



Gary Wyder
Prison Evangelist

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The Florida Prison Evangelist

“...He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners...” Luke 4:18

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LAKE BUTLER CHURCH OF CHRIST

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“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.” Ephesians 4:28

The world is full of takers, “give me this and give me that.” Most of those we first meet in prison have a long history of being selfish takers. We all have times when we need help, yet we all need to learn to carry our own load and even help others with their load (Gal. 6:1-5). All Christians should grow to become thankful givers.

We model giving, we teach giving, we need to encourage and finally expect giving from those we work with. Paul’s personal example of a nursing mother and a father that exhorts, comforts and urges is my favorite (1 Thess. 2:1-12). Sadly, most we work with never grow to this stage, they remain in their selfish world view. It is with great joy that we observed two giving brothers who sacrificed a lot of time, sweat and service to give to others.



needed some serious work (see above).

Raymond White and Keith Jackson of the House of Hope spent four hard days of labor rebuilding, then shingling the roof of Off The Chain’s new transition house. There were others that helped, but Raymond and Keith were the backbone of the project. They freely and joyful gave long hours to help a ministry that in turn will help other men like them receive an opportunity to become givers.



months. Men to be proud of!

Raymond and Keith. Raymond is a former tree surgeon and has been the “house dad” for 18 months. Keith is an underwater welder and has been in the program for three

Thomas’ Story

Let me tell you about an inmate in the Florida prison system. . . his name is Thomas. Thomas has ten convictions in Florida including armed robbery and numerous drug felonies. He is in his middle 50’s but looks older. His prison photo shows a man hardened by life. His features offer no suggestion he would be a man interested in the gospel of Christ.

But. . . Thomas began attending church services in prison. Four months ago, a fellow inmate invited Thomas to study the Bible using the World Bible School correspondence courses which are offered through the Churches of Christ Prison Ministry. Thomas has just completed that study. In the past four months, Thomas has approached other inmates about learning more about the gospel of Christ.

About four weeks ago Thomas wrote a letter asking the same material for an inmate friend (Robert), but the friend could not read or write. He asked, “Is there any way we can help?” A week later another letter arrived from Thomas; they had solved the problem. Thomas will read aloud the lesson, the Scripture, the follow-up question, and write Robert’s answer.

Yesterday I heard from Thomas again with a report on how his efforts with Robert are going. “The 1st lesson went well with Robert last night. He is smarter than he knows. We went through 25 questions. I think 25 a night will be good for him.

I have to learn to hide my expression on my face. He watches my expression to see if he has the right answer.”

In May, Thomas will be released to a transition house. He wants to be in central Florida to be near his two children. He has already tried to interest one of them in Bible study, and he has approached me about working in the prison’s mentor program. Thomas likes to be called “Catfish”, and he has become a fisher of men.

This is not just a cute preacher story. I received these letters. Thomas “Catfish” is an inmate at the Florida correctional institution at Lawtey. A fruitful ministry operates in many of the prisons in our land. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. Just as Jesus promised, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” *John 12:32*



This article was written this April by Larry Hood who does World Bible School courses with our inmates. Since the writing, both Robert and Catfish have become Christians and have been released from prison. Catfish (on left) is pictured here with Rob Balsinger, a resident of Off The Chain. They had just come from church services in St. Pete, where Catfish attends faithfully.

Thanks for your prayers!

Pat’s hip replacement surgery went well. It was June 18th, the week after we returned from the workshop in Corpus Christi. She plans to go back to school in late August. We were bountifully blessed with food, prayers and other acts of service.

36th National Workshop is a Great Success!

We greatly appreciated the King’s Crossing Church of Christ for hosting this years workshop, June 10-12. There were attendees from 15 States. Other than keynotes, there were three classes at any given time, thus much to glean from.



While classes included *How To Begin a Jail Ministry* (Ron Tomme of Sharpsburg, GA and I taught that), there were many advanced classes that had a lot of meat.

Relapse Prevention, re-entry programs, New Life certification and many other topics were presented. We started off with a keynote by Freddie Anderson of Huntsville, TX. Freddie always presents powerful Biblical lessons and spoke to us about getting our “mogo” (motivation to go). We finished with a banquet and Ron Goodman of Nashville, TN encouraging us to remain faithful to this wonderful work of Jesus.



There were a number of new folks there, but many ole timers as well. Roy Johnson and Don Hudson of Gray Road in Cincinnati

with myself in the middle were some of the ole timers. We are always greatly refreshed and encouraged after these workshops. A big THANKS to Buck Griffith and the elders of King’s Crossing for making this a reality!

62 have been baptized as of July 29, one more to do on the 31st. Please pray for these new converts.

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