

Pastor's Corner

March 2011

Dear Helpers,

Jimmy Stone, Larry Shook, Steve Miller, and myself served from February 18 until February 20 in a ministry called KARIOS. This is a ministry that brings us into a prison to share the love of God with men who may have never experienced the true meaning of love.

For Jimmy and myself this was not the first time there. For me, I thought I knew what to expect, and I thought I was prepared for what would take place. I did not go there expecting that there would be an earthquake, and the chains—or in this case—doors, fall open; and all that were there to be set free as with the story of Paul. No, these men had committed crimes; some of these crimes took the lives of innocent people, and they were there to pay for what they had done. They were guilty.

Yet, God still loves them; and, when most everyone in their lives has left them, when they feel empty, and that they are un-loveable, God still cares for them. So why was I there? I was there because God loves me, and I realized that there were times in my life and things that I had done in my life that made me un-loveable. No, I never took a person's life, but I have caused others pain, and there is no doubt that the sin that had separated me from God was just as real as the sin that they were dealing with. The difference was that along my way, there were people who continued to love me and nurtured me in real love—because God was a strong part of their life.

Well, I do not have paper enough or time enough to explain all that occurred. Like many of us who read the Scriptures, we pass those stories off as things that happened way back when, and fail to see them as real. But there was one participant out of the 42 who did not want to be there, who did not want to participate, who did not want to share. Yet, honestly, most of the men were there simply because it allowed them a certain amount of freedom—and because of the food that we shared together. One evening, they brought the meal out and one of the men simply sat there looking at his plate. I said to him, “Are you not hungry?” and his reply was, “I am just looking at this a moment. It has been at least 10 years since I have had real chicken.” I know you think, well, he was getting what he deserved. It is his fault. But his remark was not because of the prison food, but because he could not understand why anyone would do something for him. Besides, what if God gave us what we deserve?

I could tell you story upon story and many may be thinking that on Monday, these men went back to living like they had before. Well, that is true of all of us. We can have an encounter with God, and we can allow that encounter to change us, or we can choose to return to our old ways. Whichever we choose to do, God still loves us.

Sunday came, and, honestly, I doubt many of us had slept much over the weekend. It may have been the cookies, or the food, or the Holy Spirit, but we were all tired physically. We had arrived each morning at 6:45 a.m. to get into the prison and for many of us that meant we had to be up by 5:00 am. We left each night around 9:00 pm. Then we went home where many of us still had things to do. Yet, God provided us with the strength to press on.

God touched the lives of many of those participants, and, no matter what, they will know that God loves them and will always love them. They will know that God, through his son Jesus Christ, will forgive them, and that his promise is the same promise that he gave to all those who cried out, “Lord forgive me for I have sinned against you.” His promise is to remember us.

There was one participant that I will forever remember. His story is told within the Scriptures as found in

Mark 1:21-28. There was a man who was possessed by an evil spirit. A spirit that caused him pain, suffering—that made him feel unloved, and caused him to not be able to speak. This participant wanted to leave after he was there that first night. He had come for the food, but did not want to encounter anything else. The evil spirit had caused him to be silent. In fact, we as a team, gathered that first night and prayed over his chair—that God would intervene—and that he would not become a stumbling block to others; that God would work within him and work within us to share God’s love with him.

We were about to dismiss—they would go back to lock up, and we to our homes—when, suddenly, this man stood and asked to say something. The KARIOS team and even the Chaplin were in shock. This man had not participated in anything—not even to share his name. And then it happened, “Come out of him!” No, I did not hear those words spoken, but I saw it in his actions. If I were to say to you that I was not a little afraid, I would be lying. He began to shout and cry out of the pain that was inside him—the evil spirit that had such a hold of him was being broken down. Satan does not give up without a fight.

But it was what I witnessed next, that touched me. His very own brothers, those who were in prison uniforms, some who would have never given this man a second look before, stood up walked over to this man and embraced him, and loved him, prayed for him, and shared with him.

After that we left. I cannot tell you what is next for that man. I know that he has had an experience with God, and what he chooses to do with that is totally up to him. “Behold I stand at the door and knock.” It is the same with each of us. We encounter God every day of our lives, and how we choose to deal with it and what we do with it, is totally up to us.

I want to say THANK YOU to all of you that allowed us to be used for the glory of God. It took each of you to make this weekend happen. I pray that you will continue to support the ministry of KARIOS and I hope that you will ask God to show us how we can be involved even more in this ministry. Whether we want to admit it or not, they are our neighbors.

God is real and God continues to work miracles if you don’t believe it, just give him a try sometime. The only thing that I have left to say is “WOW!”

Rev. Eric Lane

