

NOVEMBER 2019

# JOURNEY

CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

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A MINISTRY OF SCRIPTURE AWAKENING



# Prisoners Who Impacted the World

It has been exactly a year since Andrew Brunson was released from a two-year prison term in Western Turkey. In July of 2018, I flew to Turkey to pray for his release and to be a support during his trial. I had no idea how the trip would impact my life. His faithfulness in prison challenged me to use my freedoms more fully; his suffering in stark and dangerous conditions caused me to be more willing to obey the Lord, whatever the cost.

We become inspired to live fully for God when we “remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them...” (Hebrews 13:3 ESV). As we pray for those imprisoned for their faith, we find God’s passion to live out our own. And there are plenty of prisoners to remember; the persecution faced by followers of Christ today is the highest it’s been in modern history. According to Open Doors, 4,305 Christians were killed for their faith in the past year and 3,150 believers were

detained without trial, arrested, sentenced, or imprisoned.

We can also remember those who have suffered in prison through the long and glorious history of the Church. Think, for example, of John Bunyan. A Puritan pastor who refused to conform to the dictates of the State, Bunyan was imprisoned in England for 12 years, during which he wrote his biography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. The title suggests how much he was inspired by the life of the Apostle Paul. While behind bars, Bunyan also wrote *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, which became one of the most published books in the English language. Some 1,300 editions of the book have been printed 250 years after the author’s death.

Just as John Bunyan was inspired by Paul, so Paul might have thought about Peter. Peter was imprisoned more than once as the figurehead of the Church that Paul at first opposed. Likewise,

Peter may have been inspired by John the Baptist, who was imprisoned and killed after he had prepared disciples to be part of the team that followed Jesus our Lord. John was likely encouraged by the example of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet who remained faithful despite many imprisonments for his faith. And Jeremiah probably drew comfort from Joseph, who had been unjustly imprisoned for as much as a decade simply for what he believed.

Each of these prisoners for the Lord shared a common detention experience that only accelerated their profound impact on the world. And there will be no stopping us as we “remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them.”



#### WILLIAM P. CAMPBELL

Author, President, and Executive Director of Scripture Awakening. Host of Beyond Words Radio.

## JOURNEY CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

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## Visit Those in Prison

In Matthew 25:34-40, Jesus says “... whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” One group that Jesus referenced here were those in prison.

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**I had the privilege of working in prison ministry in the 1970s. It was one of the most difficult, eye-opening, yet rewarding experiences of my life! It radically changed my perspective on my daily Christian walk both for myself and my interaction with others.**

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I worked with the Bible College prison ministry team. We served Purdy Women’s Correctional Facility in Gig Harbor, WA—the largest women’s prison in the state with close to 750

inmates. It was actually nestled in a beautiful wooded area. As far as correctional facilities go, it was a pretty decent place to be incarcerated.

I led Sunday morning worship and preached each week. Picture this, however: I was extremely introverted, standing in front of a large group of women. I wore long skirts because my knees literally knocked together from my nervousness! These services were, for many, their only contact with the outside world as their families and former friends had forgotten and abandoned them because of their crimes.

I also taught weekly Bible studies. One was in solitary confinement to a small, notorious group of ladies. They had been part of a religious group that had become a cult. The leader had convinced them that one of their little boys who acted out frequently was demon-possessed and that they needed to beat the devil out of him. He died

from this. The leader convinced them God would raise him from the dead.

Many days later, the authorities showed up and they all went to prison. The women had to remain in solitary because their life would be threatened in the general population; inmates have no tolerance for anyone who harms a child. These women had repented and were hungry for God’s truth and hope for a better future.

The second was also a small group. They were always eager to hear the Gospel and invited others to come regularly. One week, a woman joined us who had been kept in prison past her release date for one reason—to have corrective facial surgery completed. She had a birth deformity where her facial features were in the wrong place. Her face was horribly misshapen. She had a volatile temper. She wound up in prison because while in a store she overheard someone laughing and mistakenly assumed they were laughing at her looks. She opened a package of razor blades and severely cut the people.

In Bible study, I shared the salvation message. The more I shared, the more agitated she became, wringing her hands furiously. At the end, she calmly thanked me and walked out. As I was leaving with the other women, they emphatically told me how lucky I was. The hand wringing was the sign that this woman was going to issue a beating and the recipient rarely walked away on their own.

These two groups taught me that: 1) God forgives no matter how heinous our sin, and 2) as we obey Christ’s calling, He will guide and protect us. They are lessons that have stayed with me throughout my life.



**SUSIE SHIELDS**

JCM Executive Editor, Program Director Beyond Words Radio Administrator AWAKE! WNC.



# Christ Changes Everything

In the epilogue of my book, *Rewriting Your Broken Story*, I summarize the testimony of the late Charles W. Colson, former special counsel to the White House under President Nixon and founder of Prison Fellowship. I had the privilege of knowing Chuck personally, and one thing I admired about him was that he made good on a promise most ex-prisoners fail to keep: he never forgot those he met while serving his sentence for participation in the Watergate scandal. In fact, a week after his release, he was already back—as a visitor—“the first of a million proofs that he meant it” when he told his friends that he wouldn’t forget them.<sup>1</sup>

Chuck went on to minister to millions, directly and indirectly, through Prison Fellowship—an organization that continues to grow in impact. Key to his ministry was his ability and willingness to relate firsthand to those to whom he ministered. This humble attitude was formed in him while still serving his sentence: “One day, he read Hebrews 2:11: ‘Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them

brothers and sisters.’ Jesus was not afraid to call Chuck ‘brother.’ Neither would Chuck be afraid to call those around him brothers.”<sup>2</sup> Remember, this was a man who’d held one of the highest offices in the country!

Even if we haven’t been in a physical prison, we too can take this Scripture to heart as we minister to the incarcerated, keeping in mind that we have all been in bondage—imprisoned by our own sin—until Jesus Christ set us free.

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**Once we enjoy this true freedom, no human chains can keep us from it; we’re “free indeed,” as Jesus said (John 8:36). We have a new identity and a new destiny that nothing and no one on earth can take away.**

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We’re no longer defined by our broken past but by our unbounded future with God. This is as true for believers in a human prison as for those of us who walk “free” on the outside. In fact, sometimes believers inside a

physical prison grasp this reality even more deeply.

As we approach prison ministry, may we realize what Chuck Colson realized: that we’re no different, no better, than those in prison. Our identity before Christ—sinners condemned to die—is the same; and our identity after Christ—redeemed children of God for all eternity—is the same as that of our incarcerated brothers and sisters.

Praise God, not one of us is defined by our broken past. And all of us, in some way, have one. But we also all have a choice: “The pain of our brokenness can lead us into despair and emptiness, or it can cause us to examine what we believe so we can ultimately experience true and lasting redemption. When our story is set in an eternal context, everything changes.”<sup>3</sup>

1 Kenneth Boa, *Rewriting Your Broken Story* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), p. 204.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 206.



## KEN BOA

Dr. Boa is an author, speaker, and president of Reflections Ministries. [www.KenBoa.org](http://www.KenBoa.org)



## Imprisoned for His Faith

Persecution against Christians in China is on the rise. In 2017, it was estimated that some 3,700 Christians were arrested for their faith. In 2018, the number skyrocketed to more than 100,000 and has already exceeded that number this year.

Brother Chen (names have been changed) knows all too well what it's like to be in prison for your faith in China—not because he was a prisoner—but because he used to be a prison warden commissioned with the task of “re-educating” Christians. I met Chen at a Bible study in southern China hosted by my friend, Pastor Joshua.

Chen told me a story of a well-known Christian pastor who was transferred to his prison. He was told that the pastor would not deny his faith and would be almost impossible to “re-educate.” Chen relished the challenge.

For the pastor's first night in Chen's custody, he arranged for the pastor to be placed in a small cell together with the most notorious prisoners known for their violence and brutality. He promised to reward the prisoners if they roughed the pastor up and made his life miserable.

The next morning, Chen arrived at the prison cell ready to find a bloody and bruised prisoner, instead he found extremely calm criminals that had grown fond of the pastor and accepted Jesus as their Savior.

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**Chen was livid and immediately demanded that Joshua be transferred to another cell with equally notorious thugs. When Chen returned the next morning, he again found that all of the prisoners in that cell had accepted Jesus as their Savior.**

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Chen was not going to be made to look like a fool in his own prison! He called the guards and demanded that they beat the pastor until he was no longer recognizable. The pastor took a bad beating until he passed out. Afterwards the pastor's broken, limp body was dragged to another cell, tossed beside the only toilet; occupants were told to defecate and urinate on the unconscious pastor.

The next morning, Chen discovered that all of the prisoners in that cell had become Christians during the night when they all witnessed the pastor miraculously healed from all of his physical trauma.

“I was so upset,” Chen told me. “I could not believe it. I wanted to kill this pastor. He was making me look like a fool.”

The next day, however, a very high-profile prisoner had a dispute with another prisoner and during a scuffle was stabbed and killed.

“This prisoner was important to the government of China. If he died on my watch, I would most likely lose my job as warden of the prison and even be executed,” he said.

“I didn't know what to do, so in my desperation I told the guards to bring the pastor to my office. I mean, if he could be brought back to consciousness then maybe he could help with the dead prisoner. I was willing to try anything.”

When the pastor arrived, Chen asked him if his God could bring dead people back to life. The pastor nodded and then introduced Chen to Jesus. Right there inside the warden's office, Chen got down on his knees and the pastor had him repeat the sinner's prayer. The pastor then went and prayed for the prisoner who suddenly started to breathe again.

“Wow,” I said as he told me the story. “Do you keep in touch with that pastor?” I asked.

Chen nodded. “Yes. He is your friend Pastor Joshua. I have been a member of his church since that day.”



**EUGENE BACH**

Serving the underground church in China for 20+ years; leads the Chinese mission Back to Jerusalem.



# The Power of Christ—Not Bound by Walls or Circumstances

One reason I love to participate in ministry that takes place in prisons is because the reach and power of the Gospel is so vividly displayed there. In Matthew 25:36-40, Jesus speaks to His righteous sheep about inheriting eternal life; the Lord commends them for having visited the prisoners jailed here on earth. Our Savior cared about ministry to inmates then—and He still does.

Those who have ministered in jails in any role know how inspiring it can be. People locked up often have a desperation for Christ's presence that those of us on the outside rarely exhibit. Too many believers on the outside generally think they have little reason to desperately crave the presence of God.

But for inmates, Jesus is pretty much all in the world they have. For inmates who come to Christ (or who, once incarcerated, come back to Christ from perhaps years of wandering), the Gospel can mean several things. First and as for all of us, the Gospel is the hope of eternal life beyond this world. Secondly, for the inmate, Jesus represents hope for the future and restored possi-

bilities. Thirdly and very importantly, the Gospel is also a powerful help in surviving the often-brutal culture that exists within prison walls.

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**“Strength for today, and bright hope for tomorrow...”**

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This quotation is from Thomas Chisholm's famous hymn, “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” Inmates who hit bottom—yet learn that Jesus is there to lovingly accept them—are full of gratitude for His faithfulness. We all need daily strength and future hope that only comes from our Savior.

While holding a Gospel outreach in a correctional facility in the deep South, our volunteers prayed with men of every ethnicity, stature, background, and situation. The inmates shared testimonies that were inspiring, funny, insightful, heartbreaking, and most all unforgettable. Several told stories that I call “postcards from the jungle.”

“Jesus is Who gets me through every day,” an inmate told me last week.

“Man, I need Jesus with me every minute just in order to survive.” Time spent behind bars is not easy and is often dangerous. God tangibly shows up when His children live like His presence is with them and is the only “sure thing” in their life. If the Church craved Jesus' presence to the degree that many inmates do, revival would come to our nation!

Is Jesus just one more accessory in your otherwise cluttered life? Or do you live as if Jesus is the very key to your life and future? In truth, He is. Think of it. The incarnation of Jesus was itself a type of “prison ministry.” Motivated by love, Jesus went to an undesirable place to minister to people captively bound through the choices they had made. Those guilty lawbreakers in need of pardon are us. In this big world or in a small cell, Jesus is the path to freedom for every anxious soul.



**DR. ALEX MCFARLAND**  
Founder of Truth for a New Generation.  
[www.AlexMcFarland.com](http://www.AlexMcFarland.com)



# Prisons of Our Own Making

Not all prisons have bars and jailers; we sometimes make our own.

Janice was age eight when her parents divorced, and ten when her mother dropped her off at her married older sister's home for a visit. Two months later the sister received a note from Mom:

"I have married a man and we have decided we don't want Janice to live with us. Please keep her."

Janice's sister raised her, but at ten years-old, her father and mother had abandoned her. She assumed something was wrong with her and she better do her best to prove her worth. A compulsion to work hid the pain of a ten year-old child. She had to be busy and prove herself invaluable. She created a prison of her own making and carried it into adulthood, marriage, and motherhood.

Personal relationships, however, suffered. She had few friends and no really deep ones. She found it very difficult to speak about anything important; she simply didn't have time for that—she had to be busy at toil. Her husband was thrilled at first with his wife's industriousness; but over time, he discovered it was difficult if not impossible to find

time to just enjoy each other's company or go on vacation and relax. Those activities to Janice were just wastes of time. They drifted apart while Janice remained hiding in her secure jail cell of work.

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**When Janice tried to avoid her compulsion to work, she gained weight. Her work compulsion shifted to food. Without identifying the root cause of her pain, her jail cell simply moved from one compulsion to another. It became a vicious cycle with no hope of release. She was trapped and couldn't get out.**

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Janice is not alone; work is not the only hiding place; and women are not the only ones hiding. Shopping, eating, sports, hobbies, amusements, and many other good activities can be places to hide. None of them are bad in and of themselves, but none will satisfy.

The Psalmist tells us that God is the only acceptable hiding place. That

does not mean we are to live in a fantasy world of non-reality created by God. It means that God is our ultimate security, and every other apparent place of security is flawed and a fraud.

Janice had a friend who loved her enough to tell her, "You need help! I know a godly counselor who may be able to help you, and I hope you will call her."

Janice did call and did see the counselor. After many long and tearful sessions, progress came. The cell walls of her self-made prison were not completely removed, but they were breached. Today she still struggles with her compulsion, but less so every month. She now lives with hope!

Her counselor has given her one phrase to remember when she feels herself returning to her compulsion:

"Janice, make a decision to live in your *knowings* and not your *feelings*!"



**BILL NEWTON**

Pastors a start-up church, writes, and serves on 3 boards. US Naval Academy graduate & Harvard MBA.

# Breaking Free of Worry



If you're a worrier, there's a mighty truth you need to embrace: **God is in control of you, your loved ones, and your circumstances.**

Most women I know long to create the perfect “nest” where hearts feel at home and family members are content and peaceful, but a mind saturated with anxiety undermines their efforts. Despite our longings for a heart in harmony with peace, women and worry often go hand in hand. Even those strong in their faith fall prey to worry—those niggling doubts, fears, and anxieties that things aren't going to turn out all right.

Living in a fallen world certainly gives us many reasons to be anxious. The potential for less than positive outcomes in any area of life looms before us. Because that's true, many women have taken on the worrier role, keeping company with it on a regular basis. As one mom who recently requested prayers for her traveling children commented to me, “I just have that worry gene.” She, like a lot of other women, has saddled up with WORRY as a lifestyle companion.

Many worries fall within the “what if” category: What if my husband leaves me? What if my child gets sick? What if I get cancer? What if my children have

trouble in school? What if my finances are depleted? What if I'm a total failure? What if...What if...What if...?

Internalizing and dwelling on worries day after day will take you under, making it almost impossible to deal with even the simple problems you face.

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**In short; worry left unattended can eat at you and steal your joy. But for the Believer, there's awesome news! YOU have the power of Jesus living inside of you to break free from the worry that threatens your sanity and peace.**

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Jesus explained this reality of freedom to some believers who were gathered around Him in the Temple courtyard. “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. Therefore, if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.” (John 8:32, 36 HCSB)

According to Jesus, you are already set free from worry if He lives inside you. So, take hold of what's true in

your spiritual nature and flesh it out. Here are two approaches that will help get you started:

- 1 Decide to Stop Worrying:** This is a disciplined choice and is the first step of “worry free” living.
- 2 Trade Worry for Worship:** It's an act of obedience to toss out the worry and replace it with worship. It's a statement of surrendered faith in God.

We are co-bearers of God's image and He will gladly help us break free from the worry cycle.

Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Women long for a fulfilled life, but WORRY robs them from experiencing all that Jesus has in store. Cindi's Bible Study, *DESPERATE, Seeking Simplicity...Finding the Cross*, will help women focus on the power available through the cross of Christ to tackle their anxieties. Order yours at [FrazzledFemale.com](http://FrazzledFemale.com).



**CINDI WOOD**

Author of best selling Frazzled Female series.  
[www.FrazzledFemale.com](http://www.FrazzledFemale.com)





## Anita's Testimony

My earliest childhood memory is of my mother giving me to a neighbor and never looking back. My temporary family was horrible. My father figure was an alcoholic and very abusive, especially to me in unmentionable ways. Emotional and physical abuse was as normal as taking a breath. I felt dirty and unloved. Isolating was my way of coping with this constant depravity. Once I began to realize these things were wrong, I was too afraid to share for fear of losing the only family I had. The few friends I had rarely spent time with me.

When I was 13, I was baptized. I had finally begun to hope again! At 15, I was in an accident that took my leg and my best friend's life. I felt so alone and hopelessness set in like never before.

At 17, I ran away from all those who hurt me. I felt lost and unwanted but a little more free. At 18 and 19, I became a mom. Unable to care for my daughters, I took them to my aunt who was always there for me. That is when she told me my mother had given me away. Once again, I felt lost. I ran—feeling unwanted and unloved. I began to isolate. I medicated my pain with alcohol, drugs, and sex. My addictions got me in trouble with the law. At 28, I was arrested for possession and placed on two years' probation.

There was another possession charge six years later; finally, I got sent to prison on a four-year sentence. I was released after 11 months, but sent back one more time two years later. This charge would set me on a path to redemption.

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**From a cold bunk in prison, I cried out to God; and for the first time, I truly gave my life to Christ. I found myself visiting chapel every time there was a service. I began to grow in my relationship with God, and hope became strong in me.**

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I signed up to be in the Portal Houston re-entry program and began to think about how my life could change. I exited prison with a plan and a coach, ready for a new season of life. With God's help, I began rebuilding my life and my relationships.

Today I am a part of the Portal Houston team. I respond to letters written by other women who are ready to make positive changes in their lives. I get to go

back into prison to coach other women in their re-entry journey. I have begun a step study at Portal Houston. My church family has come alongside me in ministry and will be hosting a Portal Houston re-entry coach training. I will begin a Celebrate Recovery group at the Discipleship Home. Next spring, I will start college for Accounting/Social Work. My goal is to continue to work with women who are returning from prisons and give them hope.

My name is Anita Rose Paras-Dotson. My Father God formed me. He never abandoned me, He redeemed me, protected me, and restored my life.

Portal Houston's mission is to build capacity of women leaving the criminal justice system for good. It is made up of teams of women from the faith community who help women make a plan for their release. Portal Houston trains and mobilizes these reentry coaches, and then supports them and the clients with matched service linkages for housing, job readiness, vocational training, family reconciliation, and much more. The initiative is in its third year, servicing over 100 clients per year who are returning to the Houston area. Rhonda Arias developed the reentry initiative after 15 years of prison ministry. "I saw that God was doing a deep work in the hearts of the women while they were locked up, but their faith gets tested after release." Portal Houston is providing a safe passageway to a productive and God-filled life by connecting the women with the faith community.

Photo (L-R): Anita & Rhonda



**ANITA ROSE PARAS-DOTSON**

Member of Portal Houston team after incarceration & participating in Portal Houston re-entry program.

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# B90 Prison Initiative

When Scripture Awakening's B90 Prison Initiative launched, a great need for more Bible in 90 Days classes became readily apparent. Hunger for God's Word among prisoners has increased in America.

Men and women are experiencing genuine heart-change and new purpose for their lives by simply reading through the Bible, because God reveals Himself through His written Word.

With the assistance of grants and other gifts, B90 has enjoyed great success in numerous prisons, jails, and transitional ministries. Yet the demand for Bible in 90 Days in prisons is so great that requests have already outpaced available resources.

But... a **simple gift of \$25** is all it costs for one prisoner to participate in reading Bible in 90 Days (B90 Bible & Participant's Guide). There are so few things you can do with \$25... but investing that amount to transform a life forever isn't small—it's HUGE!

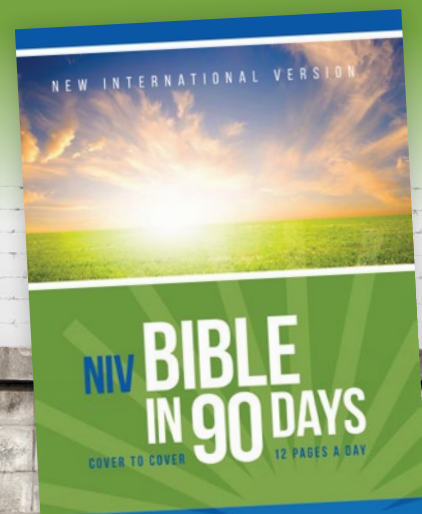
**Please consider sponsoring one inmate per month by giving a monthly offering of \$25.** Your Sunday School class, or other group, can sponsor even more than one inmate. Gifts are appreciated and are tax deductible. Thank you!

## How to Give

**Online:** [ScriptureAwakening.com/donate](http://ScriptureAwakening.com/donate)

**Mail:** Scripture Awakening, 202 N. Grove Street Suite 202, Hendersonville, NC 28792

Scripture Awakening is a 501c3 nonprofit organization.





## B90 Prison Initiative

Almost from its inception, *Bible in 90 Days* (B90) has proven to be effective in prison ministry settings. During its formative years, ministries seeking to use the B90 curriculum could request scholarship funding. Ted Cooper Jr., who created and developed B90, would then raise funding to fulfill their request. These requests were handled in much the same fashion once *Bible in 90 Days* merged with Scripture Awakening.

In 2017, things began to change as Scripture Awakening launched a “Prison Ministry Initiative.” The launch started in response to a request to partner with Prison Fellowship at the Carol S. Vance Unit in Richmond, TX, near Houston. The Vance Unit there includes a faith-based wing, and Prison Fellowship wanted to offer B90 classes. Providing some materials and deeply discounting others, Scripture Awakening assisted with these classes from which more than 300 inmates graduated.

Seeing that the “fields are ripe for harvest,” Scripture Awakening began seeking grants and private contributions to expand the use of *Bible in 90 Days* with the incarcerated. The staff at Scripture Awakening began reaching out to prison ministries, chaplains,

and transitional ministries, offering the *Bible in 90 Days* curriculum for use. As a result of the initiative, more than 1000 inmates and former inmates had completed reading the entire Bible from cover to cover in 2017.

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**In subsequent years, the Prison Ministry Initiative—with other ministries, state and federal chaplains, and generous donors—has helped change the lives of thousands of inmates.**

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Cedrick, an inmate at Wynne Prison in Huntsville, TX, had never experienced the love of God until he participated in a B90 class. He said, “I did not believe that God could possibly love me because of the things I have done...but after I read about King David...nobody messed up as much as David, but God still loved him, and he loved God. Now I know that because of Jesus, God loves me!”

Scripture Awakening was fortunate last year to get *Bible in 90 Days* into the Darrington Prison in Sharon, TX. This facility houses a four year, fully

accredited seminary funded by Heart of Texas Foundation. While there were classes for the general prison population, the entire senior class of the seminary also read the *Bible in 90 Days* before their graduation. Hopefully, those graduates will be able to establish B90 programs in the prisons to which they have been assigned as Field Ministers. One of the graduates, Emilio said, “I learned that the Gospel reaches everyone where they are...what was unique in reading this book is that I noticed when I was reading this book, it was actually reading me.”

Each year Scripture Awakening seeks to expand into more prisons and institutions while continuing to work with those where B90 is already established. There could be no group of people perhaps who need to experience the transformative power of God’s Word more than those who are incarcerated. The goal of the Scripture Awakening Prison Initiative is to “Awaken the captives to the transformative and liberating power of God’s Word.”



**DAVID L. WINKLE**

David serves in ministry outreach for Scripture Awakening and is a Charismatic Episcopal priest.



## From Murder...to Minister

In 2010, Paul David Gillette was sentenced to 45 years in prison for murder. At 49, he believed that his life was essentially over. Following his sentencing, he was sent to the John N. Wynne Unit (Huntsville, TX) with a release date of August 22, 2055. Should he live that long, Paul realized that he would be 92 years old by the time he paid his debt to society.

In the third year of his incarceration, Paul enrolled in a Bible in 90 Days (B90) class facilitated by Bill Saunders and his ministry in Huntsville. While Paul had considered himself a marginal Christian and was somewhat familiar with the Bible, the Word of God had never spoken to him so clearly. He had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ while reading Scripture. He was so excited that by the time the class ended, Paul had read the entire Bible twice (and a third time shortly after that)! Through the reading of the Word, God's Holy Spirit transformed Paul's life.

Paul began living his life in response to the Word of God, becoming active in the prison chapel and Bible studies. He realized that his life was not over and was just beginning. Eventually

Paul applied to become a student in the four-year seminary housed in the Darrington Prison Unit (Rosharon, TX).

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**While in his senior year of seminary, he and his class read through the entire Bible using the same Bible in 90 Days that changed his life and set his feet upon this path.**

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Paul graduated from seminary at Darrington on May 16, 2019, receiving a Bachelor of Science in Biblical Studies degree from Southwestern Baptist Seminary. He was approved by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to be a Field Minister and transferred to the T.L. Roach Unit (Childress, TX) to begin his new ministry.

As a Field Minister in prison, he now has a peer-to-peer ministry as a pastor, teacher, and counselor to his fellow inmates. He lives full time with his parishioners helping them find the life-transforming love of Christ that he has come to know. He is serving the remainder of his 45-year sentence ministering to others in the name of Christ.

Settled into his ministry, it is now possible for Paul to disciple other inmates using B90. Having completed the program so many times makes him the perfect facilitator and mentor. Numerous Field Ministers and their supervising Chaplains in the Texas Criminal Justice System have also successfully used B90 with inmates. Their only obstacle is the cost of the materials.

The cost for one inmate to participate in a Bible in 90 Days class is \$25.00. The transformative power of God's Word was unleashed in Paul Gillette's life because someone cared enough to give a simple gift of \$25. There are many things that one can do with \$25, but few things have more impact than transformation of broken human lives. If you would like to join others in donating to the B90 Prison Initiative go to [www.ScriptureAwakening.com/donate](http://www.ScriptureAwakening.com/donate).



**PAUL GILLETTE**

Serving a 45-year prison term for murder, now a Field Minister at T.L. Roach Prison Unit, TX.



## Set the Captive Free

When God called me to the fight against human trafficking, I had no idea how difficult the work would be nor the freedom I would receive by doing it.

Often, the people victimized by human trafficking act out in frustrating and aggressive ways because of the way their brain functions due to trauma.

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**Many times, the work is not only thankless but is also criticized and condemned by the very people I sacrifice so much to assist. Honestly, I have learned to be grateful for this because my broken heart takes me straight to the feet of Jesus. Ironically, I have been the captive that needed to be set free!**

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I grew up with a father who was physically abusive to us all, but his emotional abuse took the heaviest toll on me. I believed it when he told me I wasn't smart enough...nor good enough. This led me into a "Martha" mentality

that I just need to do more and work harder. I felt I needed to earn Jesus' approval. I am now learning (and it's a process) that if I am walking with the Lord and doing HIS will, He shares equally in the burden. I only take responsibility for what is mine; He takes responsibility for what is His. There is such freedom in this especially when working in the trenches of human trafficking gets tough.

A community agency—frustrated and out of options—called about Lisa, a victim of human trafficking. Acting from a state of severe trauma, Lisa had burnt her bridges with every service available to her in the state. My organization, *Chains Interrupted*, took her case.

Lisa was one tough cookie, arguing with me, trying to get as much as she could from the organization every second. She was embarrassing in public, and I thought she was going to become violent with me. I had to set boundaries, which she did not appreciate, telling me she couldn't believe someone she "trusted" would treat her this way. Honestly, it felt bad but was a lesson for me that I was doing

it on my own, for the wrong reasons. I was concerned about her liking me, and my own success with her case. If I was truly walking with Jesus every step of the way, He would not only direct my path and share in the burden but also receive all credit and glory for any success!

I am still in the process of living out Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." In Jesus' day, a rabbi's "yoke" was simply his teaching on how to live out God's law. Jesus' "yoke" is not a heavy burden (as in an oxen metaphor), but a way of life that changes our focus to Him. When we apply God's law to our lives the way Jesus taught, we become captives set free!



**TERESA DAVIDSON**

Co-Founder and President of Chains Interrupted, a non-profit that fights human trafficking.



## Hope for Prisoners—Like Us

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free...*(Luke 4:18 CSB).

These words, originally written by the prophet Isaiah, were selected by Jesus as He began His ministry in the book of Luke. If you take some time to re-read Luke 4, you will note that Jesus goes from His baptism with John the Baptist, then into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil, and then back to Galilee. On the Sabbath, filled with Spirit, Jesus went to the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth where, as was His custom, He stood up to read. They handed Him the scroll from Isaiah, and Jesus read the above verse—almost inciting a riot among the leaders of His synagogue and the friends of His parents when He said in verse 20, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

In this issue, we are focusing on the importance of Prison ministry. This verse reminds us that we should have a heart of mercy for the “prisoner”—

whether that is someone lost in addiction, depression, or some other trial—or, someone in a literal prison for a crime they committed. Both need our mercy and grace; I often think, “there, but for the grace of God, go I.” Let’s face it, most prisoners are in prison because of poor choices they’ve made—something any of us are certainly capable of doing.

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**Over the years, I have visited several prisons where I have had the privilege to lead the inmates in worship. It has always amazed me to see the freedom to worship that many of them have—as if the lack of freedom in every other area of their lives sharpens their senses in worship.**

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It occurs to me that we should have the same reaction. Paul reminds us in Romans 5:8 that God demonstrated His own love for us in this: “while we were *STILL* sinners, Christ died for us” (emphasis mine).

If you ever have the opportunity to visit prisoners through a Prison Ministry, I highly recommend you go. There is something ominous about passing through those gates; the steel doors closing securely behind you; the reinforced glass and bars at the window where you sign in; and the expressionless eyes of the guard on you as he briefs you on what to expect and what to do and not do. It’s a good reminder that our freedom has been bought with a price. Jesus was arrested, flogged and sentenced to death. He took our place and got what we deserved.

If you do visit a prison, as you leave you will probably experience the same relief I did and a new appreciation for the freedom we have in life. This is strong reminder that the freedom that Jesus proclaims for the prisoners is fully ours.



**TIM BRYANT**

Tim is the Vice President of The Daniels Group. [www.itwasonmymind.blog](http://www.itwasonmymind.blog)



## Grief: Setting the Captives Free

For some people, being set free seems like an impossibility. What once caused each day to feel like an adventure has disappeared. In its place is an empty hole, a broken heart, and a deep and relentless pain. That is what grief can do. That is how grief can feel. Losing a loved one can change everything. Yet, there are ways to navigate through grief and be set free to envision and encounter a new but different life.

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**While each person's journey through grief is different, there are stages in grief that most all of us experience. Elizabeth Kubler Ross described them as denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.**

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These stages come and go, may be brief or long, but are normal and are a natural part of healing. To reach the place where being set free enables the beginning of a new future, there are steps that can be taken.

- **Be honest about your feelings with yourself and God.** It may help to

write them down. Share your emotions with God and ask Him to help you heal. God knows and understands your grief.

- **Believe that God cares about you.** I Peter 5:7 tells us that God cares and instructs us to give God our problems. Jesus himself wept at the loss of a dear friend (John 11:35).
- **Rely on God for strength.** Remember Jesus said, *I will not abandon you or leave you as orphans in the storm—I will come to you* (John 14:18 NLT). Psalm 119:28 reveals: *My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word.*
- **Claim God's promises that bring hope and strength.** Isaiah declared, *God gives strength to the weary* (Isaiah 40:29). Here are some other Scriptures you might consider focusing on throughout your days of healing: Isaiah 43:1-3, Philippians 4:6,19, Psalm 34:4, Joshua 1:9, Psalm 145:18-19, and Isaiah 41:10.
- **Express your feelings; don't keep them bottled up.** Find a Christian grief support group. Share with a trusted friend your current feelings and desire to let go of the pain of

your loss. Ask your friend to pray with and for you regularly.

- **Tell God you want to experience His joy again and release your grief into His care.** Nehemiah 8:10 reminds us that *the joy of the Lord is your strength*. Look for places where you can rediscover the joy of living.
- **Be watchful and seek professional help if needed.** Grief can affect your physical and emotional health.
- **Use a devotional designed to bring hope and healing** (such as *Grief: The Unwanted Journey* by Janet K. Johnson) to help you stay focused on what God can do.

There is a season for everything...including grief. Relying on God for your journey, releasing to God your pain, and trusting in His faithfulness will help set you free to begin a new future with hope. May your journey be filled with blessings.



**JANET JOHNSON**

Pastor, spiritual mentor, author, and speaker, helping others experience God's love and wholeness.



# Dysfunction to Destiny

Because of our chaotic background (Pam with an abusive, alcoholic dad; Bill with a mentally unstable mom), people ask us every week, “What does it REALLY mean to ‘Honor your father and mother?’” (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2, 3) Does God really expect this if your parents are abusive, absent, angry, or addicted?”

Our working definition of honor is to move the family heritage where it should have gone had the dysfunctional parent not rebelled against God’s will or wandered from wholesome choices. Our condensed answer of how to honor your parents includes these vital steps that God led us through as He rescued, redeemed, and restored Bill and me in untangling us from the unhealthy decisions, habits, and choices of our parents. With His guidance, we sorted out the good traditions and traits from the confusing, chaotic brokenness of our families of origin. God then showed us His best for our individual lives and our own family.

## 1. Forgive

Our book, *Love, Honor and Forgive*, explains that forgiveness is a choice (you will never feel like forgiving). Choose to allow no one except God to control the emotional well-being of your heart, life, and mind. Forgiveness is NOT reconciliation. We can only control our side of

a relationship. We CAN forgive, release our bitterness, and hold the door open to allow God to heal the offending person.

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**Forgiveness keeps us ready to reconnect and restore a relationship as God reaches, heals, and rebuilds the loved one who was once unsafe and toxic.**

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## 2. Set Boundaries

Boundaries are traditions set in place to protect a relationship so the toxic person doesn’t destroy everything and everyone by bad behavior. Boundaries give God time to reach and heal the broken person, all the while protecting you and your family from further harm.

## 3. Reject the Unhealthy and Embrace the Healthy

Creating a simple worksheet with a line down the middle, one column was “Negatives to Rid” and the other “Positives to Pursue.” We would list all the negative habits, choices, addictions, etc. and seek to replace the brokenness with best choices that God promises to bless.

## 4. Create a Family Compass

In *10 Best Decisions a Couple Can Make*, we share how we created a family mis-

sion statement, motto, and crest. After working on the mission statement each time we took a road trip over the course of a year, we printed, framed, and posted it near the front door. We chose a family motto (short enough to fit on a t-shirt or coffee mug) based on 1 Samuel 2:30, “...those who honor God, God honors...” Lastly, we created a family crest with symbols representing core life values and beliefs we wanted to pass on to our children and grandchildren.

## 5. Be Grateful

God uses difficulty to lead us to His divine calling and destiny. My husband learned to listen well because his mother lectured for hours (if it looked like he wasn’t paying attention, the punishment got worse). I can read people’s emotions and facial expressions well. God will redeem anything we bring to Him.

Today, we have healthy and whole relationships with our Godly grown sons, their precious Godly wives, and our five Jesus-loving grandchildren.



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## F.A.V.A.R. Ministries: Released to Restore

So there I sat, wondering what to do next, stuck between my starting point and destination. Halfway up Capitol Hill, my mobility scooter balked, rebelled, and refused to budge. A friend in our group gave me a gracious push until we reached a more level area. The scooter regained its strength and handled the rest of the tour like a boss.

Looking back, it's fitting that John Jennings stepped up in that moment. His whole testimony involves helping people get from Point A to Point B when they're wondering what to do next. He and wife Cheryl are founders of F.A.V.A.R. Ministries ([www.favarministries.com](http://www.favarministries.com)). The outreach facility in Charlotte, NC, helps individuals transition back into society upon release from prison.

John will tell you that God is responsible for the success of the ministry. I'll add that as much glory as F.A.V.A.R. brings to the Creator, the story behind the ministry does too. John says high school graduation brought many choices; he chose the bad ones. Selling drugs led to doing drugs, which led to financial poverty, which led to robberies and eventually to 20 years in prison.

During incarceration, he says, "I realized this was not the life God created me

to live. I went back to my roots, asked God to give me one more chance to be the man He created me to be." God heard John's prayer, calling John to preach.

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**"During the next 10 years, my life turned around. My time was spent preaching, teaching, and helping men make a positive change." And then—with only 90 days left to serve—his own life changed forever when he lost his only son to a murderous act.**

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"This was devastating; I wasn't sure I could survive. I asked God why He took him. He said, 'I too gave my only Son that you and others like you could have eternal life.'"

After completing his sentence, John moved to South Carolina. When the killers were apprehended, "God sent me to the courthouse to share His love with them. He also commanded me to tell them how much I loved them." With what must have been dire reluctance, John chose to obey.

He now states in a matter-of-fact tone that "when it was over, God said, 'Now, son, I can use you,'" nudging John to spearhead F.A.V.A.R. to help others just as he was helped upon release from prison.

The outcome? "God has blessed me," John humbly declares. "F.A.V.A.R. is His ministry, one that He allows me to guide and is expanding into a second state."

The goal? With divine as well as human help, John is striving toward a ministry coverage area of seven states; then "God's vision will go national," he says. The vision needs human resources, of course, but John also knows that prayer is tantamount.

"Please pray," he asks simply, "that God gives me the strength, wisdom, and insight to bring His mercy to His incarcerated sons and daughters; to help them know and embrace His divine balm in their time of desperate need."



**CAROLE ANNE HALLYBURTON**  
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# Freedom and Fullness Through Christ

In John 10:10, Jesus declares that He has come that we might experience life, and life in abundance; yet, often our lives, even as Christians, seemingly lack the fullness this passage embodies. If you have experienced a sense that something is lacking, I encourage you to pause and personally ponder the following passages.

*“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”* (John 14:6). To experience the life Jesus offers, one must first invite Him into his or her heart as Savior and recognizing that only through Him are sins forgiven and restoration with God made possible. Romans 6:23 states, *“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* Inviting Jesus into your heart is the first step in experiencing the freedom and fullness of life God offers those who draw near to Him. *“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in Him and he in God”* (1 John 4:15).

Now what? Experiencing the freedom and fullness God offers will grow within us as we take God at His Word. *“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you”*

(Colossians 3:16). Our lives change from the inside out as we shift our focus from ourselves to God and trust the work of Christ on the cross to be sufficient to cleanse us of our sins and make us brand new. Second Corinthians 5:17 encourages us to know that, *“The old has passed away; behold, all things are new.”* As we focus on God’s Word, fixing our thoughts upon His Truths, we are changed from the inside out (Romans 12:2).

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**There’s another piece to put into place to experience the freedom and fullness God offers—to daily embrace His invitation to “Follow Me.” (John 21:19).**

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Once we invite Jesus into our hearts, Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20). But our lives cannot be lived for both God and ourselves. Strongholds—those things that have taken hold of our lives in ways that are contrary to God’s ways—can only be broken as we walk closely and obediently with God. It is here, in a daily time of prayer, reading the Bible, and personal surrender that

we gain God’s wisdom and strength to live our lives in ways that allow God’s freedom and fullness to prevail in us through Christ.

This world will challenge those who commit to walking in God’s ways, yet 1 John 4:4 states: *“Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the World.”* It is through persevering in trials that one’s faith and Christ-like character are strengthened (See Romans 5:3-4; James 1). Holding tightly to God’s Word will bring forth both the freedom and fullness found only in Him (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Last but not least, live expectantly; believing God *really* loves you and has a personalized plan for your life (Jeremiah 29:11; 1 Corinthians 2:9).

*You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.*  
(John 8:32)



**PATTY STUMP**

Licensed Christian counselor, author, and speaker for women’s events.



## Evangelism Behind Bars

One of the Bible's greatest truths is that our lives can be different. Nowhere is this truth more evident than in our prisons. People who are incarcerated do time and pay for their crimes. Then they have the opportunity to start again with a clean slate.

But this doesn't always happen. Today, more than 2.2 million people are imprisoned in America alone, more than any other single nation. But the sad fact is that over 75% of them will return to prison within five years of their release.

Now as believers, we know that true freedom comes through Christ alone. That freedom can be found behind bars. But often, when prisoners return to the same circumstances and communities where the original crimes took place, they struggle to keep their faith and relapse.

That's why Evangelism Explosion (EE) began a prison ministry many years ago. We have trained thousands of believers in prison to share their faith within the prison system and build solid communication and life skills that they can use when they are released.

My good friend and director of our Prison Ministry, Rev. Art Hallett, recently said, "We go in and train the incarcer-

ated church how to communicate what the Bible teaches about eternal life and the claims of Jesus, how to give an account for the hope that is in them, and even better, we give them a transferable concept and teach them how to teach others what they know."

But we also discovered something else. The recidivism rate—the percentage of people who returned to prison—dropped to less than 10% among those who had been trained in EE. That's amazing! But why has that taken place? I believe this happens for a few reasons.

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**Once an inmate begins to share his faith, Jesus becomes his identity. Hypocrisy isn't allowed within prisons. Other prisoners will quickly call out someone who speaks one way and acts another. This new identity will quickly become rooted in this believer.**

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Secondly, as prisoners are released, they will often share their new faith with their families. The prospect of an internal change often encourages

family members and friends to believe that a real transformation has taken place. They are more likely to give that person a second chance and offer greater support.

Thirdly, we believe that the practice of witnessing behind bars gives these new Christians strong life skills they can use within the church when they are released. Churches are often not welcoming to former prisoners, but prisoners with some ministry experience can find it easier to find a place of ministry and fit in within the local church.

Most importantly, as those in prison share God's love with others, Jesus works on the inside as He restores their hearts. He takes ashes that the enemy intended for harm and turns them into something beautiful, forgiven, and whole that He uses for His glory for many years to come.



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