



God's Special Time

I WAS IN PRISON AND YOU VISITED ME

(a brief on the KAIROS Ministry in KZN by Rod Morgan)

Jonny Steinberg has written an award-winning book on prison life titled *The Number*. A poignant moment in the book occurs during an open-day function at Pollsmoor Prison in the late 1990's. The speaker tells of the fate of the prisoner on his/her release back into civilian life: "When you get out, that's it! Your record says you are a criminal. Nobody will give you a job. So you become a criminal [again] because that's all that's left to you. The system (prison life) is a factory for criminals. It makes [hardened] criminals out of decent people."

This sad testimony seems to support the commonly held belief that once a criminal, always a criminal. So why bother, lock them up and throw the keys away. Finished and klaar!

If you think like that then you're wrong on 2 counts.

Firstly, receive Jesus' words of correction from his parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25: 31-46)

Then the king will say to those on his right "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance for I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Secondly, listen to the apostle Paul as he reminds us that no man is an island, entire and safe in himself (1 Cor. 12: 26,27) Now, you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

This is where the Kairos Ministry fits in. Its purpose is to break the cycle of hopelessness and despair that clings so tightly to the criminal's life. Rehabilitation is always going to be a difficult task. But the prisoner will be in an infinitely better place to make a new start in life if equipped with a new set of values, a new mindset and a new pattern of behavior.

One of the best methods to track the success of the Kairos Ministry is the reconviction record of released prisoners. Kairos Ministry is relatively new in RSA, hence statistics are insufficient to be quoted with any degree of confidence. However, data emanating mainly from the US indicates a return rate for released prisoners of a low 22.5% after 3 months from prisons where Kairos is active compared with the global norm of around 75%.

SO WHERE DO YOU AND I FIT IN?

The start point is contained in the following bold statement: Everyone in the Church is looking for something that gives meaning and purpose and direction to his/her life. **Yes?**

If this is where you are, then one of the ways in which your desire can be fulfilled is in mission, to prisoners: in other words Kairos Ministry. Reaching out to others who have invariably come from dysfunctional families; never experienced love and kindness; never known or simply , "lost the plot" ; has got to be an experience of a lifetime. The mission statement of Kairos is Listen, listen, love, love. It's a beautiful formula that is twice blessed, touching both the giver and receiver in equal measure.

But let the participants speak for themselves:

Kairos Team members:

- "when we arrived on the Thursday evening, we met 42 hardened criminals. By Sunday evening we were in the company of God's children."
- "Participation in a Kairos weekend reveals the awesome power of God."
- "I witnessed miracles in which God used ordinary people."
- "Kairos is truly God's special time. I praise God for involving me in this ministry."
- "A favourite Kairos song is Bring down the walls. While in prison I saw the walls that prisoners build around themselves come tumbling down."
- "Nothing is impossible for God. He is loving. He is kind. He is merciful. His arm is not too short to save. He goes after the lost sheep!"
- "In the company of prisoners I was forced to reflect on my own life. I thank God that I have not been punished for my own sinfulness."
- "Listening to the prisoner's stories reminded me of Bishop Tutu being overcome with emotion at the TRC hearings. We all shed many tears."
- "Some of the prisoners: grown men, old men would come up, and placing their heads on our shoulders, cry like babies in need of a mother's love. In those moments I felt very sad."
- "Over the weekend I saw God building his Church and the gates of hell being pushed back."
- "I was appointed to the prayer chapel and experienced a very powerful anointing for ministry"
- "I saw hopelessness changed to hope; lovelessness to love; strangers to brothers; prisoners to saints".
- "I believe God looked down on us with approval. The prisoners were so excited to be able to forgive and be forgiven; to love and be loved."
- "If prisons are institutions where evil abounds, then the Kairos Ministry is to beat satan on his home turf."

Participants (prisoners)

- "This feeling I have I never had before. I know something is happening."
- "I never realized I could pray. Now I know I can pray for myself."
- "A white door has been opened for me."
- "I want to thank the Lord for what he has done for me. He has changed my life. From today my name is no longer Kapa Kapa. It is Jabulani."
- "There is a certain policeman I was hoping to do something to with a knife. But now I have forgiven him."
- "I've learnt a lot. I am not alone. And I have choices."
- "I come from a Christian family. I thought I was smart. Now the Lord has opened my eyes and I can see that I am a child of God."
- "I have a peace so deep, a freedom through God's mercy."
- "I have forgiven [my enemies] in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am bubbling with joy."

You don't have to "Go to Jail for Jesus", there are many other ways that you can work with the Lord as He builds his church. If you feel a tenderness in your heart for the Kairos ministry, don't hesitate, PLEASE call us !

With Jesus' Love and in His service
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