

# PMA *Outreach*



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The Newsletter of Prison Mission Association

FEBRUARY 2004

## YOUR IMPACT MATTERS

A number of years ago there was a popular Christian song named *Thank You*. The song told the story of a man that dreamed of being in heaven and while there he saw thousands of people that had in some way been eternally impacted because of his simple and faithful obedience to Christ. The song goes on to describe how each individual, many of whom the man had never met or had long ago forgotten, came up to personally thank him for the way his service had influenced their lives.

The message of that song has often reminded me of some of the people that have played similar roles in my own life. I can still remember the teacher at the children's club when I was seven years old that gave a vivid Bible story and then asked if anyone would like to receive Jesus Christ as savior. I raised my hand and was led off to a side room where one of the older leaders explained to me God's plan of salvation and led me in a prayer in which I expressed verbally my faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord to pay for my sins.

About six months later at a Christian camp I once again raised my hand when an offer was made to trust Christ. I was then taken aside by an older pastor who asked me if I had ever accepted Jesus Christ as savior before. I told him I had earlier that year and he then went on to explain to me that once I've believed in the Lord and received him as savior that I would never lose that relationship with him and that I would never need to again ask him to come into my life. From that point on I have never questioned that I am child of God and that assurance has given me confidence to live the Christian life with boldness and security.

It is unlikely that any of those individuals remember those specific encounters yet they are deeply etched in my memory because they marked such important milestones in my spiritual life. Someday when I am in heaven I will be able to stand before those folks and personally thank them for the impact their faithfulness had on my life.

1 Corinthians 3:7-9 reminds us of the influence that many individuals can have on a person's spiritual development,

but yet it is God that must be given credit for doing the work in anyone's heart to bring them to a point of obedience.

*So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*

The process of spiritual growth is usually gradual and takes time. God uses many people along the way to influence us but ultimately it is the Lord that must receive all the glory and credit for the progress made along the journey.

This principle of many watering but God giving the increase is clearly seen in prison and jail ministry. The impact that gospel has on inmates is clearly demonstrated in the remarkable drop in the recidivism rates (rate of repeat offenders) among offenders that have been involved in prison ministry verses those that have not. Nearly 70% of inmates recidivate in the regular population compared to only around 25% of those involved in prison ministry programs while incarcerated. However, not one single program can be credited for bringing about such dramatic change. It is a combination of ministries such as the Bible Correspondence Fellowship lessons, in-prison Bible studies, chapel services, dedicated volunteers that visit inmates, penpals that write uplifting letters and the mutual encouragement of other Christian inmates that God uses to develop and change the lives of those inside prison. All are instruments in the hand of God to transform lives shattered by lifestyles of bondage to sin.

We at Prison Mission Association consider it a great privilege to be one instrument in the hand of God to be used to change lives and help them go from those that oppose the will of God to ones which are able to honor and glorify Him. Our lessons, visitation, pen pals, literature and other ministries are "watering cans" which, when left to God can produce tremendous spiritual fruit.

## A Note from the Director



Another new year is upon us, along with all its possibilities and potential. We at Prison Mission Association are excited about beginning another year of ministry and we look with anxious anticipation at how the Lord will use us this year. We hope and pray that this will be another year of growth as we reach out with the wonderful Good News of God's grace to those in and out of prison around the world.

Of particular importance in this issue of *PMA Outreach* is the announcement that PMA will once again sponsor the Revival at Washington Corrections Center in Shelton. This is a very large undertaking for our ministry and involves a tremendous outpouring of time, energy and finances. There are dozens of arrangements that must be made in order for this event to be successful. We need the prayers of all the PMA family and we ask that you devote time during the next few months to pray for the Shelton Revival.

Likewise, we are challenging others to be a part of the Shelton Revival. Perhaps you are looking for a unique ministry

experience. This is it! If you can arrange to be in beautiful Western Washington State on July 16-17 we would like you to join us as a volunteer counselor for this exciting evangelistic outreach.

Please take the time to read all the articles in this issue of *PMA Outreach*. Our lead article talks of the important impact that each and everyone of can have on others, often without even being aware of it. Mariana's Story in the Spanish Side is an inspiring story of our one person was changed through the Bible Correspondence Fellowship lessons in Spanish.

As always we thank you for your concern, interest and involvement in the ministry of Prison Mission Association.

In His Service,

*Dm*

# Shelton Revival 2004

July 16-17, 2004

The Washington Correction Center in Shelton is the place that every inmate that enters the state Department of Corrections goes before being sent to a more long-term facility in which to serve their sentence. This is for most inmates their introduction to prison. It is a time when they are fearful, confused, uncertain, and open to spiritual truth.

For five years Prison Mission Association has been invited to organize a massive evangelistic revival at WCC – Shelton. The event provides a unique opportunity to reach the inmates at a strategic time with the gospel of salvation and the opportunity for them to experience New Life through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Shelton Revival coordinates around 100 volunteers that interact with inmates using music, drama, preaching and personal contact to present the gospel to the inmates at the WCC. The highlight of the event is the demonstrations by the Freedom Team, a group of power and strength performers that use their skills to communicate the power of Jesus Christ to bring freedom from spiritual bondage. The revival reaches more than 1500 inmates and previous revivals have seen more than 400 people receive Christ as savior or recommit their lives to Him.

We can use your help!! If you can arrange to be in the Western Washington area during July and would like to help as a volunteer for this event please contact the PMA office for further information.

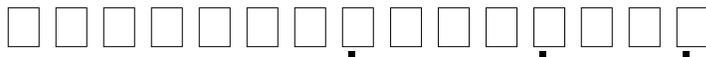
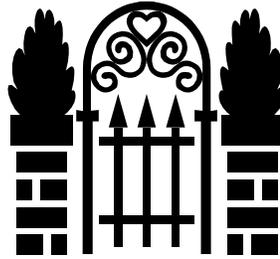
This event costs around \$2000 to organize. If you feel burdened to help with support this ministry please send your gift to PMA with a note designating that it is for the "Shelton Revival."

# PRISON ECHOES.....

I truly appreciate the blessing of the PMA. And I thank and praise God for showing His glory through you that I may know and become more equipped in the scripture. A.C.—Florida

I received this study from a friend. I think it's one of the best. It really pulls you in and helps you better understand God's word. I really enjoyed this study and can't wait for the next one. E.H.—Kentucky

Thank you very much for your time. I really like your study. I have learned a lot from it. I love Jesus more and more every day, and I thank him for people like you. God bless you and may the light keep shining bright in your hearts. 1 Corinthians 12:12 J.S.—Virginia



I'm a Chaplain in a jail. I use your bible studies every week. I hand them out and grade them when their turned in. Thank you for giving me another way to reach inmates for Christ.

Thanks for the Bible Lessons. I will be using these in our Bible Studies. Thanks. May God bless you.

## Meet the Board of Prison Mission Association

PMA has been blessed with a group of five godly and committed individuals that volunteer to serve on our board of directors. These men carry the ultimate responsibility and burden for the ministry. Each one comes to the table with a unique background that has prepared them in a special way for their role as a board member. In the next several issues we will focus on each individual, but now we wish to honor them as a whole.

### *PMA Can Use You*

Perhaps the Lord is touching your heart to have some form of ministry to inmates.

PMA has offers to two ways in which you can impact prisoners' lived for the glory of God.

**Pen Pals** – We get numerous requests each month from inmates asking for someone willing to write to them and encourage them in their walk with the Lord. We receive for more requests than we have people willing to be pen pal writer, particularly among men. We have a completely safe and secure system which makes it possible for committed Christians to write uplifting and devotional letters to inmates without the risk of revealing unnecessary personal information. If the Lord leads you to be involved in this ministry please let us know and we will send a packet with more information.

**Prayer Partners** – If you don't feel comfortable writing letter to inmates perhaps you would like to pray for them. We also receive dozens of prayer requests from our correspondence students. We want to be able to say to them that we care them and their personal needs and that we are willing to approach God's throne of grace on their behalf as intercessors. This ministry involves no direct contact with inmates but assures that we have an army of valiant prayer warriors speaking on the inmates' behalf to God.



# GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

This is the sixth in a series that examines references to prisons and prisoners in the Bible. This time we will consider the testimonies of Daniel and the three Hebrew men, captives in Babylon and Persia whose stories are recorded in the book of Daniel. We can read these inspirational accounts in chapters three and six of Daniel.

In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Judah and took the best and brightest of the Jewish young men as exiles. Among these prisoners were four exceptional individuals named Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They all became influential in the Babylonian royal court. Later in 539 B.C. the Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonian empire and we are told that Daniel continued to have a prominent role in the political life of that empire.

In Daniel chapter three we learn how Nebuchadnezzar had a golden image erected in Babylon and required everyone to bow down to it. The story of how the three young Hebrew men refused to worship the image and were thrown into the fiery furnace, only to be rescued from the flames by the power of God is familiar to anyone that has attended Sunday School as a child.

A similar story can be found in the sixth chapter of how several years later, and under another ruler, all the people of the em-

pire were forbidden from praying to any god other than the king. Daniel, however, refused to obey the commandment and prayed to the Lord. As a result he was thrown into a den of lions, but the Lord shut the animals' mouths and Daniel was not harmed.

Each of these accounts emphasize the importance of standing firm for our convictions even in the face of strong opposition. The temptation to cave in and take the road of expediency can often be strong, yet the only way we can truly glorify God in our lives is by being firm and immovable in our commitment to Him.

The comments of the three young men before being thrown into the furnace are both inspiring and humbling. When faced with the threat of being executed in the flames they responded boldly to the king by saying...

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

We must ask ourselves if we would have that kind of courage under similar circumstances. Were we forced to choose between our testimony for Christ

## THE SPANISH SIDE

### MARIANA'S STORY

*PMA's Spanish language ministry is coordinated by Arnie Selfors in Largo, FL. The following shows the impact that their ministry has in the Hispanic community here in the US and in Latin America.*

Once upon a time. There was a young lady named Mariana who was happy go-lucky, friendly and sociable, but suddenly a depression took over her life that lasted three years. The pit that she lived in during those 3 years was very dark and very deep. She would not permit herself to "see the light" as she says. She would accept help from no one, especially if they spoke to her about God. Of course her family couldn't help her in this aspect either, for they did not know God, so they resorted to psychiatrists and psychologists, naturists and even fortune tellers. Anything and everything except bringing her into a knowledge of God.

Mariana often asked God during this time, to take her out of this world. She felt she could not live any longer in this pit of depression. She desired only death and the worst part is that each time she made the intent to take her own life, God would show her that it was not yet her hour.

Because HE would not help her take her own life, she totally rebelled against Him, to the point even to tell Him she hated Him. The real truth is that she blamed God for this disgrace and for the pain that caused this depression, without realizing that this pain and the hurt was only caused by humans, not Dios, but the very ones that she trusted.

## Prayer & Praise

Praise— For the success of PMA's ministry in 2003. For the more than 1000 new students enrolled in our courses and the thousands other sent to continuing students

Prayer— For continued growth and outreach through our lessons.

Praise— For the new digital imager delivered to the PMA office in November. This machine is the true technological workhorse that keeps our ministry moving.

Prayer— For the opportunities for new and innovative forms of outreach. This year PMA Director, Don Sommer is taking classes leading to a Master's Degree in Educational Technology which will help us implement new ways of delivering the truth of God's Word to inmates. (More on this in future issues of *PMA Outreach*)

Praise— For Arnie and Sally Selfors that are working in Florida as the Hispanic ministry coordinators. They work alongside Ida Vazquez who corrects our Spanish lessons.

Prayer— For a plan to mass mail PMA information to all prisons and jails in the United States, that's over 5,000 facilities. A sample mailing will be sent out in a few weeks to see what kind of responses this approach receives.

**Pray for the Shelton Revival  
July 16-17, 2004**



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PO Box 2300  
Port Orchard, WA 98366-0690  
Phone: 1-360-876-0918  
E-mail: [pma@pmabcf.org](mailto:pma@pmabcf.org)  
Website: [www.pmabcf.org](http://www.pmabcf.org)

# KAREN'S KORNER

By God's Grace,

*Karen*

*Karen Boreutsch is the office manager at PMA's headquarters in Port Orchard, WA*





Prison Mission Association  
P O Box 2300  
Port Orchard WA 98366-0690

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*Continued From Page 4 Mariana's Story?*

The last time that Mariana tried to take her own life, she wanted to do it in a way that would this time not fail. Again she spoke to God and told Him "Take me out of here, or show me what, if any is the reason to live."

Obviously, she did not die, she began to recuperate bit by bit, and when she was better, began to plan a trip to the United States from her home country of Argentina. The word "purpose" seemed to haunt her, what was her "purpose" in life?

Only by His hand, God brought her through many marvelous situations from the Miami Area to Tampa, where she came into contact with a small group of Christians who met in homes to study the Bible. After a short time of being in these meetings with these caring people, she realized that all this time, God had been speaking to her, trying to make her understand that life was not in vain, that there was a purpose to her life. She asked Him to come into her life, and realized then that there is purpose in living, and that He

had given her that reason. That purpose was that if she would deposit all her faith in Him, He would show her that HE had suffered all that pain on the Cross for her, that with Him life is so much simpler and has more meaning and He lightens our load. She knows now that she had sinned when trying so often to take her life, but HE has forgiven her ALL her sins and taken away that feeling of guilt. Her family is so happy to know that she is whole and well. What a happy heart Mariana has now, full of light and life, not that terrible darkness.

I am Mariana Guevara, and this is my story. I have come to know God's purpose for my life through the Bible Correspondence Fellowship lessons in Spanish, and praise God for the marvelous way HE brought me into His family. I have grown to love and understand His Word and purpose for my life through these studies. I know now that He will never leave me nor forsake me. My parents are now studying these lessons also. Praise God.