

The Good News

Newsletter - May 2019

A publication of University Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, MS

The purpose of University Baptist Church is, through guidance of Holy Spirit, to assemble and worship God, to love and encourage one another, to proclaim the gospel of Christ, to minister to all people, and to live in peace. In a world where difficult issues remain, UBC is committed to its core values of being inclusive, inquisitive, and community minded.

A Mother's Worth

Before I ever even knew what love was, I loved because I was first loved—1 John 4:11-12, 17-19.

The first woman I ever loved was my mother as she carried me lovingly in her womb. God gave her strength to protect me and nurture me while I lay comfortably on the inside. - Ps. 139:13-36; Job 10: 11-12. And when she gave birth to me, she nurtured me and protected me while I lay gently in her arms. Okay, okay, okay...so I cried and screamed and kicked up a fuss all day and night keeping my mother awake.

Well, she's the one who spoiled me. You can't just treat a growing fetus inside of you like a Royal King and not expect them to want that when they are born. Cried and cried as I may, I received a mother's love for her child and that was a blessing within itself. I'm pretty sure that every newborn child has done the same thing!

From the time God made man in His image and breathed into him the breath of life, man became a living soul made in the moral likeness of God – Gen. 2:7.

My mother reiterated the moral likeness of God each time she told me “that's a no-no.” She was teaching me not only to be obedient to her but how to be obedient to God. - Prov. 31: 25-31. Eph: 6:1-4, Col. 3:20. When the word of God grows in your heart, you come to understand, to see, and to know a lot of things that you were blinded to before- Ps. 119:25-48. I may not have had the best childhood growing up but God has shown me that I had enough. -Ps. 37:16-19. And so I'm very thankful and grateful for the lessons learned from my mother even though I was a hard-headed and stubborn kid sometimes. I really appreciate the love and care from my mother even though I never really stopped ripping and running up and down the streets long enough to tell her so. I do remember calling her some years ago to apologize for not understanding what she, as a mother, needed from me her oldest son. I told her that I was sorry for not letting her know that I loved her. Honestly, I was too busy being mad about the absence of my father instead of appreciating the presence of my mother.

She reminded me of a piece of wood that I had found and I used a flat headed screwdriver to write something special on there for her. I had so forgotten all about that and I can't even remember what I wrote, but my mother told me she still had it. That was so many years ago and I couldn't do anything but cry behind that. Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Real men do cry.

A mother is worth so much more than we give them credit for. All of the sacrifice, all of the blood, all of the sweat, and all of the tears just to make sure that the bundle of joy she brought into this world has a fighting chance. - Isa. 66:12-14.

When God said to honor . . . thy mother, He means to appreciate her in every shape, form, fashion and way until He calls your name. - Ex. 20:12. Deut. 5:16.

Mother's Day isn't just a certain day of a certain month, but every day.

"Happy Mother's Day" to my mother – Ms. Mary L. Underwood – and to all the mothers of the world. - Ps. 118:24.

God bless you every day and may the warmth of His love embrace you in every way. - 2 Cor. 13: 11-14.

A Mother's Worth

The Lord bless thee, an the good Lord
keep thee
The Lord makes His face to forever
Shine upon thee

There's nothing more precious than a
Mother's prayers
There's nothing more tender than the
love she shares

For she is a circle of love around us that's
hand-fashioned by Go
She's always chastening her children and
never spares the rod

A mother's greatest joy is to hear her
her children walk in truth
A testimony that she herself has walked
faithfully in the Truth.

Her unfading beauty is like that of a
gentle and quiet spirit
A great worth in God's sight as He gives
His grace without measure or limit

A mother's worth is more precious than rubies
and more valuable than fine gold
She is the beacon of light that shines brightly
in every godly household

Her ways are ways of pleasantness and she
brings peace to every soul
She makes sure, to her children, the
Lord's story is told

A mother's worth cannot be overlooked and the
Lord said to honor her in every way
So, with all my heart, I send you my love
and prayers today and every day -

“Happy Mother's Day!”

Justin U.

The Dog Pen Church Prayer

Give ear, O Lord, unto our prayer and attend to the voice of our supplications. Teach us Thy way, O Lord, that we will walk in Thy Truth. Be merciful to us, O Lord, as we cry unto Thee daily asking that you unite our hearts to fear thy name. For we know, O Lord, that You are a God full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

We ask that you help us shine Your light to all whom we encounter each day that they may believe by faith and search the scriptures daily. We ask that You help us to weed out our spiritual life because of our love for Jesus and give us the grace with Your gracious hand to live in the freedom from sin each day.

For we know that You are great and that You alone are a God that does wondrous things.

We ask that You draw us toward You in times of silence and solitude and humble us each day as we approach Your throne. Help us, O Lord, to decrease in self each day that we only increase in our desire to hear from you and obey you. Bless all those who have wronged us and help us each day to confess our need for your grace.

Thank You, Heavenly Father, for Your mercy and we pray that everyone reflects that same mercy to the world as we are all living in some very trying times.

We thank You for listening and answering our prayers of truth for deliverance.

We thank You in Jesus name – Amen

Demp's Dirty Ole Styrofoam Cup

A few months back, I received a styrofoam cup. I began to use it to drink coffee out of every morning, as I continued to use it, I started to notice that the coffee was slowly working its way threw the cup day by day. Literally leaking threw it from the inside out. Not putting any thought into it, I sat it beside the sink one morning.

A few days or so go by, I'm up doing my daily routine which is wake, if it be the Lord's Will, pray, eat breakfast and start my day in the Word. I was reading scripture and became aggravated with myself because, I have a problem remembering as I would like to be able to.

As I realized my problem, I went to the Lord in prayer. Praying that He would bless me with wisdom, knowledge, understanding and remembrance of the Word that I may be more useful to Him as well others.

I then found myself staring at the ole styrofoam cup beside the sink. At that moment our Father spoke to me, son, just as you used this cup some time before it started to leak threw, if you too remain doing as you are daily the Word will start to leak out of you too. Before you notice, it you'll be more and more able to remember and put to use Scripture's, but just as this ole cup took time to leak and didn't happen overnight. Remember son: Proverbs 16:3 = "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established" and Proverbs 16:9 = The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."

Once I realized what happened all I could do was smile and say : thank You Father for all your strength and perseverance, knowing its your hand guiding me with assurance. Amen.

- Blake Dempsey

A Testimony

My name is Wesley Kyle Gates and this is a testimony about where Jesus Christ has brought me to and where from. On January 28th, 2019 I took a step to get serious and allow God's transforming power through Jesus Christ work for me. Since then I have done a total 180. I am now able to resist drugs, lust, anger, fear and sin in ways impossible for me before.

God still allows me to go through what I must to continue my growth. After all its effort that builds strength. I'm not saying he took temptation away or the desires he is still working with me on, but when you workout with weights, they don't get any lighter. But become easier to work with all the same, as we continue to work with them. In a similar way facing sin, overcoming temptations and growing stronger in the Spirit is becoming a reality because of my will to do what pleases God that He is giving me the will and power to do. My efforts and actions are focused on reading the Word, prayer and being open to listen to the Holy Spirit. As well as connecting myself to Jesus' body. Which is a must. After all my hand would die if I separated it from me, and I would be at a loss from the lack of it's use! So I realize now how important it is for me to allow God to use me, as well as be open to help from others connected to Jesus. I could go into all the horrible things I used to do and be alive to, but that is truly my

past and not who I am today. So the only ways my past is used, not to help others overcome what I maybe be able to identify and therefore offer insight.

I don't know what tomorrow may bring, but I pray to continue to grow closer to God and Jesus Christ for You and I is all I ask, and know I offer the same daily for us the Body of Christ.

Wesley Kyle Gates
Parchman, MS

Greetings from the Wilderness

This newsletter has now been in print for a good many years. As I sat thinking about the time gone by, I wondered how many of you readers actually know the original purpose, or at least a major purpose, for the creation of the Good News Newsletter. I would be interested in Dick Allison and David Walker's perspective since they were key in this too. I will give you my point of view and in the spirit of remembrance let everyone know a little about what's going on in my life.

It is my understanding that one of the main reasons for the creation of this newsletter was to enable a handful of prisoners to communicate and encourage one another. We were all connected to University Baptist Church through Dick. As most of the prisoners who have been reading this for any amount of time know, Dick has a prolific letter writing ministry. Well, the handful he started with tried to wear him out passing messages of encouragement to each other.

You see prison rules prohibit inmate to inmate correspondence. In order to obey the mail rules of the Department of Corrections and ease the burden on Dick, the Good News Newsletter was created. That is what I believe to be true and why I immediately got behind its creation.

After a while the other prisoners stopped writing and Dick and I found ourselves carrying it alone each month. The mailing list at that time was very small and I often sent my copy to my mother and aunts. One day my Aunt Ronda commented on how much encouragement she received each time she read of the struggles, prayer requests, and strength in Jesus. We prisoners were sharing with each other. I knew right then that God had used our open hearts revealed in the newsletter for something bigger than originally intended.

Due to the lack of monthly submissions someone at UBC correctly suggested that the newsletter only be published every other or every third month in order to have enough articles to fill it. I could sense the death of the newsletter so I wrote a call to arms to encourage, some people back then might say shame or even bully, others into picking up their pens again. The pieces came in for two months and then stopped again. I had been receiving such positive feedback that I couldn't allow the newsletter to die. I was angry at the lack of participation from the other writers and at the people I thought should have been writing. Maybe in a different article I will share the strong rebuke I received from Dick regarding the nonwriters and how I changed my life, but to do so here would take away from its importance.

Anyway, Dick and I had been carrying the newsletter long enough that I was confident we could continue doing so. Dick, of course, had a full time job and active social life so he couldn't have been the answer. I look back now and see how frustrated and upset I was. Here was this newsletter that was changing lives and it felt to me that I was the only one who could see it. In that frustration I wrote a letter to this Prison Ministry Support Group at UBC and

sarcastically said, "If no one else wants to write then I will write the entire thing myself!" My dear readers, sarcasm rarely comes through in a letter and my loved ones at UBC missed it completely. They said that that was a great idea. I could have said, "you can begin next month." Next month being about ten days from then. Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha . . . The moral of that scene is to watch what you say because you very well may be trapped by the words of your mouth and not having wisdom in speech, get the proverbial nod for lacking sense (Proverbs 10:13)

I had written two full articles and was in the middle of my third when I joked to my Aunt Marsha about watching what we say lest we receive what we ask for. She suggested I recruit some of the Believers on Death Row to write an article also. It was a light bulb moment! The guys on the Row filled the quarterly editions of the newsletter to overflowing and the quarterly edition, became the Death Row edition, became what you have in your hands now. Thank you guys for your role in this ministry and for continuing to use this platform to encourage and build up those that read and share the GoodNews. A special thanks to Justin U. (Is your finger still crooked? =0), who has helped make this what it is today. May God bless you.

With the change in writers from scattered prisoners to predominantly Death Row there came a change in tone and purpose. My "Greetings from the Wilderness," updates changed to reflect the needs of the quickly expanding readership. It makes me happy to return to the "Wilderness" and be able to use this to update everyone on the whirlwind of this year. I have left some things out because they are still developing or are not solely mine to share but I have little doubt that the news I withhold today will certainly be shared in the future.

Where to begin . . . I left Death Row after a decade and I still haven't been able to process everything associated with that. It is probably due to the fact that in many ways I am still deeply connected to Death Row. I have loved ones still fighting for their lives, which should break your hearts toward action!, and even my own on going legal issues are governed by rules I fell under while on Death Row. I miss the solidarity of everyone being in the same legal fight for life and having a group of people around me that understand my mental and emotional struggles without having to attempt to explain what can't be fully understood by someone not on Death Row. Shout out to MS. Death Row – I'm praying for you daily.

I filed my Federal Habeas petition recently. I did so without a lawyer. I was fortunate enough to have the time to work on it while I was awaiting a new sentencing hearing. As I anxiously filed the petitions I again felt a pang of loss for the friendships I had formed with the men who helped me research and write it. I'm not sure if P.Nut receives the GoodNews so someone on the Row please pass him my thanks and love.

I am currently being held in Camp 29-B at Parchman. This place is a pit of darkness that I could write an entire book about. It is so bad here that I will refrain from talking about it because you probably would struggle to believe I wasn't exaggerating. Thankfully, I am here with two other former Death Row prisoners. They will be leaving soon though. We are required to spend a year in this building for "observation" in order to ensure we are acclimated and capable of being around non-death row prisoners. I continue to have mixed feelings about this unwritten policy which I have stated in a previous article but it is what it is. I dislike it immensely for more reasons than I care to list but God is using me to be a light in this very dark place. I sign out of here in September so it won't be much longer. It feels like forever because I loathe this place and the constant nonsense surrounding me. I feel what Lot surely felt being surrounded by unrighteousness continually. (2nd Peter 2:7-8)

I was accepted into Seminary School. The Director of the school, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, tried in vain to get me transferred to Camp 30 where the campus is

located but the prison Admin seems set on keeping me here for the full year. We'll see what God says about this. I hope to be able to attend the Fall term even if I have to begin a week or two late and play catch up. I have had years, nearly fifteen, of independent study so I am excited about being in a structured learning environment and filling in the holes in my education.

The month of March contained a major milestone for me. I was privileged to be able to perform my very first baptisms. There are two men here who have truly given their hearts and minds to our Savior. I've been disciplining them for several months and it never really crossed my mind to baptize them. It seems strange now. Blake, who's submitted an article this month, asked me if I would baptize him. I immediately responded that I would love to drown him, A.K.A baptize him.

We secured an industrial sized Rubbermaid laundry cart and put it in the shower. As it was filling with cold water from the shower (this is Parchman and hot water showers are rare) Blake, Roger (whose testimony was recently in this newsletter), and I stood in the shower around it. I asked Blake what he believed and he gave me his statement of faith. It was pure and heartfelt and I will never love him more than at that moment. I then asked him if he had repented of his sins. I knew the answer already because I've been ministering to him but he said "Oh, yes!" in such an emphatic way that I had to fight a smile. I didn't dare take away from the gravity of what he was experiencing even though my own heart was leaping for joy.

After Blake finished I asked Roger the same questions. As he was telling Blake and I what he believed I was overcome with emotion and found my eyes full of tears. I still haven't figured out why joy was expressed in two different ways. One man's love of Jesus made me want to smile and cheer the other man's love of Jesus made me want to weep in joy. Note that asking these men what they believed was simply to set the stage. I knew exactly where their faith was at and would have had no qualms putting them in the water in silence.

Roger was up first and sputtered as he sank into the cold water. It took a little bit to maneuver into position because he was almost too tall for the tub. We finally got him situated and I said, "Based upon your profession of faith in the Lord Jesus and in obedience to this command, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit." I then put him under the water. When he emerged I welcomed him into the Body of Christ with a hug.

Blake went next and it went without a hitch. What a joyous moment! Now it is up to me through the Holy Spirit to continue with the Great Commission. Jesus said make disciples – check; baptize on the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – check; now I must continue to teach them to observe all that Jesus commanded me. What a privilege to get to study God's Word, to learn Christ's commands, and then teach them to baptized disciples.

I have been recording the Bible for play in nursing homes, hospitals, and for a Priest. I'm not quite sure what the latter is going to use the CD for but let God be glorified. This is a fun job, but learning how to properly pronounce some of the names is a challenge. When I recorded the genealogy in Luke 3 I had to write it out phonetically. My script looked like this : Luke 3:25 . . . the son of MATH-UH-THEE-US, the son of Amos, the son of NAY-UM, the son of ESS-LEE, the son of NAY-GUH-EYE . . ." Chapter 16 of Romans was quite a challenge as well.

I've also recorded close to two hundred children's books for play in libraries, grade schools, and day cares. This endeavor has resulted in the creation of a certified non-profit business called "Reading with Roger." The name comes from a group of librarians who use the recordings for their story hour.

I have always been passionate about lifting up children and so the nonprofit is geared toward feeding children and ending illiteracy after all, if a person can't read they can't read the Bible and if a child is hungry neither they nor their parents can think about anything but food. I want people to be hungry only for the Bread of Life Himself and to be able to read so they can get full each day. You can make a tax deductible donation to Reading with Roger, but I would encourage you to give locally. God has blessed us with plenty for this work already.

Reading with Roger has partnered with Nike to remodel an elementary school. There isn't any reason that kids should have to attend school in a building with boards over broken windows, no A/C, and an unusable playground. The State may not have the budget to address this but my God does. In addition to fixing the above issues we will redo the parking lot, get new text books and give the teachers a little bonus. I truly pray that this is the first of many projects.

I have finished my first book. It is being edited right now and I need to decide on the cover art. The publisher offered me a ten book deal which I can't take right now. I'm way too busy too commit to that but I may revisit it in the future.

All in all I am well and these are just a few of the highlights painted in broad brush strokes. I still struggle with the side effects of long term solitary confinement and the brain damage that caused. It is getting better in some respects, but in others the damage is set in stone. Again, I am well when all things are considered and held up to the light of Jesus. Have a great month.

Peace is only in Christ,
R. Gillett

P.S. If anyone has any really old back issues of the GoodNews that haven't been archived on www.ubchm.org please send them to the Prison Ministry Support Group at U.B.C.