

❖ PMA NEWSLETTER ❖

Volume 8 Issue 1

APRIL 2002

LOSING THE WAR

As I write this article the United States of America is still deeply involved in the War on Terrorism which began after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. We have been told repeatedly by our leaders that this would be a long-term endeavor which will take tremendous resources, manpower and resolve before victory can be declared. Because of the unique and secretive nature of this conflict the general public will be unable to discern the progress our forces are making in their mission to destroy international terrorism. Although we are aware of several swift victories, such as the battle for control of Afghanistan, we don't know if we are actually winning the war.

Similarly, the general public is often unaware of all of the facts regarding crime and justice in our society. Our politicians are quick to remind us that during the decade of the 1990's we experienced significant reductions in crime throughout the country. These statistics however, should not deceive us to believe that we are making great social and moral progress. Since 1980 the population of America's prisons has exploded, increasing more than 10 fold in twenty years. Thus the 30-40% decrease in crime that our country has experienced is offset by a nearly 1000% increase in the number of people imprisoned. While we may be winning the battle we are losing the war for the hearts and souls of our people.

Chuck Colson, the former aide to President Nixon who came to faith in Christ while in prison, points out that when he wrote his famous book, Born Again, in 1973 there were 173,000 inmates in the United States. Today there are more than 2 million people in America's jails and prisons at any one time. In that period of time the number of facilities to accommodate the inmates has grown dramatically as well. So much so that hundreds of communities have become economically dependent on the presence of a correctional facility in their vicinity. Furthermore, the trend toward the privatization of the corrections indus-

try has made it profitable for many to put people into prisons and keep them there.

Another discouraging statistic is that the rate at which inmates return to prison after release is nearly 75%. There is a revolving door phenomenon which seemingly cannot be broken, despite many well intentioned programs which try to reform offenders.

"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word." Psalm 119:9

The verse above is a clear reminder that real change can only happen when an individual allows the Word of God to work in his life. It is through the study of God's Word that we learn of the life-transforming power that comes through the work of the Holy Spirit when we put our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Research conducted by Prison Fellowship has shown that when inmates become involved in Bible study and programs which provide intensive spiritual accountability, recidivism rates can be drastically reduced.

Prison Mission Association provides the first and most crucial steps on the road to spiritual transformation by giving inmates the tools to discover the life-changing power of God's Word. The PMA correspondence lessons provide the opportunity for students to discover the riches of God's Word on their own through guided self study. Our lessons start with the most fundamental truths of the Christian life and gradually lead the student to deep understanding of God's Word and His work in this dispensation.

God's Word has been transforming lives for thousands of years and it has the same power today to work miracles in individual lives that have been in bondage to sin.

In Christ's Service,

Dm

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR



Get Connected

Bible Correspondence Fellowship is the core ministry of PMA. Our dispensationally oriented Bible lessons have helped tens of thousands of people over the years understand the gospel of salvation and grow in their faith and knowledge of the Word of God. BCF lessons have never been restricted to inmates alone but have been used by many people outside of prison for personal study and edification. It is our goal to distribute our lessons as widely as possible to as many people as are interested in studying God's Word.

PMA now has our complete BCF lesson set available in digital format which we distribute on CD. The lessons are Microsoft Word files which can be opened and printed by anyone that wishes to use them. Each lesson has two files, the question set and the

answer key.

BCF lessons can be used by churches, youth groups, small group Bible studies, personal study and in many other ministry settings. The lessons use the method of inductive Bible study whereby the student discovers the answers for himself by evaluating the scripture passages and extracting its meaning from the text itself.

If you would like to receive a copy of our lesson CD, simply request it by contacting us through mail, fax or e-mail. Give your name and complete mailing address. The lessons are also available for downloading from the PMA website. Visit PMA's site by going to www.pmabcf.org and clicking on "Download Lessons."

Dom

Dear Friend of Brother Lawrence Asong,

Our brother in the Lord, Dr. Lawrence Asong was tragically killed on February 9, 2002 in an automobile accident. While traveling he lost control of the vehicle he was driving and the brakes failed. The car smashed into a tree alongside the road killing Brother Lawrence immediately. Mizpah and a child were seriously injured.

Brother Lawrence began his association with Prison Mission Associa-

tion more than thirty years ago when he made initial contact with Brother Joe Mason. Through Joe, Brother Lawrence began to send and correct Bible correspondence lessons throughout the English speaking regions of western Africa. As the number of Bible correspondence students grew Brother Asong began a program of regular conferences in which the believers would congregate for a period of time to receive more in-depth biblical instruction and join together in worship and praise to God. These were very large gatherings and were a time of great blessing for hundreds of beloved brothers and sisters in Christ.

At the time of his tragic death Brother Lawrence was faithfully involved in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through correspondence courses, prison and jail visitation, directing the Grace Bible School and coordinating and administering the affairs of Grace Mission-Cameroon.

Brother Lawrence had eight children ranging in age from young adult to three years old. PMA has established a memorial fund for Mizpah and Lawrence's children. PMA will collect these funds until September 2002, at which time we will distribute them in a way which will be of greatest long-term benefit for the family. If you believe the Lord is leading you to contribute to this fund please designate your gift to "Lawrence Asong Memorial Fund."

Yes, I Will Help!

I want to accept the challenge of helping PMA.

\$100.00

\$50.00

\$15.00

Revival 2002

\$75.00

\$25.00

Other _____

Monthly

General Fund

Don Sommer's Support

One Time Only

Mini-Library Fund

Name: _____

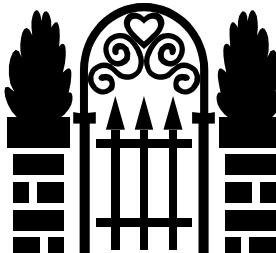
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PRISON ECHOES.....

I found your lesson very knowledgeable and fun at the same time. I really enjoyed doing these lessons and look forward to receiving more. "SMILE". My prayers will be with you and your ministries as you continue to witness to others who are in need of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and I ask that you keep me in your prayers as I continue my walk with Christ. God Bless You!! Your brother in the Lord.

-J.H.



Just a note to let you know that I am really enjoying your correspondence courses so far. This 2nd set especially has been a real challenge to me and I am learning a lot though each lesson. I feel as though I have gone back to school again. About a year ago I began to read the Bible daily. Slowly but surely, my heart began to change and my life, for the 1st time ever began to fall into place. I sincerely gave my soul to Jesus and my life has been so blessed ever since. My severe depression was lifted and I began to forgive. Even now, though I am in this seemingly Godless place, I have a hope of glory. What a difference God makes! Thank you for your help in my spiritual growth through these courses.

-G.Z.

I think anyone who takes the time to help others with these studies, God will give a special blessing. They have really helped me. Keep up the good work and may God richly bless you.

-K.M.

I pray that this letter finds you in a time of much comfort and victory in the Lord. I received the lessons. It is such a blessing to study the Word with you in our fellowship of serving the Lord Jesus. There are new men that I am around and if it is acceptable, I will share your instructions and fellowship. Daily I am thankful I have God in my life and Jesus Christ as my Savior. Much thanks to you and may God bless you always.

-B.P.

Thank you so much for the understanding that this course is helping me find and the insight it gives me in the Word of God. Finding Christ has brought hope and fulfillment into my life. I thank God the Father for the giving of His Son for me, a sinner.

-D.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I've got to say this to you. I LOVE YOU!! I'm not ashamed at all that I am telling you I'm shedding love tears for you helping me to come to know God and Jesus Christ more. I can only say PRAISE GOD and thank you so very much for your love for me a sinner. It's taken me 2 weeks to do these 3 lessons because I have been given a job detail and I have not had much time each day to work on it. But I'm finished and wanting more if you have them for me. I have a burning want, need desire to have God's Word, ways, burnt into my mind so I become as much as He wishes, wants, me to be. Praise the glory and gracefulness of God and our Lord Jesus Christ and Savior. Once again, I thank you for your help and I do mean it from my heart.

-T.L.

Thanks for allowing me to continue with these lessons. They are a great benefit and a blessing to me. I pray that the staff there at PMA will have a most blessed year. During the time of war and devastation in our own country we have so much to be thankful for. Let everyday be filled with thanks and let our hearts always be grateful for what the Lord had done for us. God bless you all!

-T.P.

I found this a very interesting Bible study and I found out just how important God's Word is. It should lead us in every aspect of our lives. I'm thankful that the Holy Spirit is leading me to seek more information in the Word of God. Thank you! I can't wait for the next lesson!

-U.K.

A Message From Zambia

-Jeff Roth

The Scripture Evangelism Bible study correspondence courses are going very well. It seems that there is a hunger or thirst for God's Word. Even pastors from different denominations are coming in and saying that these lessons are teaching them the Word like they have not heard before and it makes sense to them. The office is continually full of students who come in to pickup or drop off their lessons. Some of them have questions, which Christopher Nsama (my assistant) answers very well. It has been a growing time for him as well, as he has had to answer and "defend" our grace position. Many of these new people are Pentecostal (even the pastors) and they are very excited to hear, read, and study God's Word in an understandable manner. We praise God for this avenue, which He has opened for us to spread His word. It is encouraging to see the people grow and to see new believers come to Jesus as their personal Savior. At times we cannot keep up with the photocopying and correcting. We have many students who already completed everything that we have ready to give them and they still want more.

There are so many students now, that we have had to restructure our program to include another level of correction sites that are more local. Instead of all the lessons now coming here to Kabwe, we will have some go to Mufulira, Lusaka, Livingstone, and Mbala.

We are excited about this outreach to the people in southern Africa. What I just described is not just happening here in Zambia, but also in Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Jeff Roth is a missionary in Zambia. Pastor John Hollis brought over a set of our correspondence lessons when he visited there a year ago. They started offering the course and, as you can see, the results have been wonderful!



GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

This is the second in a series that examines references to prisons and prisoners in the Bible. This time we will look at Genesis 39 and the story of Joseph who was unjustly imprisoned in Egypt.

19 *And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.*

20 *And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.*

21 *But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.*

22 *And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.*

23 *The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.*

In this familiar story Joseph had been sold by his brothers to slave traders that took him to Egypt. Eventually he ended up in the home of Potiphar, "the captain of the guard" and "an officer of Pharaoh." Clearly he was an important and influential man in Egypt. Joseph proved to be a loyal and trustworthy servant and was promoted to the position of manager of all the affairs of Potiphar's household. Potiphar's wife was attracted to Joseph, but Joseph repeatedly refused her advances. One day when she was trying to seduce Joseph he ran out of the room, leaving behind his coat which she was clinging to. Potiphar's wife used the coat as evidence that Joseph was the in fact the one trying to seduce her. Enraged by the accusations and making no attempt to discover the truth Potiphar threw Joseph into a prison that was designed to hold political prisoners that threatened

Pharaoh. This is the first time prisons are mentioned in the Bible.

The most significant part of the above quoted passage is verse 21 which says, "the Lord was with Joseph." This is a clear and graphic reminder that God is alive and active in every circumstance. There is no dungeon so dark and bleak that God's presence is not there to give strength and encouragement to the person that trusts in Him.

This story illustrates the influence of a faithful witness for the Lord. Despite the tremendous injustice which happened to Joseph he did not allow anger and bitterness to control him. Rather he chose to exemplify integrity and dedication always keeping in mind that his actions were a reflection on the God of Israel whom he loved and served.

Because of Joseph's faithfulness, he became a trustee of the jailer in the prison and was responsible for the care of the other prisoners. One day as he making his rounds he noticed that two of the prisoners, Pharaoh's cupbearer (butler) and baker, seemed especially sad. This is a striking statement since one would expect that all the prisoners would be sad. The fact that Joseph was able to notice that these two men were particularly gloomy indicates that he was a man that really paid attention to others.

We do not know how long Joseph was in prison except that it was between 2 and 12 years. Yet throughout that entire period Joseph maintained a faultless testimony and through an exemplary life was able to give honor and glory to God. Likewise we can see that despite such bitter conditions God does not forsake His beloved servants and continues to use them for His honor and glory. These principles are just as true today. There are thousands of inmates in jails and prisons around the world, most deserving to be there and some not, that have committed their lives to Christ and are a part of God's work of reaching the lost with the gospel.

THE SPANISH SIDE

The Spanish speaking population in the United States has grown dramatically in the last ten years. As would be expected, the number of Hispanic prisoners in our nation's correctional facilities has increased likewise.

Prison Mission Association has had an Hispanic outreach for most of the 47 years of its existence. From 1998 until December 2001 that ministry was coordinated by Eliacin Rosario from Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico. Eliacin left PMA to join Grace Ministries International's camp ministry in Puerto Rico. However, the Lord did not abandon those inmates served by the Hispanic ministry. He has provided us with a dedicated and enthusiastic young woman in Florida to coordinate the correcting of our Spanish language lessons. Please read the inspiring testimony of Ida Vazquez below.

"My name is Ida A. Vazquez. I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior in 1986. I've been married for thirteen years with a wonderful man named Edwin Vazquez, who, by the grace of our Lord, accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior five years ago. We have two precious children, Edwin A. (Andy) and Keishla.

The Lord, in His mercy, gave me the opportunity to serve Him in Camp Caribe (PR), a ministry of Grace Ministries International, for more than eight years. I was not only the Business Manager but was part of the family. I thank the Lord for working there, where I grew spiritually and as a human being. Thanks to my brothers and sisters for their unconditional love.

At the beginning of 2001, my husband and I felt in our hearts that the Lord was leading us in another direction. After praying, we moved down to Florida. We started praying for a ministry where we could serve the Lord, and after a couple of months the Lord answered our prayers. Brother Don asked us if we could help out with the Spanish correspondence lessons (EBB) and we gladly agreed. We are very happy that we could be useful in His hands."

Please pray for Ida and her new ministry. These lessons reach out to non-prisoners in several Latin American countries as well.

Prayer & Praise

Praise— For the dedicated supporters of this ministry who continue to be so faithful in their affection for the Lord's work that we share. God is truly blessing us financially.

Prayer— For the continued ability of our wonderful volunteers to correctly review and correct the growing number of Bible lessons that we do. Pray for a few more volunteers to help in the office.

Prayer— For the Lawrence Asong family. Please continue to pray for Mizpah and the baby.

Prayer— That our lessons continue to inspire and bless our students, encouraging them to lead Spirit filled Christian lives.

Prayer— For our Director's efforts to work with prisoners and to bring our Lord's Word to our brothers and Praise that his transition as Director is complete and positive.

Prayer— For lesson correctors Betty Rieble & Kay Bodeutsch and volunteer, Marian Lemon—Health issues.

Prayer— For the PMA Board as they make important decisions and for all those involved with the mission against the attacks of Satan.

Prayer— For our Nation's leaders and the leaders of other countries that they will make good decisions.

Praise—For the many volunteers who continue to dedicate their time and talents to this ministry effort.



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Prison Mission Association

Core office hours:

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Monday through Thursday

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KAREN'S KORNER

I want to begin by thanking all of you who prayed for PMA this last year. God has blessed us a lot, but not without sorrow and joys.

The death of Lawrence Asong was so unexpected. Our prayers continue to go out to his wife Mizpah, their baby and to all of Lawrence's children. He will be missed but God is the blessed controller of it all.

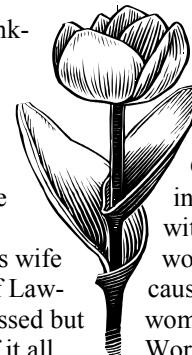
The office had a major change this year. Thank you to those that wrote me notes and made calls to encourage me in the midst of all the changes. When Bob left the office it meant a big change. We do miss Bob but we also know he had health issues with which to deal. God knows it all.

Betty Rieble, one of our lesson correctors, has shingles in her head and cannot correct lessons; Kay Bodeutsch had four way by-pass surgery and is not able to correct lessons; and Marian Lemon, my everyday work person, has liver cancer and broke her hand/wrist this last week. So we are not without our own trials here at PMA. God knows it all.

Please rejoice with us as God is at work in ways we can't imagine. We praise the Lord for God's financial blessing to this mission. Don Sommer is fully supported and we have money to do the ministry. Of course, as God blesses us with more finances we will be able to do much more.

Don has broadened this ministry and increased the territory. The influence of PMA is now felt in the Midwest and on the east coast. We praise God for all of that. Don has increased my work load due to opportunities that God is blessing us with. God is no doubt stretching me and the ministry of PMA. Praise the Lord--God does answer prayer!

We now have all of the PMA lessons rewritten and on the shelf with our new format. In a few weeks we will have a CD ready to distribute with all the lessons so far. We are still looking to



write more lessons. There is always more that can be done in this area.

I'm very excited at what God is doing at PMA. Satan is trying to get in the way. Please pray with us as our ministry to men and women poses a big threat to Satan's cause. We are presenting men and women with hope and teaching the Word of God rightly divided. We truly are "walking in the Light" (I John 1:7)

By God's Grace,

Karen

Announcement

Bob Bobo has left the Prison Mission Association office after many years of devoted service. Bob began helping PMA in the early 90's after the office relocated from California to Washington state. From then until December of 2001, when he resigned, he faithfully served as a fulltime volunteer in the office. During his time with PMA he had a number of responsibilities which included lesson development, production of promotional literature, teaching in-prison and jail Bible studies, equipment purchasing and maintenance and many other important jobs as well. Most recently Bob served as the interim director of PMA while we were searching for a fulltime replacement for Nathan Whitham. Bob remains on the board of PMA.

We wish to express our deepest appreciation for the invaluable contributions Bob has made to PMA over the past decade. He was always there when the organization needed him and because of his dedication PMA continued to minister during the interim period between directors. Bob was the man that God used to keep this ministry going and we are thankful that he was available as the Lord's vessel at the right time.



Prison Mission Association

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Inside This Issue:

LOSING THE WAR

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

PRISON ECHOES

MESSAGE FROM ZAMBIA

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

THE SPANISH SIDE

PRAYER & PRAISE

KAREN'S KORNER

SHELTON REVIVAL COMING IN JULY

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For several years PMA has had the privilege of organizing a large revival and evangelistic crusade in the Washington Corrections Center (WCC) in Shelton, Washington. The WCC is the diagnostic center through which every prisoner in the state system must pass before being sent to a more long-term facility. This is a tremendous opportunity since events such as this are generally put on by much larger organizations than PMA with more manpower and far greater resources. The fact the administration of the WCC always looks to us to sponsor this event shows the tremendous amount of confidence they have in PMA to do a quality job.

The Shelton revival involves several different events with dozens of participants and volunteers all working together to present the gospel to over 1500 inmates in the facility. During the 2001 revival over 300 people made professions of faith in Christ.

The dates of the 2002 event will be July 19-20. Our main speaker for the event will be Evangelist Lee Homoki. Other participants include The Freedom Team, which puts on strength and power demonstrations, a Christian motorcycle

club, the Port Orchard Grace Bible Church softball team and praise and worship groups.

It costs PMA around \$2000 to sponsor this event. Please consider making a donation to help with the expense of reaching out with the gospel to inmates of the WCC-Shelton. Designate your gifts "for the Shelton Revival -2002."

We Need Literature

PMA is always in need of good Christian literature that it can include with our mailings to inmates. One of the most valuable things we can use are extra bulletin inserts which your church receives. There are a number of popular inserts that churches use such as *Focus on the Family*, *Power for Living*, *Have a Nice Day*, as well as copies of *Amazing Grace* and *Our Daily Bread* devotional books. If you have left over copies of these or other valuable printed literature that can fit in a 9 x 6 envelope, send them to us and we will put them to good use.