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## Summer '07, Newsletter

### The last time they saw Jesus



*" . . . he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven." Luke 24: 50 - 54.*

About 30 years ago, my wife and I heard our friend, Pastor Graham Ingram preach on this text on Ascension Sunday. He pointed out that the last physical view the apostles had of Jesus as he was taken up and disappeared into the clouds was that of His hands raised in blessing over them.

### Joy and encouragement

Since then, I have often thought about this image and received fresh joy and encouragement especially in times of difficulty and discouragement. In my mind Jesus' blessing links to the great high priestly blessing of Aaron,

*"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." Num. 6: 24 - 26*

I have no doubt that Jesus used the words of this blessing as He as a part of His final benediction.

On Ascension Sunday, 2007, the reading of this passage reminded me again that our Lord Jesus, exalted in heaven, is still praying for us and blessing us.

*"Therefore, . . . we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, . . . one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Heb. 4: 14 - 16*

*"Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them." Heb. 7: 25*

*"Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died— was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who (then) shall separate us from the love of Christ?"Romans 8: 34 - 35*

The Ascension of Jesus has great theological and practical spiritual implications for us.

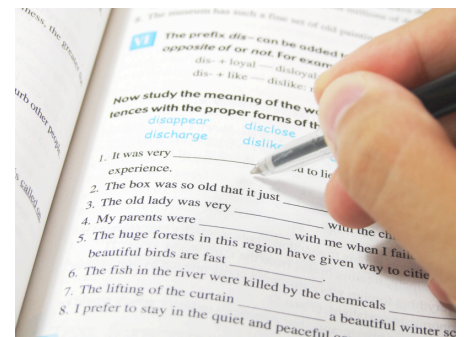
I pray that you too will be blessed and encouraged by knowing that Jesus is praying for you now and always.

I ask you to join your prayers with the prayers of Jesus for the

Church in prison, believers who have come to a living faith and are our brothers and sisters.

### Inmates answer some questions about their Alpha experience.

*"If it ain't broke don't fix it!"* was the simple reply an inmate gave to the question "What do you think we could do to make the course better?" He went on to say, *"I loved the course just the way it is."* This same man, in answer to "What is the major impact Alpha has made on your life?", wrote *"learning what God can do for me, a sinner ."* (His emphasis)



**To the question:** "What changes do you intend to make in your life because of what you learned on Alpha?" one man replied, *"Changing my whole life . . . actually I'm not changing it, I feel more like I'm starting it for the first time."* (His emphasis)

### *Inmate comments continued*

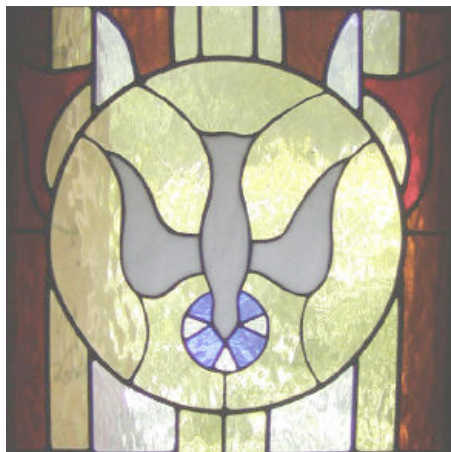
And another wrote: "I want to live as a Christian, to love my enemies and **stop looking for revenge**, I need to forgive and get on with being a Christian."

"What other comments do you have about the course?" One replied: "It's probably the turning point that saved my life when I had lost all hope." Someone else said: "I think it is grrreat! I love it, please keep doing it."

### **The Volunteers**

Although there wasn't a specific question regarding our volunteers there were many positive, unsolicited comments about them, such as; "I thank all the volunteers, they honestly care." and another says; "Like I said before, the volunteers are the greatest."

### **Retreat day on the Holy Spirit.**



The Catholic chaplain in this particular prison arranged for us to eat a meal in the chapel with the inmates on our retreat day on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

We organized some of the volunteers into four prayer stations in each corner of the chapel. The men were able to go and ask for personal prayer ministry at these stations. I think that almost everyone of the 30 + inmates were prayed for

during the day. The Holy Spirit did a very gracious work in the lives of these men. Two men I prayed for stand out in my mind. Both fitted the popular, stereotypical image of a prisoner, muscular and tattooed. (*By the way this stereotype is not really generally true*)

Anyway, God touched them deeply, both broke down and sobbed like babies. Inmates regard tears as a sign of weakness, and don't want others to know that they cry. Each sat with me for a few minutes to compose himself before returning to the group. (*I noticed that some of the women volunteers had tissues for those they were praying for. The guys I prayed for had to make do with toilet paper which I got from the bathroom.*)

### **Other news**

#### **Volunteer training workshop**

God graciously gave us a great volunteer training day on Saturday, August 4th, at First Baptist Church, Manchester CT. 13 folk participated, they came from as far away as Maine ( 3 folk), New Hampshire (1 person), Massachusetts (1 person) and 8 from Connecticut. Those from out of state all have opportunities to present Alpha in prisons near to them. In the 7 hours of the session we covered topics vital to prison ministry with Alpha, such as:-

*"Why Prison Ministry";  
"The Principles of Alpha"; "How to lead a small group"; "Prayer ministry"; "The importance of supporting the ministry of DOC Chaplains.*

**Are you interested in training for Alpha in prison?**

**Contact Free Inside at the address on the left.**

### **More on the retreat day on the Holy Spirit**

**Every participant** expressed deep appreciation for this special day, but the comment that stands out for me was made in reference to the meal we shared together



**"It was like the Lord's supper"**  
That is so New Testament, where eating a meal together was part of the Eucharist.

*"Lord Jesus Christ Thou wast poor and in misery, a captive and forsaken as I am. Thou knowest all man's distress . . ."*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*German Lutheran pastor, imprisoned by the Nazis, martyred in April 1945, just a couple of weeks before the end of WW2.*

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