

Free Inside
A Christian Prison Ministry
A Partner with Vision New England Prison Ministries
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Out of the starting gate.

Report on First Alpha Day - Gates C I. January 21/04.

My sense of nervous anticipation grew in the days leading up to yesterday. The chaplain knows the system, its complications, the inmates and therefore tried to keep my expectations about attendance realistic. So, I kept on asking myself questions.

- *'How many inmates will show up?'*
- *'The volunteer team has been anticipating the start as keenly as I have, will they be disappointed if the attendance is low?'*
- *'Would the inmates be interested enough to stay through the whole session?'*

So much planning, work, patience and prayer had gone into getting ready for yesterday.

A heart overflowing with praise and thanksgiving.

God wonderfully answered prayer, far and above my expectations, those of our volunteer team and the chaplain. The day before she had informed me that 22 had signed up for the morning session, and 34 for the afternoon one. "But" she said, "not all will likely show up." She was right, 20 showed in the morning and 30 in the afternoon.

Praise God with me for these 50 men, who sat through and participated in the entire session.

The video presentation.

This was very well received, the feedback was positive from the inmates. My only regret was the fact that the TV screen is too small for a group that size. The series is now available on DVD. I kept on thinking, if only I had a laptop and DVD projector, what a difference it would make. Please pray about this need.

The volunteer team.

These wonderful men and women did a great job. Our initial nervousness was quickly dispelled as we mingled and spoke to those who arrived early.

Small groups.

After the presentation we broke into groups, I had prepared a worksheet for everyone. The chaplain and I did not participate in a group, but were available to help if needed. The volunteers did so well that our help wasn't needed.

Report back.

The volunteers were clearly overjoyed and moved by the experience. They reported an interest and openness from the inmates that they had not expected. Before the final dismissal, the chaplain had us all stand in a circle and asked each of us to say just one thing that made us glad we were there. I wish I had the foresight to take a few notes because the responses from both inmates and volunteers were eye-opening and moving.

A steep learning curve for all of us.

We ate our bag lunch between sessions with the chaplain, and shared our impressions. Every one of us had learned so much in a short time. We learned something of the dehumanizing nature of the prison system, the deep hurt and pain in the lives of inmates, but also that at least in those who attended there is a real spiritual hunger. Last but not least, the fact that God is

there and is actively at work. A statement (not verbatim) by one of our volunteers captured beautifully the spirit of the day. "I thought I was coming to bring Jesus here, but I found Him here already."

Praise.

1. Praise and thank God for a good start.
2. Praise God for the good response from both inmates and volunteer team.

Prayer.

I have been in ministry long enough to know that the evil one will try and throw us 'a curve ball' somewhere along the way. Pray that we will recognize his attacks when they come and stand against him in the name and power of Jesus.

Pray for:

1. The inmates who came, that nothing will hinder them from coming back.
2. Next Wednesday's session on "Who is Jesus?"
3. For the spiritual protection of all of us involved, that we would go back prayerfully trusting in the Lord, relying on His grace and power and filled with His love.
4. For the provision of a DVD projection unit.

Do any of you have clean, unmarked copies of the Nicky Gumble booklet "Why Jesus?" Would you be willing to donate them for distribution to the inmates? If so please mail them to:

77 Kingsbury Lane,
Glastonbury,
CT. 06033.

Sincerely,

Peter.
For Christ and His Kingdom