

# "MONEY"

MONEY, SOME SAY IT IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL BUT WITH THE ECONOMY THE WAY IT IS THESE DAYS EVEN HONEST AMERICANS ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO MAKE QUICK AND EASY CASH. SO FOR MEN LIKE MYSELF TRAPPED BEHIND THE CONCRETE WALLS AND RAZOR WIRE WRAPPED ELECTRIC FENCES OF AMERICAS PRISONS, MONEY IS MORE LIKE THE ROOT OF ALL JOY. FOR THE RIGHT AMOUNT, SLID TO THE RIGHT PERSON, CAN GET ~~SOME~~ OF US JUST ABOUT ANY OF THE CONVENIENT PLEASURES THE AVERAGE AMERICAN HAS COME TO TAKE FOR GRANTED. SUCH AS: MP3 AND DVD PLAYERS, PLAY STATIONS OR OTHER VIDEO GAMES, AND OF COURSE THE MOST JOY GIVING GADGET OF ALL TIME - THE CELL PHONE GRANTED THE PRICES OF GETTING THESE ITEM. WHILE IN PRISON CAN RUN 5 <sup>10</sup> EVEN<sup>10</sup> TIMES WHAT THEY COST THE CONSUMER ON THE OUTSIDE, MY FIRST CELL PHONE FOR INSTANCE COST ME \$3,000, BUT AS THE MASTER CARD COMMERCIAL STATES: "SOME THINGS IN OUR LIVES ARE PRICELESS." LIKE THE DAY I WAS BLESSED TO TALK TO MY 5 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER AS SHE WALKED TO SCHOOL HER VERY FIRST DAY. TO HEAR HER EXCITEMENT, HER ANTICIPATION, THEN TO FEEL HER FEAR AS SHE REALIZED HER MOTHER WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE HER THERE BY HERSELF WITH ALL THOSE STRANGERS. NO, I WASN'T THERE PHYSICALLY BUT I WAS ABLE TO CALM HER DOWN AND REASSURE HER THAT IT WAS OKAY TO STAY. SO IN MY MIND AND PROBABLY IN HERS

AS WELL IT FELT, AS IF I WAS RIGHT THERE WITH HER.

ANOTHER QUICK EXAMPLE OF A PRICELESS EXPERIENCE IS THE MORNING MY 16 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER CALLED AND WAKE ME UP AT 2 A.M. CRYING HYSTERICALLY AND TELLING ME SHE WAS STRANDED BECAUSE SHE HAD REFUSED TO GIVE "IT" UP TO SOME OCTOPUSS OR A THUG, WHO IN HIS IRE AT BEING REJECTED HAD PUT HER OUT OF HIS CAR AND DROVE OFF. MY BABY (FOR THAT'S WHAT SHE WILL ALWAYS BE TO ME) COULD HAVE CALLED ANY OF A NUMBER OF PEOPLE, IN HER TIME OF DESPAIR, ALL OF WHOM WERE FREE, BUT SHE CHOSE TO CALL ME, HER FATHER, EVEN THOUGH I'M IN PRISON. ALTHOUGH I WAS MAD AS HELL, THE HONOR I FELT AT THAT MOMENT THAT SHE REACHED OUT TO ME FIRST IN HER TIME OF NEED WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO BE PUT INTO WORDS. NO, I COULD NOT GO GET HER MYSELF, BUT I WAS ABLE TO CONSOLE HER AS WELL AS CALL SOMEONE WHO DID GO GET HER. THOSE ARE THE KIND OF MOMENTS THAT DEFINE A FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP. AND WE WERE BOTH ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM IT, ALL BECAUSE OF A PIECE OF TECHNOLOGY KNOWN AS A CELL PHONE.

YES INDEED, SOME THINGS ARE TRULY PRICELESS, AND A DEVICE THAT CONNECTS ME TO MY FAMILY 24/7 SO THAT I CAN SUPPLY THEM WITH THE BENEFIT OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE, IS DEFINITELY

ONE OF THOSE THINGS. SURE THEY ALLOW US TO MAKE COLLECT CALLS FROM PRISON, BUT FOR THE MOST PART THEY LIMIT OUR COLLECT CALLS TO 15 OR 30 MINUTES AT A TIME. AND YOU'RE FORCED TO USE THE PHONE IN A COMMON AREA, WHILE PEOPLE ARE MOVING ALL AROUND, YELLING AND SCREAMING ACROSS THE TIER AT THE TOP OF THEIR LUNGS. NOT TO MENTION THAT TO CALL SOME PLACES THEY CHARGE OUR FAMILIES, HONEST HARD WORKING PEOPLE WHO ARE ALREADY UP AGAINST IT DUE TO THE FACT THAT, WE, THE MAIN BREAD WINNERS OF THE FAMILY ARE NOT THERE TO CONTRIBUTE, ALMOST \$1 A MINUTE. NOW WHAT REAL MAN WOULD FEEL COMFORTABLE EXPOSING THEIR LOVED ONES TO THAT SORT OF HIGHWAY ROBBERY?

AT LEAST WITH A CELL PHONE YOU CAN RENT IT OUT HERE AND THERE TO RECOUP MOST, IF NOT ALL OF THE MONEY THAT WAS SPENT ON IT. YOU CAN EVEN DO THAT TO COVER THE MONTHLY BILLS. PLUS THE TIMES THE INSTITUTION PHONES ARE USEABLE ARE NEVER THE TIMES YOUR LOVED ONES NEED TO REACH YOU. FOR THE MOST PART THE PHONES IN MOST PRISONS ARE ONLY AVAILABLE FROM 9 A.M. TO 9 P.M. HOW DOES THAT HELP YOUR 5 YEAR OLD WHOSE BED TIME ISN'T UNTIL 9:30, AND WHO WANTS HER FATHER TO READ HER A BED TIME STORY AT NIGHT? HOW DOES THAT BENEFIT YOUR TEENAGER THAT HAS TROUBLE GETTING UP FOR SCHOOL WHO NEEDS YOU TO CALL AND WAKE HER UP

AT EVERY MORNING BECAUSE HER MOTHER LEAVES THE HOUSE FOR WORK AT 5? NEITHER OF WHOM HAVE EVER COMMITTED A CRIME IN THEIR LIVES, EXCEPT OF COURSE THE CRIME OF CONTINUING TO LOVE A FATHER WHO IS IN PRISON.

IT'S SO CRAZY TO ME TO SEE THE SYSTEM UP IN SUCH A ROAR THESE DAYS. ACTING AS IF CELL PHONES ARE SUCH A MAJOR PROBLEM. I HAVE YET TO READ OR EVEN HEAR OF AN INCIDENT WHERE SOMEONE USED A CELL PHONE TO ESCAPE OR ATTEMPT TO. THE REALITY IS THAT MOST PEOPLE JUST WANT THEM TO GET CLOSER TO THEIR FAMILIES, AND <sup>THE MAN</sup> IN POSSESSION OF ONE IS BOUND TO BE ONE OF YOUR BEST BEHAVED PRISONERS. WHY YOU ASK? WELL BECAUSE HE OR SHE DOESN'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING THAT WILL JEOPARDIZE HIS CELL PHONE OF COURSE.

TRUST ME, I'VE SEEN LIFE LONG GANG BANGERS TURN THEIR BACKS ON GANG ACTIVITY. I'VE SEEN HARDENED CRIMINALS EXCUSE OVERDUE GAMBLING, OR DRUG DEBTS, EVEN WALK AWAY FROM PHYSICAL ALTERCATIONS. BUT BETTER YET I'VE SEEN MEN BECOME BETTER HUSBANDS. BETTER STILL I'VE SEEN THEM BECOME MORE INVOLVED THAN THEY HAVE EVER BEEN IN THE LIVES OF THEIR CHILDREN. ALL BECAUSE OF THEM HAVING A CELL PHONE. NOW ISN'T THAT ONE OF THE MAIN GOALS OF PRISONER REHABILITATION? TO ENCOURAGE MEN TO BECOME BETTER HUSBANDS AND FATHERS

WHILE STILL HERE, SO THEY CAN BE MORE PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY UPON RELEASE?

OF COURSE HAVING A CELL PHONE AT THIS TIME IS STILL ILLEGAL IN PRISON, BUT WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? THEY ALREADY ALLOW US TO HAVE OUR OWN T.V.'S, RADIOS, TYPEWRITERS AND OTHER APPLIANCES. WHY NOT ALLOW US THE ONE TOOL THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL OF HELPING US BECOME BETTER SONS, HUSBANDS, AND FATHERS? WHY NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE ONE TOOL THAT CAN STRENGTHEN FAMILY BONDS AND POSSIBLY EASE A MAN'S TRANSITION BACK INTO SOCIETY?

EITHER WAY IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME. I'M A LIFER WITH VERY SLIM POSSIBILITY OF PAROLE THE WAY THE PAROLE BOARD IS CURRENTLY SET UP. SO AS LONG AS A FEW CRISPY \$100 BILLS CAN PURCHASE IT, I'M WILLING TO ACCEPT ANY PENALTY THEY CHOOSE TO IMPOSE, FOR THE CHANCE TO CONTINUE HAVING THE POSITIVE IMPACT IN THE LIVES OF MY LOVED ONES THAT POSSESSING A CELL PHONE GIVES ME. AND PERSONALLY I DON'T BELIEVE THAT IS A BAD THING OR THAT IT MAKES ME A BAD GUY.

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