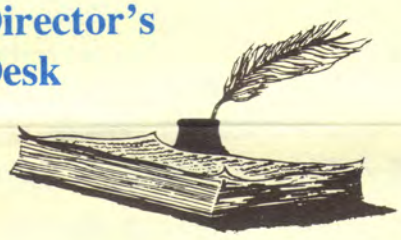
THE CONTENDER

Spring 1991

". . . it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith . . . " – Jude 3

Published for the faithful supporters of County Corrections Gospel Mission

From The Director's Desk



Dear Beloved:

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all who are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon, Build yourselves houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take to yourselves wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city to which I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it; for in its peace shall ye have peace. . .For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected (hoped for) end."

- Jeremiah 29:4-7,11

If one meditates on the Scripture quoted above, he will quickly see how God clearly exhorts His people to make the best of a difficult situation. In the midst of great grief and sorrow, He instructs His people to make a difference in the land in which they've been caused to dwell. "Seek the peace of the city to which I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it!"

My tendency is naturally drawn to giving attention to the problems while often neglecting to attend myself to the special people and ministries that spend themselves in the midst of the problems. Hence, I have been exhorted by my co-workers to recognize some of the positive and joyful observations of this ministry.

As noted, it is natural for me to bring you burdens and themes such as "my eye affects my heart" (Lam. 3:51). Paul often spoke of "many adversaries" and "I bear in my body the marks (brands) of the Lord Jesus". BUT he also gratefully announced many praises, thanksgivings and joyful testimonies. His letter to Philippi is one example of his attentiveness to the "fruits of righteousness". "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." (Phil. 1:3) To the Thessalonian believers he said, ". . .ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received not the word of men but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. . .ye are our glory and joy." (I Thess. 2:13, 20)

I rejoice when I think of God's precious servants who support the effective testimony of the City Gate Mission, Jim Davis and staff as they bring LIGHT to 7th and Diamond Streets in Coatesville. The faithful witness of Pastor Steve Meyers at Kensington Outreach Center and Bible Church rejoices many hearts as he impacts the otherwise helpless and hopeless lives of 2436 Kensington Ave. in Philadelphia. John Freeman and Ken Larter of Harvest/Hope identify daily with the brokenness of AIDS victims and the agonizing recovery of men and women from homosexuality. The Carver Bible College of Atlanta, under the direction of Dr. Hungerpiller, trains vital indigenous leaders and seeks the spiritual vitality of its city. Countless servants are spending their lives in similar occupations which ultimately touch the cries as evidenced in our prisons and nationally syndicated newspapers.

Those who know me best know my ultimate joy: the effective work of the local, Bible-believing church in high-crime areas. May God mightily reward those who tirelessly "seek the peace of the city"!

Because He came for our peace,

Jack Crans

Warden's Corner

Recent reports from the PA Dept. of Corrections reveal an unprecedented increase of "new cells". Although this expensive effort will alleviate a critical over-crowding crisis. **It does not touch anywhere near the root of our national prison crisis!** More on this in our next issue.

Four Bibles were distributed to Wardens since our last issue went out.

Telling Our Boys About Dad's Past

By Charles ''Tex'' Watson

Benjamin, Kristin, Charles and Joshua

Charles ''Tex'' Watson, a former Charles Manson family member, was born again in 1975. Kristen and he married in 1979, and have two children. Still in prison, he directs Abounding Love MinistrieS (Box 1398, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406). Write for his testimony book, *Will You Die For Me?* He writes in his newsletter:

We knew it was about time to tell our son, Joshua, why his Daddy was in prison. Our hearts were anxious about how we would share this with the boys, but much more, how they would take it. Joshua already knew more than he was letting on. He was six years old, and finishing up kindergarten.

A little girl in Joshua's class asked her Mother, ''How come Joshua's Dad is not home?'' Her mother answered her in a beautiful way, saying, ''Joshua's Dad did something wrong a long time ago. God forgives him, but he's still in prison and can't come home right now.''

So she went back to school and told Joshua. Then Joshua asked his Mother about it. Kristen said, ''You will have to ask Daddy.'' He said, ''I don't want to.''

. . .A couple of weeks later, the ideal opportunity came to pass. Benjamin fell asleep in the visiting room (which is very unusual) and at that time the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart saying, ''It's time to share with Joshua.'' We had no idea that this was to be the day. . .

Joshua was lying across our laps, with his head in my arms looking up into my face. Kristen was resting on my shoulder. Not knowing if she was awake or asleep, I said to Joshua, ''Mommy says that sometimes you don't want to come out here.'' Josh giggled a bit nervously. I said, ''That's okay, Daddy understands that it isn't the most fun place to come to. You can't bring your favorite toys here or run and play. Daddy really wants to be home with you to play and everything, but I can't right now.'' He said, ''Why can't you; won't the officers let you go home?'' I said, ''No they won't. But if I could, I would be home with you. I want you to know that it is not because I don't want to come home; I can't right now.'' It was almost like he felt compassion for me, and showed concern. I assured him that I loved him and hugged him real tight. He said, ''I love you too, Daddy.''

At that time, the question came. Kristen straightened up and held Josh's hand. He said, ''Why are you in prison.'' We had decided the week before to only answer the questions he asked, so I said, ''Well, a long time ago - twenty years ago. Do you know how long twenty years is? That is three times older that you are.'' We counted it out on our fingers and he realized that twenty years ago I had done something wrong. He said, ''What did you do?'' I said, ''I hurt some people.'' He said, ''Did you kill them.'' I said, ''Yes, Joshua.'' He said, ''Was it war.'' I said, ''no.'' Kristen's eyes filled with tears.

Of course, he wanted to know why I did it. Kristen spoke up and said, ''You know, Joshua, I have told you a lot about drugs and how they make your mind crazy, right?'' He said, ''Yeah.'' Joshua and Benjamin had heard about ''drugs'', so Kristen told them how bad they were and what they do to people. They knew drugs were of the devil. Kristen said, ''Daddy took drugs, before he knew Jesus. They made his mind so crazy that he killed some people. I said, ''And also, I believed in a man and what he said I should do instead of listening to God, who I did not know at the time.''

. . .Quickly we turned to forgiveness and the cross. Thank God for children who have been brought up in the Lord! Josh and Ben have learned a lot of the Bible stories, especially the story of Calvary, that Jesus died for ***us.***

. . .The Lord led Kristen to tell Joshua how that eight years after Daddy came to prison, she read Daddy's book and got saved herself. How God led her and Daddy to marry and three years later, God gave him (Joshua) to us. We all prayed as the anointing rested upon us. It was such a blessed and precious time in the Lord. The three of us hugged.

. . .The Lord had brought us this far, and would not leave us comfortless. We could trust Him, ''and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord: and great shall be the peace of thy children.'' (Isa. 54:13)

A Family Who Evidences Christ's Love to Delinquent Boys

A Testimony from the Mellinger Family

Each time I receive a copy of **The Contender,** whether at church or in my mailbox, I find a spot and begin reading its contents. I'm certain all of us have different mailbox items which draw our attention whether they be letters from loved ones, cards on special occasions, etc. The attention given is because there is an attachment present. Our family shares the love and concern for those within our prison systems and so **The Contender** receives immediate attention upon its arrival.

April 6, 1991 marked our family's two-year anniversary working with teenage boys at a group home in our area. These boys have ranged in ages from 13-17 years and are placed in this treatment unit because they are considered habitual juvenile offenders. Their living environment is tightly disciplined and the boys' average stay is nine to twelve months at the location.

The principle goal of the program is to change the mind set and behavior patterns of the youth so that their criminal tendencies will be eliminated. As Christians, we know that it is only Christ who can truly change one's mindset and behavior as we accept His death, burial, and resurrection and confess our sins seeking salvation.

Steve and I plus our three sons, Jason 10, Nathan 8, and Joshua 6 began holding bi-weekly Bible studies after we visited the unit at a friend's request. We saw a field white unto harvest and as we got to know them as individuals a bond was formed.

During our last two years we have tried to build relationships through the Bible studies providing each boy with his own Bible upon his arrival, spending holidays such as Memorial Day, Fourth of July, with them, playing games, recognizing their birthdays with a personal size coke or oversized cookie, and occasionally dropping by just to say "Hi".

Some of our highlights over this past year have been the privilege to take 1-4 boys weekly to Sunday School and Church with our family and having one of the residents spend Christmas in our home.

We have had times of discouragement when they don't attend Bible study or boys who have genuinely accepted Christ return to criminal activity, one even lost his life; but we've also had the joys of warm hugs, phone calls months after their release, saying "remember me?", and the privilege of seeing them accept the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior.

Our ministry as with all must be met with prayer, faithfulness, and determination. We may never know the long term effect on some of these boys' lives. We thank the Lord for each and every one of them and for giving to us a new and broader vision. Pray for us as we now move into foster care to open our arms wider to the hurting youth around us.

Lovingly,

The Mellinger Family
Steve, Jennifer, Jason, Nathan
and Joshua

A Thought Worth Quoting

"No pit is so deep that Jesus is deeper still!" - Corrie ten Boom, from a concentration camp in Hitler's Germany.

Focus on a Ministry Servant Miss Dawn Markel

BETHANNA is a residential treatment center for 48+ emotionally disturbed school-age boys and girls of every race, color and creed. The children residing at Bethanna require caring staff members, a concerned community, specialized treatment and exposure to spiritual concepts.

Since the ministry is geared toward the physical, emotional and spiritual well being of each child, Bethanna meets needs created by their traumatized beginnings. The children's lives have become disrupted by the necessity to be removed from their family due to various causes including neglect, abandonment, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and ineffectual parenting. Bethanna believes that a vital relationship with Jesus Christ is essential for life.

Dawn Markel, a veteran houseparent and child worker, was one of our former young people from Hephzibah Baptist Church. She writes:

Dear Pastor Jack:

Thanks for allowing me to share about my ministry with abused children with you. The 8 years I've spent here at Bethanna have challenged my walk with Jesus.

I work with 9 boys (ages 8-16) and they all hold a special place in my heart. The Lord has been teaching me what giving away His love really means. These hurting lives need Jesus. Day in and day out sharing Jesus with them is a big part of my ministry here besides caring for their daily needs. These children came to us empty handed - hurting, lonely, scared, angry, and in great need of love. What better love to share with them is the love of our Lord. I surely can't think of one better.

As time goes on and trust is built between us, their lives unfold and they tell their story. I can relate to their hurting hearts. Some of their stories remind me of my own abuse. I cry with them, hurt with them. As they work through each step of their past, many prayers are being said for each of them. I believe prayer is the only thing that gets them through at times. The pain is so deep at times, it hurts too much to deal with it at the time. I see the Lord becoming real to each of them. Just the other day, my 8-year-old really had a rough day. I ended up holding him in my arms, crying with him. He wanted his Mommy, he said. As we talked, I told him that I would be his mommy while he was here at Bethanna. He looked at me with his sad little eyes and agreed with a long hug. As he hugged me, my only prayer that I hoped would be heard was, "Jesus, bless this little one - hold him so close to **your heart.**" This is when my heart breaks in two. I felt their pain. I can so easily be reminded of my own abuse.

I thank Jesus for my healing. I can relate to a special song that talks about a girl who was sexually abused and how she cried out to God in the middle of her pain - and in the middle of her shame. And His mercy brought her life again. Jesus is so good to us. What a wonderful Lord we have.

Please pray for these hurting children here at Bethanna. If God is calling you to work with these hurting children, contact Bethanna at (215) 355-6500.

I would like to send a special "thank you" to Jack, Sue, Alice S., Mom H. for always being there with open arms of love and support.

In His unfailing mercy,
Dawn Markel

You can encourage Dawn by writing to her at Bethanna, Inc., 1030 Second St. Pike, Southampton, PA 18966.

Special Prayer Concern

Reggie Clark, former student at the Leadership Bible Institute, has had to leave Word of Life Bible Institute for treatment of cancer. He is now at the Philadelphia Veterans Hospital. Please send any greetings c/o CCGM, P.O. Box 1136, Coatesville, PA 19320.

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P.O. Box 1136 • Coatesville, PA 19320
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From The Bookshelf

NEEDED: FOR THE BOOKSHELF AT CHESTER COUNTY PRISON BIBLE STUDY LIBRARY

If you personally, or your fellowship group, would like to purchase any of the following books for the inmate Bible Study Library, please send your contribution and **choice of book** to CCGM, P.O. Box 1136, Coatesville, PA 19320.

We will purchase the book at great discount (as listed) and credit the book to the honor or memory of you or your fellowship. Thank you!

Needed:

(2) Strong's Exhaustive Concordance @ $10.95/book
(1) Systematic Theology, Charles Hodge @ 34.95/3 vol.
(1) Systematic Theology, LS Chafer @ 32.95/2 vol.
(1) Kingdom of the Cults, W. Martin @ 12.95
(1) Thru the Bible, J. V. McGee @ 74.95/5 vol.
(1) Matthew Henry's Commentary @ 39.95/6 vol.
(1) Bible Exposition Commentary, W. Wiersbe @ 39.95/2 vol.
(1) Wilmington's Guide to the Bible @ 22.95
(1) New Unger's Bible Dictionary @ 21.95

South East Secure Treatment Unit - A Year Round Commitment

If you feel Christ is leading you to serve Him somewhere, but you are not sure where, this may be your chance to search it out. Try coming with us for a few Tuesday nights as a volunteer worker in our Industrial Arts program from 7:00-8:30 p.m. It could be a very special time for you and the boys at SESTU.

SESTU, which is located on the grounds of the Embreeville State Hospital, houses 34 delinquent boys from ages 13-19. You could help as a carpenter, mason, small engine repairman, welder, plumber, electrician or help with arts, crafts, Bible study or other helps.

You can help financially to provide the supplies for the projects. We need prayer support, as well as the doors open to us, and they are slowly opening.

If you are interested in this type of ministry, please feel free to contact me at (215) 384-4592. I'd be more than glad to have you join us. The boys of SESTU would be overjoyed.

George Welsh, Jr.
SESTU Coordinator

Areas to Designate Gifts

SESTU
General
Memorials
Van Replacement Fund
Snack Foods
Warden's Fund
Chaplaincy

Note:
All gifts are tax-deductible; a receipt will be sent.

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