

Jail or Prison Ministry

From the Pews to the Streets Ministry

Pastor Alan Sharp

In order to start a ministry to prisoners, some initial steps must be taken. First is to contact the area chaplain in charge of prison or jail ministry. Usually a class is offered training volunteers about proper procedures and safety. Next is a required background check which is done by the chaplain in charge. I was involved with a ministry which was started through Mount Hope Church in Lansing, MI and Len Hill who is Michigan's chaplain.

In speaking to men or women who are incarcerated, you must start with the basics by making them aware that they must receive salvation. You must develop an attention getting technique using scripture. Next, you must give them hope by telling them that God wants to use them for ministry to change people's lives. They must be taught about doing ministry in God's way and not man's way. If these men and women will put God in priority, they will have all of their basic needs met, such as a job, housing, etc.

A man by the name of Mike asked me to go to Ingham County Jail to do two services each one hour long every 3rd Sunday of each month. He would open the service with prayer and then sing a couple of songs from a handout he had distributed to the inmates in attendance. There would be 30 – 40 men for each service. These men looked very hardened with no emotion on their faces. Mike would give a short sermon about salvation and then would follow-up with scriptures to back up his message. He would ask if anyone wanted to receive Christ in his life. In each service there is always a great response. He would then ask me to speak. The first thing that came out of me was, "You are the luckiest people in the whole world." If looks could kill, I would be dead a thousand times over. Each time I would go on to explain that God wants all of them to become heart surgeons once they are released and go back home, or to say it another way, He is looking for a few good soldiers to do battle in the supernatural not in the natural human ways.

God wants to empower them to do this work. All they have to do is get to know their Bible real well and also learn to pray. This is why they are so lucky. Because they have all sorts of time to prepare for being used to heal the hurt that Satan has caused out in the neighborhoods. Next we would ask if they would allow God to take complete control of their lives to become ministers to carry on Christ's ministry. We would ask for them to be baptized in the Holy Spirit through prayer and laying on of hands.

The hour would be up and the men that walked in stone cold hard, walked out like they were floating on a cloud, excited to get started. God seems to be able to move in people that are in a complete broken state easier than in people who are secure in the secular world. My prayer is that somehow God will do this with people that have not fallen like these men have. If people could just see the hurt that sin causes instead of the sin itself, we could be constantly building up each other to be used of God to heal each other's hurts.

