

YARD OUT

Vol. 17 No. 1

A PFC Publication



Inside...

*Helpless Slave
To Drugs*

*The Devil's
Playground*

*Toes Up
Or Walking*

and more

YARD OUT

Vol. 17 No. 1

Start a new life... GET CONNECTED TO GOD

YARD OUT is published by Prisoners for Christ Outreach Ministries.

All contents are presented from a Christian world view. Such contents reflect the experiences of the featured subjects and not Prisoners for Christ Outreach Ministries or its staff.

Sorry, we cannot offer legal advice or provide contact information to anyone, inmate or civilian. Nor can we provide financial help to anyone incarcerated. We are grateful for every inmate who writes to us, but the total number of letters is too many for us to use all such material, nor can we reply personally to each letter. *Yard Out* is published three times a year.

Yard Out does not have a mailing list. Requests must be made to receive individual copies. Please look in your chapel reading racks for the latest issue. Thank you and God bless.

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Editor: Peyton Burkhardt

YARD OUT

c/o Prisoners for Christ

PO BOX 1530

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MORE ASSORTED TESTIMONIES

COVER PICTURE

"At the Foot of the Cross" by
Jeremiah Harris, Moore Haven, FL
won Second Place in Yard Out's
2013 Art Contest.

If you feel there is more to life than what you see pass before your cell bars everyday, then *YARD OUT* has good news for you. You can know that God loves you. You can meet the real Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, sent to earth by God his Father to die for our sins. Jesus showed the love of God by His mission and proved His divinity by His physical resurrection three days after He died by crucifixion. These guidelines from the Bible tell how to receive Christ.

Trust God to create an internal change in you. A power bigger than yourself is available if you ask. "But to all who did accept Him, He gave power to become children of God." John 1:12

Understand your need for change and see that God is giving you a chance to start a new life. "Truly... I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God," John 3:3

Admit your basic selfishness. Be honest about the hidden motives of your heart. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

Realize that salvation is God's free gift. Nothing you do can earn it. "Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God..." Ephesians 2:8-10

Express your faith. Believe God will do what He promised. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

Show your need to receive Jesus by prayer. "For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

Talk to God one-on-one. In your own words, tell Him how you felt after reading these Bible verses. Or simply repeat the sample prayer given here with an open and sincere heart.

"God, thank you for loving me. Thank you for sending Jesus to die for me. Please forgive my sins. I'm sorry for all I have done wrong and for all the pain I have caused others. You promise to forgive all who ask, and I ask now that you forgive me. I commit myself to you. Come into my life, Jesus, and be my Lord and Savior. Fill me with the Holy Spirit, and help me trust you for the rest of my life. Amen."

Take a few seconds to be quiet and think. Did you sense God's reality? Or know the presence of His love? Regardless of any feelings, your forgiveness is based on His promise and not your emotions. By talking to Him daily and reading the Bible, you will strengthen your faith and grow to know God better. If you have questions about your new life in Jesus or what it means to be a Christian, please send for our free literature. Write to:

Prisoners for Christ, P.O. Box 1530, Woodinville, WA 98072

Name _____ ID # _____

Institution _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Lost in the Frost from Ice

by Nathan “Butch” Lee

I was born and raised in Hawaii, a little island known to travelers as paradise. As they visit, some of their hearts are captured by the beauty of the lush green mountains, glistening waters, fresh air and beautiful blue skies, known to me as home. In my younger days I ran wild, crazy and free. It was the most beautiful thing to me.

In the first stage of my adulthood, I lost my sense of direction due to experiencing drugs. It came so fast and powerful from a drug known as “ice.” Venom from that first hit made me realize how vicious of a mistake I’d made.

I was unconcerned for the people I hurt, lied to, cheated and stole from. The saddest part was, it was my family and true friends who were only there to help me.

In the beginning, it seemed all cool and fun, but before long I was hooked. I found out how cold, wicked and destructive it is. I ran rampant and heartless, showing no mercy, craving the demonic high of crystalmeth.

It strips you of your morals. It makes you move so fast, that when the high is gone, you’re sure to crash. It was such a senseless, irrational way of life. It is demanding, unforgiving, possessive and cruel. This is what “ice” does to you.

Driven by my own selfish ambition and

greed, I soon found myself lonely and paranoid.

I trusted no one, not even myself. I became my own victim, feeling wrong headed and under attack from emotional maniac-depression. I became violent and brutal to everyone around me. Life had no meaning at all.

My addiction became so uncontrollable, I would go on runs of any length to get my fix. I cheated death over a dozen times.

Home on the streets, I found I was a true hustler. Swinging and slinging dope here, there and everywhere, I was up and running day in and day out. Rolling all night, high in the air, everything was up for grabs, and I didn’t care. By the age of 30, I felt untouchable.

Surrounded by a new generation of freaky people. I realized they’re not my kind of style. Questioning myself, I realized I was far from who I was and where I came from. In the next three years a lot of acquaintances that I dealt with began to get busted, not to mention the

people who fell to their graves from their addiction to “ice.” For the first time in 15 years, I felt fear that my time was surely to come to an end. I decided to quit, and told myself “just one more roll and I’m done.”

It was my last roll alright. It ended in a dramatic fashion. The law raided my home and found an enormous amount of crystalmeth, marijuana and six digits in currency. I faced a 45 year sentence. Even with the best lawyer, I was found guilty and served 12 years in prison.

Finally, I had a chance at freedom again by working in a furlough program. I worked full time as a labourer at the Pearl Harbor shipyard. After seven months, I was reintroduced to my soul eating friend crystalmeth.

It took me on a journey to hell once again. On the run from the law, I was doing the same things. Finally recaptured, I added another five years for my escape.

While on the run, I met this lovely, beautiful lady who I fell in love with. From the start she captured my heart. I married her and we have a healthy baby daughter. I adore both so much.

I might be back in prison, but by the grace of God, emotionally and spiritually, my heart is awakened by the Holy Spirit. I found a new high, and it’s free. It’s the love of the Lord.

Blessings come from the Lord. He hears our prayers. I now have a new sense of direction. Open your heart, be sincere and let His love flow in you. Just ask and you shall receive.

Nathan “Butch” Lee, Aiea, HI

The Devil’s Playground by Marcos A. Medina

I was a family man, a man who loved the married life. I had a good wife with no bad habits, like smoking, drinking or drugs. She was, and still is, committed to church every week, and takes the children with her. We both worked and cooperated financially to the home. However, there was one big problem. Me.

I rarely went to church. I barely knew who God was. I had three habits that led me astray and down the wrong path. I smoked cigarettes and marijuana on a regular basis, and drank alcohol almost everyday.

I found myself in the devil’s playground, facing some serious charges. The details are complex, but I was charged with home invasion robbery, attempted felony murder, possession of a firearm and grand theft auto.

I felt lost, lonely and confused, and despite the grave situation I was in, Satan was not happy or done. He was out to do more damage. He was looking to ruin and make my life a living nightmare. I came across a guy selling sticks of marijuana for ten bucks in the county jail, and of course, wasting no time, I bought one.

My entire life was in total disarray. I knew in my heart there was only one person who could change my situation if I would submit myself to Him and change my ways. His name is Jesus Christ, the son of God.

The problem was, I knew “of” Him but I did not “know” Him. My sister began contacting prayer lines. I drew closer to Him through prayer and His Word. As I begin to reach out to the Lord, something inside me kept telling me to flush that stick of marijuana down the toilet. So I did.

I then submitted myself and made a life long promise to the Lord. “I will never smoke that crap again.” This was totally contrary to my way of thinking and the complete opposite of what I said for many years.

I always said I would smoke weed until the day I die, and here I was making this promise to the Lord. But for me, I knew exactly what I wanted. I wanted to change my life. I prayed, accepted the Lord into my

life and asked for forgiveness. As days, weeks and months went by, the state’s original offer of 30 years with a ten mandatory was short lived. They were fixed on taking the case to trial. I prayed none of the essential witnesses would show up on game day. On the morning of the trial the judge asked if all the witnesses were present. The state responded yes.

When the attorney called the first of seven witnesses, I didn’t question the Lord at all. Not for a second did I wonder why God didn’t grant my request and have none of the witnesses be present. Instead of negative thoughts racing through my mind, I felt calm as though I knew He had my back.

My biggest trial was yet to come. During the trial, Satan challenged my faith and commitment. On the last day of closing arguments, I was handcuffed to another guy. I had never seen this man before, but we boarded a bus together for a 30 minute ride to the court house.

This guy wasted no time. He broke out and lit up a stick of marijuana, the same junk that overpowered my will for many years. He extended his hand, offering to share. I said, “No, thanks.”

After a long day of closing arguments, the bailiff notified the court that the jury had reached a verdict. The moment of truth had arrived. The judge said, “If you are found guilty of these crimes, I will sentence you to three life sentences instead of four.”

Immediately after the first two “not guilty” verdicts were read, my attorney slapped my knee and blurted out seven words, “Kid, you just got your life back.” The firearms charge was acquitted prior to trial, and (for the last charge) the jury found me guilty of grand theft auto.

I was so blessed. I’d been given a second opportunity at life. I have no doubt that had I chose to take a few puffs from that stick of grass that morning on the bus, I would be in prison serving three life sentences.

I believe we struggle more than we should. It’s a tough challenge, but far from impossible. If we would only submit ourselves to the Lord. After nearly a decade in prison, I will cherish the freedom the Lord gave me, and the opportunity to spend quality time with my children.

To walk in the light of the Lord is freedom. I hope this testimony touches the hearts and minds of many to change their lives for the better.

Marcos A. Medina, Polk City, FL

ROAD TO ETERNITY

BY DONTEL KEYS

For nearly two decades I've called prison home. I'll be 35 soon, and sixteen birthdays have been spent behind prison walls. This didn't become my home due to being framed or a case of mistaken identity. I'm here because of stupidity and a disbelief in God's word.

The son of a preacher, I was introduced to God's word early. My father planted the seed of God in my heart. However, the seed of corruption was planted in my mind. And my mind is where I lived for so long. Only recently have I learned to live from my heart.

But it was not an easy road. Imagine traveling down a crater filled road in a suspensionless car. Every bump is felt by the body, every impact jolts the heart. If there is a hell on earth, I've lived it.

However, God has delivered me from the hell I created for myself. He has placed me on a road to eternity. And even though I may hit a pothole every now and then, it's never enough to knock me off course.

God has truly worked wonders in my life. God made the ultimate sacrifice, gave His life so I can escape this sinkhole. Doubters say you'll fail, disbelieving the promise of saving a sinner's soul.

Even at our worse, God is there for us. I confess this to be true. I was a horrible person. However, God had a calling on my life. He took me from being a gang member, to being beaten nearly to death, to being a deacon in my church, to being married.

From sinner to believer and lover of God's mercy and grace, is a road we can all take. All we have to do is take a step towards Him.

Dontel Keys, Branchville, IN

Toes Up Or Walking

by Terry Lamar Byrd

I am serving a 135 year sentence for some very sick and awful charges. I'm almost 50 years old and this is my first time being incarcerated. I've been in and out of church all my life but after my first divorce I gave up on God.

It was my doing that caused the divorce, but I blamed God. Time passed and I married again. My new wife didn't have kids, but I had two from my first marriage. We helped, doing foster care for my brother's boy and his sister.

Satan really hit me. I stayed stressed out and angry all the time. My wife and I argued because I could not handle the pressure with the kids. One thing lead to another, and I was put in jail for the first time.

Walking by a cell in jail, there were some guys having a worship time. The Spirit was pulling at my heart, so I went in, and one of the guys was my bunk mate. As they praised God, I fell under the weight of my sins. I asked God to clean my heart of all the anger and stress. I felt a weight lift off me.

I know God didn't put me here, but He allowed me to come here to give me one more chance to live for Him. Some people ask me how I can be so cool and relaxed with such a hard sentence.

I tell them God still loves me. He's all I have to live for. He'll get me out one way or another, toes up or walking, I'll be going with Him.

Terry Lamar Byrd, Jackson, GA

"I Can Never Be the Person I Was"

by Jeffrey Clemente

I committed a senseless and cowardly crime. I grabbed a man around the neck with my forearm and strangled him, thereby causing his death. I was irresponsible and made a terrible choice. A life was lost at my hands. Nothing can excuse what I did. For the rest of my life, I will owe a debt and I accept the consequences of my horrible choice.

I could not have apologized years ago, for it would have fallen on deaf ears. My actions then would not have been compatible with my words. Today, I am not only able to speak about being remorseful and apologetic, but I am also able to demonstrate these words through my actions.

This open apology is an effort to convey to the victim's family and all I have affected by my senseless crime, the remorse, regret and indebtedness I feel. I have dedicated myself to making sure I can never be the person I was the day I committed this hideous crime.

I have caused the pain and suffering of many, and there are no words or actions to take back what they have endured. However, I still offer my sincerest apology, along with the assurance that I will never again cause such suffering to anyone. Instead, I vow to be part of the solution. My debt is not only to my victim's family, but to society as a whole.

I pray forgiveness finds the hearts of all those I have hurt, and that each apology maneuvers your heart until it finds a way in. Being in prison for the last eleven years has given me time to reflect on the damage I have caused. Confinement to a cell has forced me to face the reality of my guilt and embarrassment for my atrocious actions.

Some may forgive me and others may continue to despise me, but it is important for my self-growth and rehabilitation to first forgive myself, then seek the forgiveness of others. God knows my heart and intentions, for He is the master of my heart.

I have found forgiveness within myself by my belief in God. Now I ask others to forgive me. Thank you for allowing me to cleanse my soul. May God give you all the strength and heart to find forgiveness for a soul that truly needs it.

Jeffrey Clemente, Ossining, NY

National Inmate Christian Art Contest

Enter Now!

Prisoners for Christ Outreach Ministries announces its 2014 Annual Art Contest!

FIRST PRIZE \$100 • SECOND PRIZE \$75 • THIRD PRIZE \$50

Mail artwork to:

ART CONTEST

Prisoners for Christ Outreach Ministries

PO BOX 1530

Woodinville, WA 98072

RULES: Entries must be original art work of the inmate. It must be free hand and not traced or copied. Please do not copy images from any other picture. That is a violation of copyright laws. Any medium (pencil, paint, pastels or ink) is permitted. Size should be no larger than 10 by 14 inches. It should have a Christian theme, not contain nudity, and be signed by the artist. Sorry, but COD packages will not be accepted. The art will not be returned to the sender. All entries become the property of PFCOM and may be used for Prisoners for Christ promotions. Only winners will be notified by mail. A news article in the first Yard Out printed after the contest will give the results. The decision of the judges is final. Prize money is awarded to winning inmates via J-Pay or trust fund deposit forms. Entries must be submitted by November 30, 2014. Entries received late will be placed in next year's contest.

----- **CLIP & SEND** -----

Entries must be accompanied by information requested below. Please write clearly. By signing, inmate agrees to all rules and authorizes use of their name and institution for PFC promotions.

Signature _____

Printed name _____

Inmate ID number _____ Location within prison (if any) _____

Institution name: _____

Institution address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

One Trick Pony

by Peyton Burkhart

What recent television show became the most watched program ever, in the history of broadcasting? If you guessed the Academy Awards, the NBA All Star game, March Madness or the Amazing Race, your answer would have been wrong. No, it was the NFL's 2014 Super Bowl. Some 110.5 million viewers watched the Seattle Seahawks smack down the Denver Broncos. The score, 43 to 8, was one of the biggest margins of victory ever.

While the game itself wasn't very competitive, the other contest was in high gear from the get-go. The other contest refers to the competition for the most creative commercial. Each year the sharpest minds in advertising strive to come up with an unforgettable bit that compels consumers to rush out and buy the latest high tech gadget, fastest car, or crispy corn chip.

This Super Bowl saw Volkswagen engineers grow wings, Bob Dylan pitch Chrysler Motor Co., and Radio Shack parody a Seinfeld episode. Fifty commercials aired during the game, and at four million dollars per 30 second spot, the real winner appears to be the Fox Broadcasting Network.

Cheap laughs were scratched in favor of touchy sentiments. Small wonder that a preselected panel of 6,272 judges favored a Budweiser ad that shows a Clydsdale horse and a Golden Lab puppy connect on an emotional level. They fight the odds, jump over fences and run away from home to stay together as best buddies. The heart warming skit was flawless.

However, behind the scene, animal trainers used 17 horses and 12 dogs, teaching each one just one trick. It seems that one trick was the limit to what they could learn. Edited together, it made one of those "ah, isn't that cute" television moments people love to talk about. In reality, it was a patchwork of film created to separate consumers from their money.

Now that the game is over, and the hangover of excitement has worn off, do any positive results remain with those who watched? A more pointed question might be, is there ever one experience that brings lasting change, that creates a difference inside a person where it matters most?

Jesus doesn't advertise in the Super Bowl, but He made just such an amazing claim. "I have come that you may have life more abundantly," (John 10:10). No, that doesn't mean you'll be a superstar in a material world. It means the quality of your spiritual life will be defined by the presence of God in your behavior. People can either allow Jesus to live in them or wait until the next corn chip—with new and improved taste—comes along, and give that a try. Then give it a try again next year. And the next.

Peyton Burkhart, Woodinville, WA, has been Editor of Yard Out for 18 years.

Helpless Slave to Drugs

by Anthony Millar

Growing up, I was always attracted to the criminal life. Born and raised in a Florida town with nothing to do. I had little motivation for success. I was seven when my mother and father divorced. I was raised by my dad, and we never went to church.

At 14, I started smoking weed and taking prescription pills. That's when I got my first arrest for car burglary and possession of a controlled substance.

I went from breaking into cars to breaking into houses. By age 18, my drug use and addiction went sky high, and I started shooting up oxycontin and cocaine. Before I knew it, I was a total helpless slave to drugs.

Getting tons of money through an extortion scandal, I spent thousands of dollars. Doing highly lethal doses of oxycontin every night, not to mention my every day alcohol use, I was addicted. I was also addicted to sex and every night I'd be at a strip club or would resort to prostitutes.

I had no hope that I would ever see the age of 25, and had no hope for the future. Really, I just didn't care about life or anybody in it. I lost pretty much any relationship I had with my family. I was arrested for home invasion robbery and kidnapping at age 19. I was out on bond (at the time) and was on felony probation.

As I was sitting in the county jail about a month after my arrest, I picked up a Bible and started reading. But not long after, I put it down because I felt like a hypocrite looking to God just because I was facing a life sentence. So I stopped reading.

A chaplain came every week to the cell down the hall. One day he asked to speak to me and my roommate. He told us about Jesus Christ and he did the following week after that too. That is when I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and savior. Even then, I didn't change automatically.

I was still living in sin and lust, cursing and all kinds of things. A couple of months passed and the Holy Spirit started moving in me and I started feeling guilty and convicted for certain things I was doing. I repented and got serious with the Lord without partiality.

God is so great. I'm now at a youthful offenders camp. God is doing awesome things in my life and opening doors. He is also restoring my family back to me. I'm only 21 and I'd like to tell people my age that you're never too young to get saved by the great Almighty God, and you should before it's too late.

Anthony Millar, Lake City, FL



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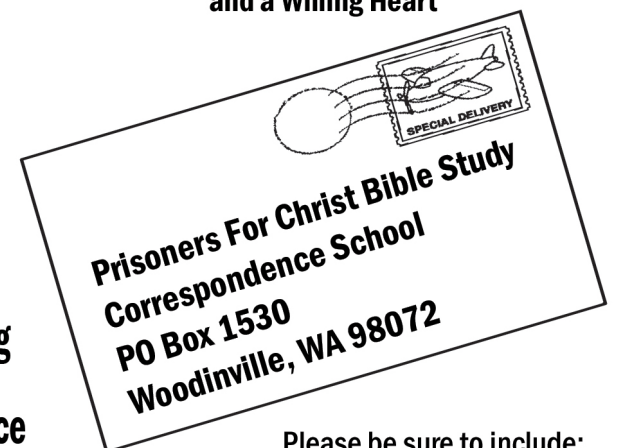
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“Rapture” by Anh Tuan Hoang, of Livingston, TX won Honorable Mention in Yard’s Out’s 2007 Art Contest. The picture was rendered in pencil.

Art Winners Selected

Another year of competition is finished for *Yard Out’s* Art Contest. The 2013 entries continue to show a high degree of ability by the inmates who participated.

About 200 drawings were received from almost all states, with Florida prisoners submitting the most entries. Texas, which has been a leader in past years, was a close second in number of entries.

An Oklahoma artist won first place this year, with a drawing of Jesus entitled “The Lion of Judah.” James Kidwell, from Hominy, used pencil to capture a realistic picture of the crucifixion and a lion with reference to scripture that conveys that image for Jesus.

The second place winner also used the crucifixion as a theme, showing the foot of the cross with a group of disciples attending to Jesus during His suffering. It was drawn in pencil by Jeremiah Harris, from Moore Haven, FL.

Dione Allen, of San Saba, TX won third place with a picture of a lighthouse (also in pencil) and the guiding hands of God presenting the source of light. It symbolizes divine protection.

All the participants are congratulated for their effort. There were many well drawn pictures. Hopefully the experience of creating something meaningful was a rewarding one for each of you.

Inmates write

Pen Letters

Dear Yard Out;

I have to tell you, *Yard Out* is by far the best paper in the world, hands down. I love it. Keep up the good work. Some how *Yard Out* came to my cell and got put under the door. No one knows how it got there. I’ve asked the tier runners if they put it there and they told me no. I know it was from God. Its been a blessing to me ever since I’ve been in prison. I’ve only been in prison since September. My cell doesn’t have windows and the toilet leaks water all over the floor. The rats, they play in it almost every night. I have put a request in to fix it. They told me things around here are slow and water runs up hill. It’s not me I’m worried about. I have the top bunk. It’s my cellie on the bottom (he was in a wheel chair) that I prayed for. I know my prayers have been answered because the Bible says where two get together in the Lord’s name that is a church.

Richard Burrell, Tracy, CA

I have no poem to send, just a testimony of Jesus’s love and glory. I fell in ‘09 for the murder of a friend. (But) I committed no crime. I was forced to take a plea by my Public Defender. The whole way, I’ve stayed prayed up and never let my heart harden up. Prayers have continually been answered, and I’m now about to have my conviction overturned and be exonerated. All by the glory of God, I’ve overcome the odds. Instead of cursing them all for being behind these

walls, I pray for them and am doing my best to better myself even though the last five years have been absolute hell. All I can say is, never give in to Satan’s lies. You can do this whether guilty or innocent because Jesus paid the price for our sins. If possible, get baptized through water and the blood, and receive your spiritual gifts. If you don’t know what I’m talking about, search your heart and get saved—today.

Bryan Dryden, Indian Springs NV

Recently I was given the gift of reading *Yard Out*. What an amazing publication for us inmates. I was in awe of the testimonies, art and poems. What hope it gives. You do an awesome job of putting a great message out. I am currently serving a six year sentence and I have realized once again it is the Lord who saves the lost soul like myself. Your publication gives hope to all.

A. S., Avenal, CA

I enjoy reading *Yard Out* front to back. I am a new brother in Christ. Everyone around here enjoys *Yard Out*. Thank you for such a newspaper. But thank the Lord first. I enjoy reading the poems and struggles everyone faces before meeting Christ. Reminds me of myself.

A. H., Wasco, CA

I really enjoy your paper. I think it helps others who are struggling. It gives them hope. I was rescued when I was put here. I’m glad I got to find God. It has taken me three trips and 13 years, but I’m here and have more peace than I ever had. As long as I have Jesus, I have no doubt I will make it this time. So thank you so much for doing what you do. Just hearing about others in prison who are changing and finding God, brings great joy to my life.

Tracy Yarbrough, Tampa, FL

I absolutely love reading your paper. The stories bring such inspiration and hope. My life has been a disaster (with) hard drugs, abusive relationships, and a marriage that almost left me dead. I almost died, probably nine times. No matter what (happened), it didn’t kill me. Not even getting my head smashed by a mail box, pushed out the door of a (moving) truck, or multiple drug overdoses. I’m like a cat with nine lives. I too have found the Lord here in prison. It’s kind of weird how coming to jail has helped me. It’s the first place I ever went to church, picked up a Bible or even opened one and started reading. This sentence has saved my life.

D.N.M., Kenai, AK

I’ve been reading your newspaper for a few years, on and off, but always love it. As long as they have the Lord, I believe everybody deserves a second chance. The more you read the Bible, the more you believe in Jesus. I thank God for saving my soul and allowing me time to learn a lot in prison. Jesus will guide you to the right path of life. We are touched by the Holy Spirit to set aside fear and reach out to Him. I pray for all my sisters and brothers to do their time peacefully and to glorify His name.

Denzel Aloyo, Brocton, NY

Letters sent to Yard Out must be accompanied by the release form found next to the “Headed Your way, Yard Out” cartoon on the last page. Signature is required for use of the inmate’s name.

Contents may be edited. Send material to:

Letters to the Editor

c/o Yard Out

P.O. Box 1530

Woodinville, WA 98072

Prison Poetry

Blessing in the Storm

by David J. Harris

There's been so many storms, when will it ever end?
When will the pain cease, when does my life begin?
I'm hurting everyday, but I know God is on my side.
As many times I tried to run, from God I cannot hide.
I'm so tired of the rain, dark clouds and stormy nights.
But I'm holding on to God, because at the end there is light.
I'm looking up to Him, saying, "Lord, free my soul.
Give me peace instead of pain, set me free, please don't let go."
My test is in this storm, Lord, please guide me through.
I know I have a purpose, so I put my trust in you.
I'm stepping out on faith, holding on to something warm.
Giving glory to God, because there's a blessing in the storm.

David Harris, Comstock, NY

Lift Up Your Eyes

by Aaron McAdam

When the storm rages and rain falls from the sky,
peace is on its way, so lift up your eyes.
When struggles overtake you and you're sure to meet your demise,
strength is on its way, so lift up your eyes.
When Satan approaches, and begins to tell all his lies,
truth is on the way, so lift up your eyes.
When engaged in warfare and we fear for our lives,
victory is on its way, so lift up your eyes.
When our hearts become broken from those who cut ties,
love is on its way, so lift up your eyes.
When the day comes and our bodies have died,
we shall fear no more, for we have arrived.

Aaron McAdam, Pittsburgh, PA

This Little Girl

by Nicole Sean Williams

I think about this little girl, I knew sometime ago.
Her innocence, her wit, her charm, her candescent glow.
As time went on and as she grew, her life began to change.
When darkness fell—too soon she learned—so much made her afraid.
I remember how she used to hide, and all that she would deny.
Then came the friends, the fun, the drugs, the fake, the front, the lies.
Soon the time had come for her to pay her consequence,
and as you know, the story goes, no one stood for her defense.
Today, I still pray for her, I get down on my knees,
But in my heart I must admit, that little girl was me.

Nicole Sean Williams, Los Angeles, CA

Forgiveness

by Kathryn Estelle Anderson

Forgiveness is a funny thing.
It picks you up and you grow wings
to fly above the hurt below
then looking down... to let it go.
To hold on tight to what they've done
imprisons you, far from the sun.
Yet when you choose to make peace
your heart will swell with your release.
Unforgiveness is a chain
that link by link connects you to pain.
But by one little word that's spoken
that impossibly long chain is broken.
But the remaining chain can wrap around
until you are sprawled upon the ground.
For life, and peace, and deep soul health
do not forget... to forgive yourself.

Kathryn Anderson, Redmond, WA

Momma

by Michael Lee Alberts

Hello, Momma. It's been a while since I've talked to you.
I want you to know I've changed from the things I used to do.
I've accepted God in my heart and He is guiding me.
He opened up my eyes, Momma, and now I can see.
I'm not proud of my past, of many the things I've done.
I'm not proud of how cruel I was or how I hurt someone.
So, Momma, I am sorry I could not be there.
I wish I could tell you just how much I care.
But I have to pay for my mistakes, and serve out all my time.
But I know that I can do it now, I have Jesus on my mind.
And Momma, I sure do miss you, now that you are gone.
And some day I'll be with you, when Jesus takes me home.

Michael Lee Alberts, Navasota, TX

A Mess to a Masterpiece

by Richard Lamar Thomas

I would like to share my testimony, and let the truth be told;
of how God healed my broken heart and restored my shattered soul.
My life was filled with calamities and devoid of any trust;
and my desires were consumed in a world filled with lust.
My life was desolate of feelings, with no one to behold,
because my flesh ran rampant for lack of self control.
My body was afflicted with pain caused by drugs and stress;
I was on the brink of destruction, my life had become a mess.
But the Lord was merciful and gracious, and attentive to my needs,
He cultivated my old way of thinking in order to plant a new seed.
He formed me with His love and wisdom, according to His will,
then blessed me with understanding that I might be fulfilled.
Now I've come to know Him. His love will never cease,
He took a mess like me and made a masterpiece.

Richard Lamar Thomas, Memphis, TN

The Word of Truth

by William Billington

It leads you from the darkness and guides you to the light.
The word of truth is the only way to all things that are right.
It protects you from temptation, for "it is written" is how you start.
The word of truth is all you'll need, when you hide it in your heart.
It teaches you to love your neighbor, "to seek and you shall find."
The word of truth is peace and hope, and it calms a worried mind.
It prepares you for a godly life, on earth and then in heaven.
The word of truth—it paves the way, to the life you should be livin'.

William Billington, Cheshire, CT

How Can It Be

by Hipolito A. Osorio

I'm sitting in jail, wondering how can it be.
I thought I was alone, until I felt God in me.
I wish I could take back everything I've said and done.
So I apologize to God and to everyone.
How can it be, I thought I had it all figured out.
Until I started to listen to my heart, instead of with my mouth.
Although I sit here thinking, it could be a lot worse.
For all I've done, I could be dead and riding in a hearse.
It's time to stop doing wrong and start doing right.
So I let Jesus Christ back into my life.

Hipolito A. Osorio, Cranston, RI

Our Savior Lord

by Rod Gray

Our Savior Lord is watching you,
He's watching everything you do.
His love is great for you and me,
so open your Bible and let us see.
It talks about His love to show,
so take your time and read it slow.

Rod Gray, Ft. Madison, IA

Who Is This Jesus?

Who then is this Jesus who has risen from the dead?

Who then is this Jesus who arose just as He said?

***He was present at creation, and all things were made through Him,
even Adam and his lady – expelled from Eden for their sin.***

Later, in the time appointed, as a babe He came to earth.

Angels sang across the heavens... shepherds & wise men hailed His birth.

As a youth, He baffled scholars. When a man, He taught the throngs;

“Truth I am, and Light for living.” Gently He forgave the wrong.

God incarnate... He was hated by the rulers of His day.

On the cross one day they nailed Him, thinking they could stop His Way.

Only then the Way was opened, all our sins were on Him laid.

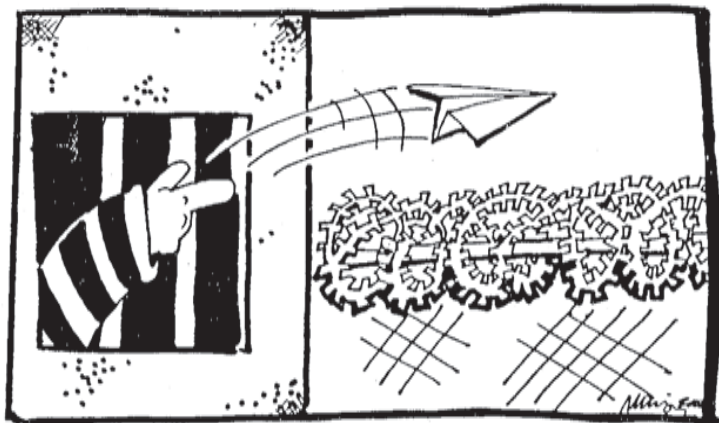
He cried in anguish, “It is finished.” Our redemption fully paid!

And it is this very Jesus that was risen from the dead.

Living yet, and coming back to reign, just as He has said.

Fern Freeman, Seattle, WA

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