

# Jubilee

PRISON MINISTRY

## Volunteer News



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### Jubilee Weekend Launches in El Paso and Plainview

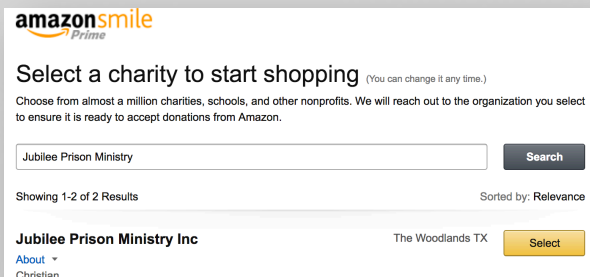
We are thankful to Our Lord for enabling us to hold the first-ever Jubilee Weekends at Sanchez State Jail in El Paso, TX and Formby State Jail in Plainview, TX. The weekends were a blessing to all who participated and we are grateful to the local volunteer teams and churches who have come together to bring the Gospel to these incarcerated men. We are especially grateful to Warden McDuffie (Formby) and Warden Parker (Sanchez) for their support and assistance. Formby and Sanchez each house over 1,000 male inmates with most of the offenders serving sentences of ten years or less on state felony convictions. We are looking forward to returning each month for the Jubilee Reunion program and returning in the Spring to hold Jubilee #2 at both units.



*Prayers at Formby State Jail during the recent Jubilee Weekend.*

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## New Reunion Talk Series Now Available Online

The new Jubilee reunion program is now available on the Jubilee web site. The first series, called *Decisions that Make a Life* is available in a version for both men's units and women's units. The talks, which are adapted from a series of sermons given by Pastor Rob Renfroe at The Woodlands United Methodist Church, build on the Jubilee program and discuss some of the challenging decisions we all face as we try to walk in a life of faith.



*Rainbow over Sanchez State Jail during the Jubilee Weekend.*

The new reunion program includes a program outline and the series of four talks, to be delivered by volunteers over a four month cycle. Each talk includes a participant handout with questions to help focus your prayer and share discussions. We have tested the program this summer at Lychner and it has met with positive reviews from both participants and volunteers. You can find the new program on the Jubilee volunteer portal. Click "Go" and select "Download Talks and Meditations."

## What Jubilee Meant To Me... Comments from Participating Inmates

- ◇ *"Jubilee Weekend was the most wonderful and blessed time for me. It has given me peace I've not had in a very long time and helped me to have the strength and courage I never knew I had because I know God is with me..."*
- ◇ *"Jubilee Weekend really changed my whole outlook on life... It had been such a long time since [I was] aware that anyone loved me at all. Through your prayers I have a new found hope."*
- ◇ *"I found Christ at Jubilee and experienced the Spirit of God for the first time in my life... It has transformed me and given my life a purpose!"*
- ◇ *"The weekend left me feeling complete. I love God in a way I never [thought] I could love anyone. The greatest part is that I know God loves me even more..."*
- ◇ *"Having Jesus in my life will, and is, making me a better man, a better husband, and a better father. Thank you Jubilee."*
- ◇ *"...[T]his experience helped me to understand that He is a loving, faithful, and merciful God. He is real. And it amazes me to find love somewhere I never imagined it coming from. Thank you [Jubilee volunteers] for loving me."*

## Devotional Meditation: Forgiving Others Is Not Optional

*Adapted from the Jubilee Program Manual ([Matthew 18:21-35](#), NIV)*

Many of Jesus' parables are uplifting, encouraging, and comforting. We think of beloved stories like the prodigal son, the lost sheep, and so many others that speak to God's forgiveness. There were times, however, when Jesus told parables like this one, with a sharper edge and a dire warning. (As in most of Jesus' parables, the King or Master in the story represents God the Father.)

*"...The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'"*

The King was understandably furious that the servant has squandered His money. The servant did not try to make excuses. Instead, he took responsibility, admitted his crime, and asked for time to make restitution. Jesus continues: *"The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go."* The King cancelled the debt altogether! Just as God does with our sins, He wiped the slate clean.

We may be tempted to stop reading here, say "praise God," and be comforted. Unfortunately that is *not* the end of the story. *"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.' But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt."* This man quickly forgot about the generosity and mercy he was shown by the King. When it came to his fellow servants the man was demanding and unforgiving.

*"When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. 'YOU WICKED SERVANT,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed."*

The same King who was ready to completely cancel the multi-million-dollar debt of his servant, got so angry when the servant refused to forgive the debts of others that He handed him over to be tortured! And just to ensure we did not misinterpret the message of this parable, after Jesus finished the story, He looked at the people gathered around and said: *"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."*

Forgiving others is not optional. It is our non-negotiable obligation as followers of Jesus. Our Lord is quite clear on the matter: should we decide not to forgive others, we cannot expect God to forgive us.

Jesus makes this point on several occasions. In another example, right after teaching the Lord's Prayer Jesus says, *"If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."* (Matt 6:14-15) It is the only part of the prayer where He gives us some additional instructions. There is no room for misinterpretation. Forgiving others is not always easy but it is never optional.

We pray that Our Lord will grant you the faith, the peace, and the courage to forgive those who have sinned against you.