

UNTIL JUSTICE Rains Down

THE AC PHOENIX PRISON MINISTRIES

By: Rodney Sumler

Every year thousands of Americans are wrongfully convicted and thousands of the guilty are punished with draconian sentences of many years locked up in prison. "What do we live for if it is not to make life less difficult for each other." As a recovering former inmate, I want to make the rest of my life count for something. I'm inviting churches large and small to join the A C Phoenix in implementing several much needed prison ministries that will provide relief from disruptive influences serious and pervasive problems, and the painful experience of prison life.

There are 2 million Americans in our states and federal prisons. Three times that number are on probation and are under the supervision of probation officers and various courts. In most communities, when dealing with our prisons, you are a member of one of four groups: People who have been to prison; people who have members of their families in prison; people who know someone in prison and a very small group of people who know nothing about the people in the first three groups. What group are you a member of?

Family Weekend Visitation Trips.

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me." Matthew 25:26. One of the happiest times of a prison experience is when family members or friends visit people in prison. The A C Phoenix and participating churches will reach out with planned and coordinated family visits to state and federal prisons using church vans, buses or chartered buses.

Every Member Write One.

Mail call is the sadist time of the day when most inmates never receive letters from home. Every member of a church prison ministry and/or congregation can implement Matthew 25:26 and visit inmates through the mail by adopting an inmate and writing to them.

Rapping With Senior Citizens.

Eagles rest through the night until the updrafts of morning air enables them to launch out and fly. The A C Phoenix will invite senior citizens to participate in quarterly rap sessions to encourage and share their strongest memories and experiences through oral history.

Senior citizens from a cross-section of various communities will teach inmates that there is a time to fly and a time to rest. From the eagle's example, inmates can learn to use their hours of darkness (prison) as a waiting, resting place – a time of preparation for a new soaring when freed from prison. The stories of senior citizens experiences – extraordinary will be a source of power and strength.

For The Children's Sake.

With tens of thousands of non-violent first time offenders in prisons, hundreds of thousands of children of inmates are being bred into the next generation of criminals. Every one of these children have problems, suffering from extreme feelings of abandonment. For the sake of the children, a ministry is needed to offer guidance and support for children of inmates. Are they destined by fate to become criminals or will it depend on the support and guidance they get from parents (one incarcerated) their neighbors, church, school, community and the penal institution that is housing one of their parents.

Our communities are suffering from two perceived solutions. The conventional conservative solution, while praising "family values" has focused on tough law enforcement and incarceration, disregarding the impact of disintegration of families. The liberal solution focused on dealing with social ills through government programs. Both solutions are unrealistic. We need to bring God back into the family and follow God's family plan. This plan meets the needs of children for support and guidance.

"Out In Front" Dramatic Presentation

Ignorance is the snare that causes most inmates problems. Almost 90% of young inmates are not using their abilities positively. Many would confess that fear often stops them before they can ever get started. One bible proverb describes fear as a snare. A snare captures an animal and holds it until the creature dies or chews away its own limb to escape. But inmates are people, not just animals.

Churches with the assistance of college drama students will help former inmates to produce prison life situational sitcoms. These dramatic presentations will allow inmates to see themselves as others see them. They will help teach young inmates how to identify disruptive influences of others.

I Am My Brother's Keeper


There will be old brother/young brother programs that will teach pride, love and respect. This ministry will exploit "dad-pops" respect relationships that presently exist between some young black inmates and older black inmates. It will build on the resources, wisdom and positive experiences of older inmates. The fact that most of these inmates, raised in single-parent homes with no fathers are resources that shouldn't be neglected. This will equip young inmates to assume their father roles and become better fathers. Other inmates will become role models for attitude changes.

Jesus said, "Go into the vineyard and work. Whatever is right, I will pay." All ministry is about people and relationships. I'm asking churches, businesses, civic groups and other organizations to let people see your humanity. Sponsor workshops, seminars, and lectures with the AC Phoenix and consultants with year of prison experiences. Your days are your life in ministry.

"I've got to work until my day is done!"

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