

LIGHT BEARERS MINISTRY

MISSION UPDATE

February 2004

2004 CONVOCATION SCHEDULE

5th Annual East Coast Convocation
Fletcher, North Carolina
June 28–July 3, 2004
828-687-5125

20th Annual Convocation
Malo, Washington
July 6-10, 2004
509-779-4444

TY GIBSON GOES TO PRISON!

Now that I have your attention, allow me to share with you how God’s love recently opened doors and penetrated hearts in the only women’s prison in Hawaii.

THE INVITATION

Oahu was my home for the month of November. I had been scheduled to conduct a series of evangelistic meetings at the Kaneohe church. About a month before my arrival, I received a phone call from Helena Reid—a precious sister who has devoted herself to prison ministry. The request was simple: “Could I schedule you to speak at the women’s prison on one of your nights off?” I immediately knew that this was prompted by God and enthusiastically

accepted the invitation.

Upon my arrival in Hawaii, Helena explained that they usually have somewhere between eight and twelve inmates who regularly meet for their spiritual events. “How

many inmates are there?” I inquired.

“Oh, there are many more than that, but most of them don’t attend our religious services.”

THE PRAYER

That night I prayed, “Dear Father, I would very much like to speak to as many of these women as possible. I understand

that each one has the freedom of choice to attend this upcoming meeting or not. But please do all that you can to influence them in the direction of attending this meeting. And then, give me the

grace and power to reach their hearts with the good news of salvation through Your beautiful

Son, Jesus Christ. In His name I pray, amen.”

THE PROGRAM

The program we had planned would be very simple. First, some opening comments, a prayer, a

couple of music specials, and then the message for the evening. As we stepped into the concrete courtyard, walled in on every side with the night sky above us, I noticed two tents that had been erected, separated by about thirty feet. I would speak under one of the tents and the inmates would be seated under the other.

THE ATTENDANCE

As the time arrived for the meeting, just a few women were in attendance while others looked on with curiosity around the edges of the prison yard. Gradually a few more came and sat down, and then a few more until there were slightly over one hundred women, seated and ready to listen as the program began. In

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my heart I was rejoicing and praying earnestly that somehow I would be able to connect with them and communicate effectively in the short time allotted.

THE MUSIC

Many of the women seemed distracted. I saw whispering and could hear dull chatter. A heavy blanket of reservation was disturbed only by furtive glances of curiosity. But then, as the program got underway, God did something remarkable through three young girls, the pastor's daughters. With the innocent beauty of their youth and their melodious voices, they sang two songs. Both of these songs were perfect for the occasion and created an enthusiastic response from the inmates. Their hearts were now warm and open.

THE TESTIMONY

I stood up to speak and began with a brief personal testimony, and then launched into a presentation of two women whose hearts were touched by Jesus in a remarkable way—the woman at the well and the woman caught in the act of adultery.

THE ALTAR CALL

For about the first ten minutes, I felt no freedom but the distinct feeling that I was not connecting to their hearts. Some of them looked distracted or disinterested. My heart

began to sink as I prayed for God's intervention. As I continued preaching, I realized that the two-tent arrangement was not conducive to effective communication. They were so far away under the one tent while I stood under the other, shouting across the space between. It just seemed so impersonal. So I did something I had no idea was strictly forbidden by prison rules. I made an altar call, inviting anyone who wanted to arise and walk across the prison yard from their tent to come under mine. I appealed to their hearts to receive Jesus

my message, speaking from my heart to theirs and quoting the word of God to point them to the Savior. Eyes began to fill with tears all around me. In those faces I could see evidence of deep wounds and heavy loads of guilt. But I could also see wounded women who were longing to escape from the entangled web of the enemy into the arms of the Savior.

THE INVITATION

The Holy Spirit was clearly moving on the minds and hearts of these ladies. I have rarely felt

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Christ as their personal Savior and to allow Him complete access to their lives to work His miracles of transformation through His grace.

THE MOVEMENT

There was a nervous moment of hesitancy, and then a few got up and began moving forward. Others joined them until nearly all the women were surrounding me in the speaker's tent. As they stood there, I continued

such riveted, undivided attention as I spoke the word of God. I invited them to bow their heads with me and pray. As their mouthpiece, I spoke to God on their behalf, inviting Him into their hearts, and asking them to repent of their sins and receive the Savior. There was a hushed silence as our hearts ascended to God, which was only broken at the end of the prayer by enthusiastic *amens*. As I lifted my head and opened

my eyes, I could see that I was surrounded by sisters in Christ who had sincerely turned to the Savior in this hour of His revelation.

THE LAWBREAKING

As the crowd dispersed and the women began going back to their cells, I was informed that what I had done was against the law. All the inmates know that they are not allowed to move, especially as a group, into close proximity to non-inmates who are visitors in the prison. I was told that some of these women were in prison for violent crimes, some even for murder. When I invited them to arise and leave their designated area and join me in mine, the prison guards became nervous. It was their duty to immediately intervene and forbid the inmates to respond to my appeal. But for some reason, they just looked on and allowed the women to do what they had never been allowed to do before. The guards themselves were deeply moved by the effect of the message on the ladies. I pled ignorance, of course, which was a genuine plea. The rule had not been explained to me beforehand. And I'm glad it hadn't been because that ignorance on my part allowed me to make a heartfelt appeal that resulted in the salvation of nearly a hundred souls.



An Overlooked New Covenant Passage

There is much beneficial discussion of late regarding the new covenant. I have been stimulated and blessed by the insights emerging from serious Bible students. In addition to their renewed interest, a recent Sabbath School Quarterly was devoted to this important subject as well. What, exactly, does the Bible mean when it speaks of the new covenant? While it is a broad subject and involves far more than can be dealt with in a short article, I would like to call your attention to a powerful passage of Scripture that is rarely addressed. It reveals a vital aspect of the new covenant that ought to hold a prominent place in our understanding. Ezekiel quotes God Himself:

“As I passed by again, I saw that the time had come for you to fall in love. I covered your naked body with my coat and promised to love you. Yes, I made a marriage covenant with you, and you became mine;’ this is what the sovereign Lord says” (Ezekiel 16:8, TEV).

Clearly, the covenant God has in mind for us is a covenant of love, for in it the sovereign Lord has “promised to love” us, and He is hopeful that we will “fall in love” with Him in response. God’s promise of love to us is the firm foundation on which the covenant is based. Our love for Him is merely a responsive reflection of His love. Hence, even *our* love directed to Him is His achievement, not ours. And therein lies the secret power of the new covenant.

Under the over-arching promise of God’s love, and the igniting power it

contains, three main elements combine to compose the new covenant:

- 1) The promise of restored vision.
- 2) The promise of restored sensitivity.
- 3) The promise of restored moral power.

Regarding the first element, the new covenant promises to completely restore our knowledge and understanding of God’s true character, in contrast to Satan’s misrepresentations: “For this is the covenant . . . none of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for *all shall know Me*, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Hebrews 8:8-12, NKJV, emphasis supplied).

The word “know” in this passage refers to intimate, firsthand experience in God’s love. God’s purpose in the new covenant is that each one of us would know Him in this way, with such clarity that it would become unnecessary to admonish one another, saying, “Know the Lord.”

With regards to restored sensitivity, the new covenant promises that our hearts of stone will be made anew into hearts of flesh—that is to say, hearts that can feel. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26, NIV). Moffat’s translation says,

“I will take away your hard nature and give you a nature that can be touched.”

The longest journey you’ll ever

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make is from your head to your heart, from mere intellectual accent to passionate emotional commitment. I say it's a long journey because sin has so hardened our finer sensibilities, and so blinded us to God's true character of love, that we find full-throttled devotion to Him unnatural. Sin has blurred our perception of God's love, and blunted our ability to feel God's feelings and the feelings of others with sympathetic vibration. According to Jesus, "Blinded . . . eyes [minds]" and "hardened . . . hearts" go together (John 12:40). Paul teaches us that our hearts are "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). Sin deceives us into believing that God is an arbitrary, self-centered slave master. When the mind is blinded by this false picture, the heart becomes hardened in its feelings toward God. But the new covenant, by restoring our vision of God's character, simultaneously restores a soft and yielding heart that is sensitive and responsive to Him.

Concerning restored moral power, the new covenant promises to flood our lives with spiritual strength that is unnatural to our fallen natures: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Hebrews 10:16).

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. . . . I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27, NKJV).

The all-illusory obedience to God's holy law, which we have found so impossible to achieve, becomes a reality in the new covenant. When God gets into our hearts and minds by the revelation of His love, He operates in us as a causal power that enables us to "walk in," "keep," and "do" His law. As the apostle Paul says, when we "comprehend" and "know the love of Christ," it becomes an aggressive "power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:18-20).

All that is included in the new covenant is embraced in God's promise to love us, and in His invitation for us to fall in love with Him in response. The new covenant calls upon us to look, to behold, to see—not to do. And in looking, we are simply asked to believe the promise God has made in Christ rather than to make promises we are powerless to keep. *Then*, as we behold and believe, the needed changes in our lives that we could never achieve for ourselves will be brought to pass in the new heart God has created in us by His love.

by Ty Gibson

Events Schedule

- ◆ **February 20-21**
Moscow SDA Church, ID
Ty Gibson—☎(509)332-7676
- ◆ **February 27-28**
Dallas North Brazilian SDA Church, TX
Herb Montgomery—☎(972)234-1117
- ◆ **March 5-6**
Andrews University
Ty Gibson—☎(269)471-8454
- ◆ **March 18-28**
Peru Evangelism—The Quiet Hour
Ty Gibson—☎(800)242-2322
- ◆ **March 19–April 3**
Minden, LA Evangelism
Herb Montgomery—☎(318)371-9572
- ◆ **March 22-27**
SOULS, Orlando, FL
James & Risë Rafferty—☎(352)408-6044
- ◆ **April 17**
Spirit Lake SDA Church, ID
James Rafferty—☎(208)683-2998
- ◆ **April 23–May 1**
OCI Retreat, Fountainview Academy
Ty Gibson—☎(250)256-7184

No Health Nugget This Month

You will notice that this month's *Mission Update* is not attended by Risë Rafferty's *Health Nugget*. This is due to the fact that Risë has been working on a series of health tracts that will be designed for sharing. Look for the first in this series with next month's *Mission Update*.

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