

# The Good News

## Newsletter - October 2013

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### THE POND OF PROMISE

Poem by Devin B

Artwork by Claudia

Surrounded by the many expressions of life and  
endless colors of love,

Two pure-white swans exist within a light that  
warms their hearts from up above.

Together their hearts become one through promises  
they now share;

Promises of love, grace, honor, compassion and hope—  
abiding faith to keep their love afloat.

Through these promises their love will surely survive,  
protected by a greater promise of love no hatred  
can find.

Their love is now eternal through Him, without end;  
For God's love is pure and overflowing in the "Pond  
of Promises"



## GREETINGS AND A TESTIMONY

Dick A

Every month we have new readers of "Good News". We want all of you, old and new readers, to know how much we appreciate you. This little newsletter has been a work of love for many of you from the very beginning. We aren't professionals either as writers or publishers. We just want to celebrate the Christian fellowship between prisoners, families, church members, and friends. We're all in this together.

I must comment briefly on what a positive reaction we at UBC have received from the readers of last month's edition from Parchman's death row. What a powerful and moving experience it was to read those testimonies in both prose and poetry.

I need to tell you how you blessed Jane and me. Then that wonderful edition of Good News was followed by a beautiful hand-made card that was sent to Jane, arriving right at the time of her birthday which was during her early recovery period from surgery. The card was designed by Justin U and contained notes from 13 friends on death row. Jane and I both cried, but our tears were tears of joy and thanksgiving for the fellowship of believers in the Body of Christ—and that Body is everywhere that there are believers who worship and serve our blessed Lord Jesus.

I trust that you will enjoy and be blessed by this edition that includes contributions by three of the Prison Ministry Support Group, along with several others from those who are incarcerated. May God bless you richly!



## YOU ARE OUR POTTER

Phyllis D

*But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay and You our potter. And all of us are the work of Your hands. (Isaiah 64:8)*

For a long time, I have wanted to learn how to use a potter's wheel—to “throw” pots. It takes a good bit of “stuff”: a wheel, clay, glazer, and a kiln. I didn't have any of these things or access to them.

Finally, I found a source. Our city Recreational Department provides all this, plus a teacher, for a nominal fee. I was excited, and still am. It's as much fun as I had hoped, but my output leaves something to be desired. Throwing pots is hard!

When the teacher asks what I want to make, I have to say, “whatever comes out”. I still have very little control over the product.

To throw a pot, first you have to condition the clay, to be sure there are no lumps or air bubbles. This is called “wedging”. I can do okay on that. Then you have to center the ball of clay on the wheel. Simple, yes? But no—I have much difficulty with this, and if the clay is off-center, even a little, your pot will fail.

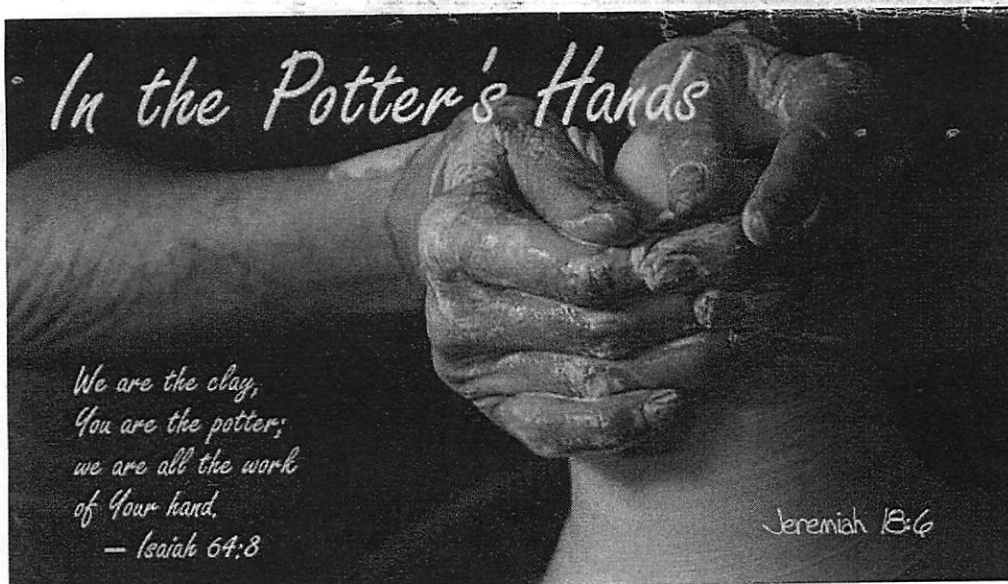
Once centered, you begin to shape the pot, or bowl, or cup. In my case, this is where the clay takes over, seeming to have a mind of its own. Occasionally, I get a “keeper”, but not always. The “keepers” are fired in the kiln, then glazed and fired again.

Experienced potters know pretty well how the glaze will look when fired, but it's always a total surprise to me. Glazes change radically in the intense heat of the kiln. Usually, I am pleased. Once in a while the pot shatters in the kiln. I keep trying!

Isaiah says that God is our potter and we are the clay. He can form us into something marvelous if we are centered on Him. But it's hard to be centered. When I try to pray, or meditate, or just concentrate, my mind wanders. My self (the clay) takes over and distracts me. No doubt the Potter has hopes for me, If I will allow Him to shape me in His will for my life. Sometimes He finds it necessary to subject me to the intense fire of the kiln—disappointment, hurt, frustration, fear—so that I will be transformed into something more pleasing to Him.

Perhaps you know the line in the old hymn “Have Thine Own Way, Lord” that says, “Mold me and make me after Thy will.”

This is my prayer.



Our Bible study class was recently reading some scripture (Genesis 18:14) where God asks the question "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Some Bible translations word this verse as "Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?" The use of the word "wonderful" gives a sense of joy and celebration...perhaps in expectation that something longed for over an extended period of time might finally take place.

Well, the obvious answer is no, nothing is too hard or too wonderful for God, but ponder this matter with me if you will. With this question, what is God telling us about himself and about our relationship with him?

First off, I think God is telling us that we need not doubt what he can do. Remember the creation story? God created our world out of nothing. He did not just reshape something that already existed. God formed something out of nothing and he formed it by speaking it into existence. This is a display of power and love beyond our comprehension.

I also think that God is telling us that his promises to us are assured. We need not question God's ability to deliver what he himself has promised to us. This is an important point for us to accept. Sometimes our minds lead us to doubt what God has clearly promised to us in his Word. The devil may lie to us by telling us that we are not worthy of God's love or compassion. That somehow we are not "good enough" to merit the blessings that God has promised to us. But the word of God is filled with assurances that we are worthy, that God does care for each of us and that he is waiting to receive us with open arms if we will accept him.

Secondly, I think God's question to us carries with it permission for us to expect him to honor his promises... promises that are too wonderful for us to imagine... and not just permission to expect him to honor his promises, but to remind him of his promises to us. Me...remind God? Yes! Absolutely! When we pray God's word back to him we are reminding him of his promises to us!

In the context of our discussion, this is how you might form such a prayer: "Father, I know that helping me get through this day is not too hard for you. Your word tells me that I need not be afraid; that you will uphold me with your righteous right hand. Father, fill me now with the peace that you have promised to all who love you and who accept Christ as savior."

With these words you have reminded God of his very clear promise to you. You can be assured that God will honor his promises to you. Is anything too hard or wonderful for the Lord?

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## STARING AT MY WORLD IN THE REARVIEW

Daryle

Hello, this is Daryle, a hurricane refugee from New Orleans, writing off the vibe of the Holy Spirit. I just want to share with all the brothers and sisters at UBC and to all the brothers who are incarcerated across the state of Mississippi and elsewhere who read the news letter that I will be discharged shortly from MDOC. My nine and a half years has come to pass. I give thanks to God the Creator for our Lord Jesus Christ. Without the strength that he has provided and the people he has placed in my life, none of this would have been possible.

Just to be here to share the good news is a blessing. My two childhood friends died young. They were both murdered in the streets of New Orleans. I'm the last one standing of the three.

I remember when I first gave my life to Christ. I got down on my knees, asking Jesus into my heart to be my Lord and Savior. After I got up off my knees I didn't feel any different. But something really did happen that day. Later on in life, I felt convicted when I would do something wrong in the eyes of God. I believe that when I asked Christ into my life that day I experienced rebirth and Christ filled me with the Holy Spirit, and just that conviction alone lets me know that God lives inside my temple.

I have been involved as a reader and writer in this newsletter. I have shared a number of testimonies and have read what many other brothers have shared. This brings me back to the title of this testimony. I encourage the brothers to continue to pray and write and keep the newsletter, good news! Shouts go out to Roger G on death row for spreading the good news there. Also to Roy and to Muleskinner, for without them none of this would have been possible for me. Also to Dick, thank you for being a good friend.

So, just as Christ died, let our old selves die with him, and as Christ was resurrected from the dead, let us rise up to walk in newness of life with him. Even after my release from prison, I will continue to share the good news. I love and pray for all of you, and will continue to do so. Stay strong and never stop believing in Jesus. I ask all of you to continue praying for me, because I'm going to need it where I am going. Temptation is everywhere! God bless you!





1-800-CALL-GOD

Read Luke 15:1-10

Why is it that we always find it convenient to call upon God when we're in trouble or at a crossroads in life? I know that when things were good for me I hardly ever called God's name, I hardly ever said my daily prayers, and I hardly ever said grace.

Does that make me a bad person or just another person caught up in many worldly things? I was one of many people that was raised in a religious family. My parents were Jehovah's Witnesses when I was a kid and I remember going to the Kingdom Hall every Sunday. (Psalm 83:13)

When my parents divorced, my father remained a Jehovah's Witness, but my mother became a Baptist Christian. I, on the other hand, became a product of ripping and running the streets. (Psalm 119:176) (Matthew 18:11)

I stole from my family, I stole from my friends, and I stole from strangers. I'm not proud of who I was--a lot of what I did was for attention and some of it just had to do with being foolish. I am proud though of who I became--a servant of Almighty God in Heaven. (Psalm 119:30)

There are still doors that I haven't opened and areas in my life that I know need to work on, but I know that I have to take those steps one at a time. (Psalm 119:130-133)

In ending, I'm very grateful to God for tucking me in at night as I lay me down to sleep (Psalm 4:8) and I'm very thankful to Him for every day that I can enjoy talking to Him. (Psalm 5:1-3)

I may not be proud of the road that I traveled but I do stand proudly in the place where my faith leads me and I do hope to see you there with me some day. God bless you all always! (Psalm 23).

### "LOST AND FOUND"

I called out His name with false lips  
and yet He still answered,  
Plagued like a disease as the evil  
spreads like a cancer.  
I'm known by the unknowns; reaping  
that which I've sown,  
Ignorant to my missteps; Ignorance has  
no place for the grown.  
Once as a lost sheep, He looked and  
I was found,  
I stand tall as an oak tree; I stand  
firmly on solid ground.  
Reformed from the inside out 'cause of  
the Spirit that moved me,  
Out of the darkness into the shining  
light, I now can see.  
I speak this truth from the experience  
of a troubled man,  
I believe without a doubt; I believe  
in His holy plan.

## GOD'S BLESSINGS

Roger G

How do you handle the blessings that you are given by God? That may seem like an easy question to answer but take a few minutes to really think about it. The first thing you must do is ask yourself what you consider a blessing. I doubt you will list the struggles and pain in your life, but those can be blessings too. It has been my experience that they are often the greatest gifts God allows us because they are the ones that show the world His grace and help us share the Gospel effectively. It is my sincere belief that our conduct toward God and the world, in the face of trials and tribulations, is what produces the most fruit in our lives, and through us, brings blessings upon others. When people see how we react to all life throws at us it will either make them want to know the One that helped us through or dismiss the One we ourselves turned against.

We all have problems and we all face challenges in our daily lives. What separates us Christians from everyone else is how we view those challenges and where we first turn for help.

God will give you what you need today so keep that in mind during prayer. Reevaluate how you see things and try to find the blessings in the struggles. You will be stronger and will be a blessing from God to everyone who sees you. How will you handle that? (Deuteronomy 28).

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## CONFIDENTIALITY...(Proverbs 16:28 & 25:9-10)

Roger T

A challenge in ministry and witnessing is confidentiality--how open can we/you be? Here are some questions I have read that give Godly examples and wisdom to help us decide. (1) Are you telling someone who can do something about the problem/problems by helping or offering discipline or correction? (2) Are you talking to someone wise (with Christian Godly knowledge and principles) enough to help you process your feelings and courageous enough to make you do the right thing by confronting the other person or confessing where you are at fault? (3) Is this news approved for sharing? (4) Are you breaking a confidence and if so is it strictly because the person is endangering someone's life including their own? (5) Are you willing to divulge your source so it can be checked? (6) When you say this does it break your heart? (7) Have you examined your own life and confessed where you've sinned in similar areas? (8) Would you be comfortable if someone were saying this about you?

A man approached Socrates one day to share some gossip. The wise philosopher asked, "First, are you certain it's true? Second, is it something good? Third, is it something useful?" When the man said, "Not really", Socrates replied, "Well if it's not true, good, or useful why even talk about it?" Gossip can feel like a form of intimacy, but it's actually a false bond motivated by the desire to diminish another person and make yourself look good.

(2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12)