

You Will Know

Frederick Mason #55487-056 USP Tucson PO Box 24550 Tucson, AZ 85734

There's a wonderful song by Stevie Wonder titled, "You Will Know". There's a line that goes, "You will know, lonely heart you know; every life has meaning, trust and I will show". It's a wonderful testament that God says to us to comfort us in trying times. Every person, and this includes inmates, has value. The problem is that a lot of staff in prisons, like here at USP Tucson, are actually taught to make our lives miserable...

"That can't be true", you'd say. "Aren't you overexaggerating that a bit... since you're an inmate"?

It might appear to be overexaggeration, but it isn't. Most officers and staff flatly refuse to help inmates, not because they can't, but because they won't. Psalm 82 touches on this:

Psalm 82:2-4 "How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the poor and the fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free them from the hand of the wicked".

Prison staff have a godly responsibility to treat inmates with respect and compassion; they refuse to do that, opting, by training, to make our lives harder than it already is. Our punishment is to BE in prison, not the persecution by any staff member or officer.

When things like this happen, it can cause you to question not only yourself, but God's plan in your life. I'll use myself as an example, and how it is absolutely critical to keep God in front of you at all times. If you do, you'll find that God is certainly a Comforter in times of distress.

Lately, things have been challenging for me. Here at USP Tucson, our mailroom has been under investigation for destroying legal and personal mail. Imagine YOUR local Post Office trashing your mail simply because they didn't like you. Yep, that's what is going on here. And because of that, I'm not getting mail from home or friends... or readers who read my blogs. So, I'm quite frustrated with that. Then there's the internal problems in the prison. Some of the people I've befriended, and helped, have turned against me. It's like scriptures coming to life:

Psalm 35:12-13 "They reward me evil for good, to the sorrow of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart".

Psalm 41:9 "Even my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who ate of my own bread, has lifted up his heel against me".

Guys, it's frustrating when you go out of your way to help people, only to have them turn their back on you.

It hurts....

Why then, do I play the fool?

Because... somebody's got to care. People in prison are no different from those on the outside. A lot of people are hurting emotionally and spiritually. Hey, we've all got "baggage". But to have the true love of God, you've got to be willing to accept the baggage of people that God has picked to be in your life.

And you'll KNOW who they are. There are certain people that if the love of God is in you, you'll be drawn to a friendship with them. Some more than others. Here at USP Tucson, I've run across several people like that. It's like we "click" pretty well. People like that, I pray for every day; whether that person knows it or not. I thank God for giving me a friend, and often times a "little brother", since many guys I know are between 22-28. So, I have to be the "big brother", encouraging them, helping them and being a good friend.

But sometimes it seems to backfire. Sometimes it just seems like one big mistake, and I sit here wondering, "Why did I bother to care about anybody"? People turn their backs on you, even after you've blessed them with stuff. It's like biting the hand that feeds you.

One guy here has been in debt, and I helped him pay his debts. You'd think he'd be grateful. But now he acts like he's too good to even talk to me. I even made a phonecall to his mom, an emergency call, because she was going to surgery the NEXT day. None of his other "friends" could, or would, do it. Whenever he really needed help, I was there. But he avoids me as if he doesn't know me.

"What am I doing wrong"? I ask myself. I'm trying to take the advice my dad once gave me, "While you're in prison, do your best to help those around you". It's like a scripture, "Pray for peace, so that there will be peace". That scripture was written for the captives. God was saying, "While you're a captive, pray for peace where you are, and I will give you peace".

Gosh, I'm doing the best I can, but it's not working... at least not for me.

I just didn't know what I was supposed to be doing, and I was frustrated.

Often times when I get time to myself, I question God about this. Sometimes you just have to lay out your complaint to God, and tell Him how you feel. I don't think God minds so much, as long as you talk TO Him.

So I'm saying (in my head), "Lord, I don't understand it. I'm not perfect, but I'm trying to do my best to help. But people are talking about me, and a lot of what they're saying isn't good. What good is it to DO good if there's no reward?"

We all remember the scripture from Jeremiah 29:11, right:

Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you, and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

God has a plan for everybody... a GOOD plan.

But because God is love, He cares just as much for every inmate in prison as the congregation at your nearest church. God WANTS to bless them, to show them that somebody loves them. But who takes that job? Most people don't because they don't have the love of God in them. Even many believers don't have the love of God in them.

So God has to find people-laborers- who have good hearts. Even in prison, He needs them. Perhaps my flaw is that I'm too nice. As some say, "they take your kindness as weakness", and yes, it hurts sometimes.

But at times I feel down, and ready to give up, then God encourages me to not give up on people He's given to my care. They are in my life for a reason; to show the LOVE that God has for them.

One guy, who couldn't type, needed a 40-page brief due in short order. He typed about 2 pages an hour. I type about 12. I was able, in a day, or two, to finish his brief, when it would have taken him 2 weeks.

Another guy needed my help typing a letter to the court to get his time back that the government didn't give him. I did 2 letters (8 pages) for him.

Another older guy needed help writing emails to staff about issues he had. He has NO computer or typing skills, so I helped him.

Another guy, when I wasn't hungry, was given my lunch, so he could have a little extra to eat.

One younger guy, whom I knew well, I would give pill bottles of coffee to, since he doesn't get money to buy his own.

God was reminding me in these, and other instances... all I do IS give.

But I countered, "what good does it do"?

I felt discouraged, because I just wasn't seeing the fruits of it. I mean, surely God's got to kick that window of blessings open, and I can get some prosperity going on. Then I could do MUCH more. But... it just didn't seem like it was happening.

But God assured me; what I'm doing is indeed a good thing. Sure, people talk about me, but it ought not stop the good things I do to help others. I've found (humbly speaking) more than one

person say, "Everybody likes Fred". I get along with just about everybody. Not that I want recognition of being popular... I just want friends I can talk to.

Guys... prison can be lonely, even surrounded by people.

And God knows this. He also knows that others NEED a friend, a real friend. One who truly cares about you, not trying to take advantage of you. One that prays for you, and thanks God for giving you such a friend. That is a real friend. And yes, there are some like that here in prison.

But God also knows, with each friend comes baggage. Are you willing to hold on to a person God gave you to care about, to stick with and encourage, even after they turn their back on you, or bite your hand? Can you pray for someone that does that?

I have... it is SO hard to do, but I have. I promised God that if He gave me good friends, people I could look at like my brothers, then I would always pray for them, even if things got bad. And when they got bad... I had to honor my word to God.

And when I did, God would always restore the friendship. God has been completely faithful to my requests, because He knows the kind of person I am.

Guys, as the song goes, "Every life has reason...". God loves everybody to a level we can't fully understand. Christians use that saying like a cliché... "God loves you". But do we truly know how much He loves us? Think for 2 minutes about the person or people you love the most. God's love exceeds that. But to show it, that love has to come through us. God's love doesn't come raining from Heaven like rain. It shines through those that have His love.

So, as I sit here wondering if it's worth it to care, I have to believe it does. Just the other day, there's a guy who's birthday is actually today (Oct. 5th). He always says, "Nobody likes me". But 2 days before, I gave him \$5.00 in stamps (the currency here) for his birthday.

Why? Because I wanted him to know that somebody cared about him. That was God's love in me. Every life has reason; every life is worth something.

Most believers -and many Christians- don't understand that.

But a person with God's love does. And if you've got God's love, then you will know how important it is to keep God's commandment, and love your neighbor. If you can do that, your path in serving God gets clearer, because you'll be operating on God's love.

You'll indeed know your purpose...and importance in life; to love one another, as God loves us... until next time...