



Christian Jail Ministry Newsletter

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CJM website: <http://www.christianjailministry.org/>

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What Excuse Will You Offer to Jesus? And will it be good enough to avoid His wrath?

Many Americans think of Jesus in terms of a hymn and nursery rhyme based upon a 1742 poem by Charles Wesley: Jesus is described as *gentile, meek, and mild*. They are very comfortable with this kind of a Savior.

The New Testament gives a more complex description of the God-man who died to make our salvation possible. It also shows Him to be a righteous judge who separates the sheep from the goats. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus says that judgment at that sheep-goat separation will be based upon the way one treats the least of the brethren who are hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, or in prison. Jesus even says ministering to such people is actually ministering to Him.

However one interprets this passage, one point is clear. Anyone who wants to please God cannot ignore the least of the brethren in such circumstances.

What will happen to you when the Lord Jesus the Christ judges in this way? Will He welcome you to the company of His sheep because you have attended to the needs of the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the sick, and those behind bars? Or will you have to try to explain why you neglected such people in their time of need? Pastors face a higher standard; they have responsibility to educate their flocks as well as responsibility for their own personal behavior.

While we cannot say what individual Christians and their churches do in ministry to the hungry, thirsty, alienated (the strangers), naked, and sick in our community, CJM can speak with knowledge about what is being done for the inmates of our local county jail, the Howard County Detention Center (HCDC). *The vast majority of churches and individual Christians in Howard County and the surrounding area ignore these inmates.* Those churches and Christians are not involved in any of the religious programs inside HCDC or in community programs that help inmates, former inmates, or their families, and they do not provide financial support to facilitate the programs of those who are ministering to these inmates and their families. Perhaps these Christians feel they have reasons (excuses?) to explain their failures here that will satisfy Jesus.

Christian Jail Ministry gives you an opportunity to be involved with the prisoners of our local jail. To learn how you might become one of those going inside HCDC to visit and ministry to the inmates, contact CJM or plan to attend the September 13th training session (see the next page). To facilitate a fuller ministry to inmates at HCDC, you (and your church) can contribute to CJM.

Do not let words describing Jesus from a poem for children dictate your understanding of Him. Instead, take the time to look through the Gospels and see what Jesus says about Himself and the kind of person He is. Then ask yourself the questions that introduce this brief article.

**See Page 2 for an update from the May 20th meeting of the CJM Board
and for information about the September 13th orientation and training session..**

An Update

The May newsletter shared the news that Chaplain Nichols will be leaving CJM so that he and his wife can help their daughter (who was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis as an infant) with the grandchildren. Exactly when Chaplain Nichols will depart is uncertain (probably at the end of 2008 or possibly not until the end of 2009). The CJM Board had a special meeting on May 20th to address the forthcoming change in CJM ministry leadership. Here are a few items from that meeting that will help you to stay informed about what CJM will be doing.

- CJM needs to improve its financial situation so it will be better positioned for the transition to a new chaplain. Several initiatives will be undertaken to increase financial support for CJM from churches and individuals.
- CJM needs to update and improve its website (unfortunately we have allowed the CJM website to get seriously out of date!).
- CJM appointed a Search Committee to refine its job descriptions and to develop a process for how candidates will be reviewed, and then to implement that process when a firm date is set for replacing Chaplain Nichols.

Please keep CJM and the CJM Board in your prayers.

Needed: A CJM Historian

As noted above, we have let the CJM website get seriously out of date. It has become clear that a historian for CJM would be very helpful. Someone who could talk with those involved in the ministry and then update the CJM History on the website. Anyone interested in taking on the volunteer role of CJM Historian should contact Chaplain Nichols (410-997-0253).

Ministry Orientation and Training

September 13th, 9 am – 3:45 pm, at HCDC. The orientation part of the day (9 am – noon) is required by HCDC for all volunteers involved in religious programs at HCDC so that they can function safely and effectively within the institution. Part of that session is taught by Capt Baldwin, HCDC Training Coordinator, and part by Dr. Pace or Chaplain Nichols. This orientation and training is free, but advanced registration is required (by September 10th). We need time to prepare the handout materials. To register, give us your name, contact information, and that you wish to attend the September 13th session by calling CJM (410-997-0253) or sending an email (cjm@christianjailministry.org). This notice about the orientation and training gives you an opportunity to mark your calendars now so that you keep the date free from other commitments.

The training presents Biblical principles and practical guidance that will help volunteers to be more fruitful and effective in ministering to inmates. Chaplain Nichols or Dale Pace teach this part of the training and orientation

The orientation and training is not only free, it also does not impose an obligation on those who take it. Some attend because they want to become part of the ministry to prisoners at HCDC. Others attend merely to learn more about ministry to inmates. We welcome both kinds of folks.

You can help us to let others know about this training. Please share this information with your friends who may be interested in ministry to prisoners.

**Send your contributions to:
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