

Crossroad

NETWORK NEWS

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The Most
MEANINGLESS HOLIDAY
of the Year?

The Most MEANINGLESS HOLIDAY of the Year

By Dr. David Schuringa, President



We look forward to Father's Day as a chance to honor that special man in our life who, though far from perfect, was always there to point us in the right direction. It is said, however, that Father's Day is the most meaningless holiday of the year in prison. Most inmates grew up without a father. In fact, many have never met their dads, or even know who they are. Chaplains don't bother handing out Father's Day cards like they do for Mother's Day. And it doesn't make the day any brighter for prisoners to reflect on their own fathering record either.

Absentee fathers have destroyed more than just a holiday. They have decimated the family unit, and nowhere is the fallout of this more evident than among those in prison. There's never an excuse for making immoral choices, but let me tell you a little about the early years of most inmates:

- Most inmates never had a parent read to them when they were children.
- Most inmates dropped out of high school.
- Most inmates were sexually and/or physically abused before age 12.
- Most inmates witnessed violence against others by age 10.
- Most inmates were using drugs and/or alcohol by age 10.
- Most inmates suffered from severe neglect in "homes" that were in utter chaos 24/7.
- Indeed, most inmates grew up with no father in the home.

The chaos created in such homes is beyond belief. A high school teacher in the Mississippi Delta tells of the time his parents were in town and he invited them to visit his class. When he finished introducing his folks to the students, a teen from the back of the room piped up, "Hey, y'all have the same last name. What's up with that?" Mary and I have a friend who volunteers at an inner city crisis pregnancy center. It amazes her how rarely the children of these young mothers share a last name. Without a man who hangs around long enough to be a father to their children, or

a husband to them, these women settle for serial relationships with barely a hint of an echo of the divine design for love and marriage. Apparently, comedian Bill Cosby wasn't joking when he said, "Five, six children—same woman—eight, 10 different husbands or whatever. Pretty soon you are going to have DNA cards to tell who you are making love to."

"What happens to kids who are raised in such an environment?"



What happens to kids who are raised in such an environment? They grow up with hearts that are bursting with rage and anger. I spoke with a female ex-offender who told me that as a kid she couldn't understand why she was so incredibly angry all the time. The drugs, alcohol and sex helped some. But what finally dulled her pain was robbing convenience stores. It wasn't for the money as much as for the thrill of it. The violence seemed to fill her empty soul. We all know that men who aren't very good dads can do great damage to their offspring. But fathers who choose to be absent from their families profoundly exasperate (anger) their children (Eph. 6:4).

When I think of how thoroughly the family has unraveled among the inner city and rural poor of our land, I sometimes wonder if there is any hope. Frankly, I'm amazed that there aren't more people in prison when I consider the circumstances in which so many were raised. There's no excuse for making the wrong moral choices, but I think that the fact that I've never done time is due more to my upbringing, and coming from generations of stable families, rather than to any moral superiority on my part.

At Crossroad Bible Institute we're doing more than helping prisoners. We are seeking to salvage a society drowning in the misery that sin brings. We're trying to rebuild the family from the ground up, one inmate at a time. So we gently instruct these fathers and future fathers (95% of inmates are male) in God's truth, and show them something of God's love. Our hope is to turn the hearts of these fathers back to their children (Mal. 4:6) by igniting a spark that will replace generations of dark despair with generations glowing with hope.

All for One

Several Ministries, One Goal: To Reach Every Prisoner With the Hope of Christ

by Becky Beane

His first 17 years in prison, "all I did was catch nothing but misconduct tickets," confesses Steve, an inmate in St. Louis, Missouri. On seven occasions, his misconduct was severe enough to send him to "the hole"—confined in total isolation. "But I'd been so angry all those years and didn't care one way or another."

Until Operation Starting Line™ poured into his prison one day—a cast of characters who sparked enough curiosity to lure him into the prison yard for a music concert,



athletic displays, and testimonies of new life in Christ. "I listened to what they were saying about their own lives and what Jesus did for them," Steven remembers. And his armor of anger cracked under the weight of a longing for peace. "When they started to pray, I prayed with them and accepted Jesus into my heart." At the close of the event, he signed up to begin receiving a correspondence Bible study series to guide his spiritual growth.

"I've been misconduct ticket-free for 16 months now," he proclaimed recently. "I haven't been in any trouble [while] taking the Crossroad Bible studies!"

A host of other Christian organizations stand ready to support Steven. If he has children, Great Dads can help him reconnect broken bonds. Intercrossors for America will cover him with prayer.

And when Steven closes in on his release date, staff at Crossroad Bible Institute will be ready to match him up with Christian ministries in his area that can help usher him back into the community.

Steven's got a team of Christians on his side now, pulling for him to succeed.

"I think Satan trembles when he sees ministries working together, when he sees the Church united," says Dr. David Schuringa,

president of Crossroad Bible Institute (CBI). "He knows how powerful they can be."

In the Beginning...

PF's Starting Line evangelistic campaign literally shot on the scene in 1992, blitzing through more than 90 North Carolina prisons in two weeks. Even then, it was a collaborative effort, as Prison Fellowship recruited well-known Christian musicians and professional athletes who could coax out the prison masses for a couple hours of music, feats of strength, or tales of glory days on the gridiron—always followed by tales of a higher calling in Christ. Volunteers from local churches, recruited and trained by PF, mingled among the prisoner spectators to pray with them or answer questions. Volunteers who received more PF training helped with follow-up Bible studies or seminars.

But Prison Fellowship had a huge vision: to reach *every* prisoner in *every* prison with the Gospel message, discipling those who came to Christ for the first time or recommitted their lives to Him. And that would take more than one organization, the leadership determined. It would take a whole village of ministries working together.

So in the spring of 2000, a refurbished and expanded Operation Starting Line campaign debuted as a collaboration of 10 non-profit ministries, pooling strengths and resources to reach the escalating prison population. Today Operation Starting Line comprises 24 fully active collaborators and a growing number of associate collaborators that can fill specific needs on a referral basis.

"Through the collaboration we're able to provide more in-depth follow-up," notes OSL Project Administrator Larry Tucker. "We're able to provide materials that weren't previously provided, and we're able to get into niches where we didn't have a strong presence before."

One of those niche collaborators is Youth Direct, a Dallas-based ministry to incarcerated and troubled youth. Led by Don Smarto—with 30 years of juvenile work under his belt—Youth Direct has trained hundreds of volunteers in the specialized

needs of youthful offenders and conducted OSL-affiliated events in 58 juvenile facilities so far.

"There are 350,000 incarcerated juveniles in America that are largely invisible," say Smarto. "If we can reach these kids with the Gospel and they can change their lives through a commitment to Christ, then they won't end up entering the adult prison system."

Some OSL collaborators contribute to the restoration of family ties that have been shredded by the prison experience. Child Evangelism Fellowship found that its Mailbox Club's correspondence Bible studies for children also appealed to adult prisoners with limited reading skills. Now they promote a Bible study course that imprisoned parents and their children do simultaneously, so they can *share* their spiritual journey.

Collaborator Great Dads presents parenting seminars not only in adult prisons but also in youth facilities, because "people forget that a lot of teenagers are fathers, too,"



Smarto points out. "So it's a good time to start teaching them about responsibility."

The list of partnering ministries goes on: Good News Jail and Prison Ministry, which is opening up access to more facilities; the Billy Graham Center, which developed the "five points of the Gospel" presented to prison audiences; Alpha Ministry, offering materials and programs geared to reentry; Morning Star Ministry, which ministers to Native Americans; Omega Arts, founded by

Continued on page 4

OSL musician Larry Howard, which supplies audio and video resources; Campus Crusade for Christ, which, in part, has provided a special version of its masterful *Jesus* video for prisoners; and on and on.

Reaching the Prison Masses

In five years, OSL has spread through 22 states, reaching some 556,000 prisoners in 684 prisons with the Gospel. Of those, 32,995 handed in response cards saying they accepted Christ as their Savior and Lord. Only God knows the total number of seeds that have sprouted onto redemptive relationships.

Over the years, more than 37,000 inmates have signed up to receive free correspondence courses from Crossroad Bible Institute, a charter collaborator of OSL—and one that helps prevent prisoners from "falling through the cracks" when in-prison programs are limited. Tier 1 of the mail-in course starts the students off with 12 lessons on "Great Truths of the Bible," followed by Tier 2 Bible studies on post-release issues. And for the hearty few ready "to reach into the tall branches," says Dr. Schuringa, Tier 3 offers college- and seminary-level studies.

Since October, Crossroad has also provided 800 to 1,000 inmates nearing release with information on reentry ministries in the areas to which they will return. It's a service they offer to all their incarcerated students, "and you'd be amazed at the response," says Schuringa.

CBI has been in existence since 1984, "but we could not be engaged at this level were it not for our network affiliates," Schuringa stresses. "It would be pretty tough to get 30,000 students by just knocking on prison doors. But when other ministries entrust

their inmate respondents to us, that networking in the body of Christ is a beautiful thing. And we hope we never do anything to damage that trust."

A few rules help preserve that trust: Ministries can't go after one another's donors or try to entice away their staff. Representatives gather four times a year, via meetings or conference calls, to discuss ideas, evaluate progress, and enjoy fellowship.

Those meetings are led by Prison Fellowship President Mark Earley and Paul Krueger of the Navigators, another charter partner of OSL. Krueger admits that "prison ministry wasn't

even on our radar six years ago" when his organization was invited to join the collaboration. World renowned for its outstanding discipleship ministry, the Navigators joined with five other collaborators to create training and materials (in both English and Spanish) for use with OSL.

"We pooled the best stuff we could find and dropped it down to a fourth- or fifth-grade reading level," says Krueger. "But it's not *childish*—we ask very adult application questions: How does this verse impact what you're going to do with your cellmate? How do you feel about the person who did something wrong to you?"

Following the "race" motif of Operation Starting Line, the team created *The Race Begins*, a 20-lesson follow-up Bible series for new believers in prison. Using the accompanying *Player-Coaches Training Manual*, Krueger and Campus Crusade staffer Dan Brygger team up to train chaplains, pastors, and volunteers to facilitate the discipleship studies and train others to do the same.

The collaborative provision of training and materials gives chaplains and prison staff a variety to choose from, depending on their own goals. More and more prisons are stepping up their focus on reentry programs, preparing prisoners to get out and *stay* out of prison.

At the request of many chaplains, Krueger's team is writing a series of Bible studies on issues inmates typically grapple with: anger, forgiveness, self-worth, sexual identity, etc.

Operation Starting Line is "striking at the very heart of crime," says Mark Earley. "We know there is only one real way to reform a prisoner, and that is to change his heart. And only God can do that."

Between now and 2010, OSL plans to take that message to the remaining 28 states. "Every prisoner in every state—that's nothing short of miraculous!" says Dr. Schuringa.



"But networking is what the Holy Spirit blesses, because Christ says that's how the Church should work. The arm can't say to the leg, 'I don't need you.' The Church should not be in competition with each other. That's why I think OSL is successful—it's obedient to Christ."

From Jubilee Magazine, reprinted with permission of Prison Fellowship, P.O. Box 17500, Washington, DC 20041-7500.

U.S. Prison Statistics

1.4 million

Number of inmates in the U.S.

6.9 million

Number of people in the system per year

103,310

Number of female inmates

91,789

Number of non-citizens incarcerated

98,791

Number of inmates in privately operated prisons

3,455

Number of people on death row

59

Number of inmates executed in 2004

18.6%

Lifetime chance for blacks to go to prison

10.0%

Lifetime chance for Hispanics to go to prison

3.4%

Lifetime chance for whites to go to prison

11.3%

Lifetime chance for men to go to prison

1.8%

Lifetime chance for women to go to prison

Criminal Justice in the News

Note: This column will keep you informed, in a fair and balanced way, of important and interesting criminal justice issues and stories in the news.

Olympic Gold Medalist Arrested for Drunk Driving

SALISBURY, MD—Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps was recently arrested on drunk-driving and underage drinking charges. Phelps is now 19 and won 8 medals, including 6 gold, in Athens last year. Judge Lloyd O. Whitehead ordered Phelps to speak at three schools and attend a victim impact panel sponsored by



Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Ian Thorpe, Australia's top Olympian, blasted his rival for the incident, calling him "an idiot."

Landmark Ruling Narrows Scope of Death Penalty

WASHINGTON, DC—In a move reminiscent of the Supreme Court's decision three years ago to bar the execution of the mentally retarded, the highest court has now banned the death penalty for those who committed their crimes prior to their 18th birthday. Prior to the decision, 12 states had 72 young men on death row in these circumstances. The practice was allowed by 19 states. The decision was far from unanimous, however,



as it was carried by a slim 5-4 split. According to the majority opinion, executing people for crimes they committed as teens constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, a violation of the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution. An emerging consensus in the United States, as well as in the rest of the world, was not lost on the court. Only seven countries outside the United States have ever executed people for crimes they committed as juveniles, and all seven—Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Nigeria, China and Congo—have outlawed the practice. Using the death penalty against offenders who were under 18 when they committed their crime was banned by the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, and was ratified by 192 countries—every country in the world except for the United States and Somalia. According to Justice Anthony Kennedy, the decision rests "in large part on the understanding that the instability and emotional imbalance of young people may often be a factor in the crime." He added that it also helps us keep pace with "evolving standards of decency."

Judge Orders Immigrant Mother to Use Birth Control

LEBANON, TN—A judge hearing a child abuse and neglect case threatened to take an immigrant mother's child away unless she learned English and used birth control. Children's Services had turned her in for failing to immunize her toddler and to show up for appointments. Wilson County Judge Barry Tatum gave similar orders last

fall to a mother being tried for the neglect of her 11-year-old daughter. "If all you have is a push mower, you don't want to have a five acre yard," he explained, to illustrate why poor people should limit the size of their families. Civil rights advocates say that the ruling is discriminatory and unconstitutional, but others have cheered the ruling, citing the need for outsiders to assimilate more quickly into American society. Tatum, a first term judge, already has a reputation for delivering unorthodox rulings.



Inmates Escape Prison in the Philippines

MANILA—Nine prisoners recently escaped from a Philipino prison by starting a prison riot and feigning illness to the guards. They then stabbed the corrections officers, took their weapons and made a run for it. Five of the nine were immediately captured but the other four are still at large. According to reports, it was the 10th jailbreak this year in the country. The Philippines is considered to have the world's most porous prisons, due to frequent escape attempts, which are blamed on dilapidated facilities, corrupt guards and harsh prison conditions.

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Q and A

Questions for Crossroad

Instructor Is Asked to Contact Inmate's Family

Q Dear Crossroad, In the "Prayer Requests and Notes" section of the Roadmap, my student asked if we would contact the mother of his daughter and let her know that he had requested prayers for her to find the "true Lord." Would it be permissible for me to send her an anonymous card telling her that we are praying for her?

Instructor in Michigan

A Dear Instructor, Thank you for your sensitivity and for your willingness to go the extra mile and write to this woman. However, in our Instructor Guidelines we ask our Instructors not to write to anyone on a student's behalf. This may include a student's friends and/or family members. There are many reasons for this, but among the most important is that there can be legal restrictions, such as restraining orders, that we are unaware of which prevent contact between inmates and others. So sending any type of correspondence to someone whose name was given to you through a CBI student is a violation of CBI policy. However, we appreciate your concern for this woman's spiritual well-being. Your heart obviously goes out to her and so does ours. What you can do is tell the student that he may give her name and address to CBI. We will then send her an enrollment form and information about our courses. We pray that she will get involved in this program, and that she will come to know Christ!

Q Dear Crossroad, What should I do with a letter that is addressed to the last person that corrected a student's Tier 1 lesson? Obviously their last Instructor was a man, because the student addresses it, "Dear Brother in Christ."

Instructor in Florida

A Dear Instructor, Sometimes when students are just starting out they do not read the materials in their introductory packet carefully enough to understand exactly how the program works. As a result, some students are confused about who their Instructors are. Please read the letter you received as if it were written to you, and



respond to any questions or concerns that the student may convey. In your encouragement letter remind the student that he will have a different Instructor for each lesson in Tier 1. Let him know that he is unable to correspond with previous Instructors. Also, it would be good to tell him that he can look forward to applying to Tier 2, where each student has his own personal Instructor. His Tier 2 Instructor will correct each one of his lessons, and will be able to correspond with him.



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