

In February, a small team led by Sandy Evans ministered at *ebenezer's* Sunday service at the Sacramento County Boys Ranch. It was Sandy's first time leading and coordinating the youth

team's once-a-month trip. The group shared worship songs and testimonies with a focus on God's love with a Valentine's Day theme. Sandy's goal was to show the young men that God's love for them was more powerful than any love the world offered them. The boys were touched by the message and over half indicated a desire to invite Jesus into their lives. Another up-and-coming leader, Judy Moran, had been preparing for the Boys Ranch service in May. The theme of the service was God's faithfulness! She chose songs of worship that will focus the young men on God's unfailing love and the fact that no matter what happened to them in the past, God still has a plan for their life!

In March, Dr. Larry and Gail Day ministered at the Boys Ranch on the topic of Self Esteem By God's Design. Dr. Larry Day is a Christian psychologist

who has ministered at California State Prison-Solano, Vacaville, California, on how to find a Bible-based view of self-esteem. Many of the young men at the Boys Ranch had never heard this most important truth: that they were made in God's image and because of that fact, they had a very high value in God's eyes. Many of them indicated they wanted to begin a relationship with God that day to start living their lives in that truth. Many of the ministry team were also touched by the message and have been changed by this truth. This truth has helped to reinforce that they can be used by God to do His will in spreading the Gospel by reaching out to others who need to know the truth. For more information regarding Dr. Larry Day's ministry please visit his website at <http://www.larrydayministries.com>.

## *Valley State Women's Prison*

Also in March, I was able to be part of a small team led by Linda Fowler (another *ebenezer* volunteer) to minister at two women's prisons in Chowchilla, California; Valley State Prison for Women and Central California Women's Facility Prison. We joined another larger group from **Daughters of Destiny**, a women's prison ministry, for two days of ministry out on the yards at both prisons. Special music for each event was provided by Ron Brigmon, who has a unique blend of Christian jazz and rap music that really appealed to the women. The services were well attended, and nearly half of the women came forward to receive prayer or to receive the Lord. **Daughters of Destiny** ministers to women's prisons all over the country. This ministry is coordinated by Deanna Allen, a woman passionately dedicated to reaching women behind bars with the news of God's love for them. For more information regarding her ministry please visit her website at <http://impactlife.org/index.php?id=60>.

www.ebrock.org

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### **California Youth Authority**

In May, our youth ministry team went to the California Youth Authority in Stockton to lead a worship service for the young men incarcerated there. This is California’s highest level security youth facility and many of the young men there will eventually end up in adult prisons. The youth worship team ministered through songs of God’s faithfulness and love. Dan Gamel, who is a part of the regular *ebenezer* Boys Ranch team, gave a powerful message for the young men out of Isaiah 43:1-2: “*But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.’*” Dan’s message was one of hope in spite of being in a place of no hope, and of God’s power to transform them by a complete surrender to God. Approximately 25 attended the service and about a third of them indicated that they wanted to invite God into their lives for the kind of change Dan’s message promised them.

As more opportunities for ministry become available, more of *ebenezer’s* volunteers may sense God’s leading to step into roles in ministry that they could never have imagined in their own strength and gifting. However, with God’s anointing and empowering Spirit, they will do the greater works that Jesus promised we would do in His power.

the Mission of Grace Foundation’s Passport to Purpose program, taught by Carol Davis, to apply to their lives the principles learned in the Purpose Driven Life.

The Passport to Purpose program is a series of four classes, taking participants on a guided journey to discover their unique design and purpose. In the first class, *THE VESSEL: Understanding Your Divine Design*, the men discovered their personal values, natural talents and abilities, spiritual gifts, and personality types. Below are some of the comments from the inmates.

As a result of attending The Vessel...

*I have grown into a better person by the help of this class and with that I know that I can make it (I get out next month).—Robert R.*

*I have come to see things in me that I didn’t know I had, nor did I even think I could possess.—Anthony E.*

*I see myself in a different way, as a more complete individual.—James D.*

*I am able to use the information I learned about my abilities, talents, and spiritual gifts to further the Kingdom of God right here in prison.—Anthony O.*

*I have begun to interact with my wife in a better way because of a better understanding of myself and my temperament and I have become a better person.—Quincy J.*

*I got to know Jesus better and He showed me things I need to do to better my life and what my purpose is for my future. I thank Sister Carol and Brother Chris and all the guests who came to speak. You all have touched my life in a way that I will never forget. I love you all.—Billy H.*

*I have a better understanding of what spiritual gifts and talents I have and have been using, and what my role is when it comes to dealing with others. I would recommend this class to everyone in prison.—Alvin B.*

To view pictures from the class and all the participant comments, go to <http://www.missionofgrace.org>.

Since completing the first class in the Passport to Purpose program, the men have continued on to the remaining three classes. In *THE CHARTER: Defining Your Personal Mission Statement*, the men took a deep look at their past and present life experiences in order to discern their life passion and define their

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**“Community”** continued from page 10

personal mission statements. They are currently writing their personal vision statements in *THE PROMISED LAND: Discovering God’s Vision for You* and will be defining their life goals in *THE CROSSING: Turning Your Vision Into Action*.

Evidence of real-life change is seen through the stories heard. Examples include men taking their Passport to Purpose workbooks with them to work to go over the content with their co-workers from other yards; men reviewing their workbooks with their families during visiting time; and men taking their workbooks to their parole board hearings! There have also been men transferred to other yards or prison facilities that have sent in their completed workbooks and requested the next workbook in the series. Now that’s commitment!



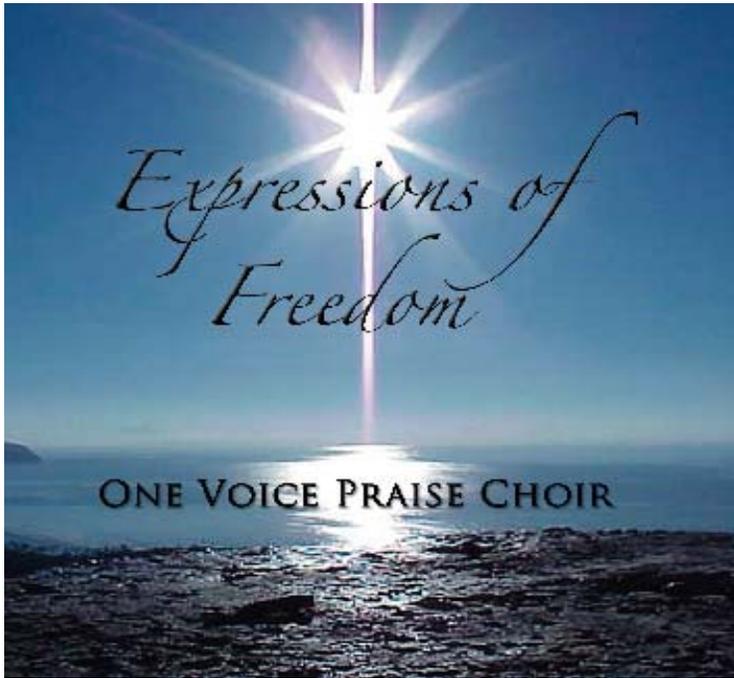
It has been a real joy for the ministry team to travel with the men for an extended time. After being with them for almost one year a deep sense of Christian community has been established, which has provided the safe environment needed for the men to share their lives with one another at a candid and authentic level. At one point during *The Charter* class the men were sharing about the lessons, freedoms, and passions they have found through

their life’s ups and downs. In order to facilitate sharing at the deepest level, some of the men opted (at their own initiative) to pass their workbooks around to one another so they could read each other’s responses rather than do limited sharing aloud. This has never been seen, as usually class participants want to share aloud so they can edit the deep personal things they have written!

Due to this strong sense of community and in response to the men’s expressed desire for the class to never end, on-going monthly alumni gatherings are planned upon completion of the four classes to encourage the men as they live out the real journey—walking with God as they implement His purpose and plans for them. At these gatherings, achieved goals will be celebrated, testimonies will be shared, guest speakers will be heard, encouragement and assistance will be received, hurdles will be overcome, God’s purposes will be fulfilled and His dreams for these mighty men will



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be realized!

In addition to the twenty inmate small group facilitators, the on-going volunteer ministry team from outside the walls who serve two days a week include Carol and Chris Davis, Ron Handa, Pastor Sammie Shaver, Joe Tomlinson, and Ernest Echelbarger. Guest speakers have included George Mathis, Greg Taylor, Ana Maria, and Chris Mullen.

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*Carol Davis is the founder and Executive Director of the Mission of Grace Foundation, a tax-exempt 501(c) (3) non-profit organization with the mission to help individuals and organizations find clarity of purpose and direction for their lives and ministries.*

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“Midnight” continued from page 3

down and be left out, stand up and step out, for Jesus is your friend. Be persistent; He's not knocking for loaves, but rather for your souls.

On the day of Christ's crucifixion, from noon to three it was as though it were midnight, when darkness fell across the whole land; when Jesus paid the ultimate price for our redemption, when at the hour of His death, the earth quaked.  
Blessed be His Name, Amen.