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## **A Weekend of Fellowship, Faith, and Unexpected Grace**

By Buck Jorgenson, Saints missionary-athlete

Last weekend, while visiting the Federal Correctional Complex at Oakdale (LA), our Federal Team had a unique opportunity; to share a meal on Saturday with the inmate team we'd be playing against on Sunday. This unexpected time wasn't just about food - it was about fellowship and reflecting the love of Christ in an informal setting. We spent hours connecting, laughing, and sharing stories. Many of the prisoners opened up about their faith, and I was deeply moved to learn that their team included a strong group of committed, Bible-believing Christians.

The men I was sitting with shared testimonies of over 20 confirmed miraculous healings. When we returned on Sunday, I met a few of those men, including a Jewish Christian who had been healed of thyroid cancer. His story was incredible; the doctors only discovered he was cancer-free after surgery, and he had the scar to prove it.

But this weekend took a personal turn for me. After leaving the facility on Saturday, I received news that my father's health had declined significantly. While I had been preparing for this moment, having spent meaningful time with him in recent weeks, the reality of his condition weighed heavily on my heart.

Sunday morning, while warming up before the game and chatting with one of the inmates named Dallas, I shared what was going on with my dad. Without hesitation, Dallas called over a few other inmates and together they prayed over me.

Let me pause here: I've ministered to many inmates over the years. I've prayed with them, encouraged them, and walked alongside them in faith. But this was different. This time, they ministered to me. These men - incarcerated, yet full of the Spirit - laid hands on me and

prayed for my father, for my family, and for me to glorify God through this trial.

It was real. It was raw. It was Holy Spirit-led.

For me, this trip was unlike any other. Every visit means something, but this one was unforgettable. The love, the prayers, and the presence of God through these men touched me deeply. I've been sharing this story with everyone I can. It's a testament to how God moves in unexpected places and through unexpected people.

## **Moments That Matter**

By Bob Hipp, a guest with the NE softball team

During a recent visit to Ft. Dix Federal Correctional Institution, I observed two moments that powerfully illustrate the impact of the Saints Prison Ministry.

The first occurred early in the day as the team played its first game. An inmate approached me with a handshake, chest bump, and hug. He shared that he had been incarcerated since 2018 and was intentionally staying out of trouble, motivated by the hope of one day reuniting with his wife and children. His sincerity was striking - a quiet but profound reminder of the resilience that hope and family can inspire.

The second moment was even more impactful for me. Following the game and Gospel presentation, an inmate came down from the stands and approached me. He expressed how much he looks forward to the Saints' team visits, saying they provide him with hope and spiritual guidance, helping him stay focused and grounded amid prison life. I felt God's presence all day but, in that moment, I was filled with joy, knowing that our time there made a real difference in his life.

These moments exemplify why the Saints Prison Ministry continues its mission - and I was grateful to be part of that experience.

## Should We Be Amazed?

By Frank Zeidler Jr., Executive Director

The response to our recent call for funds to repair the SPM van in the northeast left me speechless. I have never experienced anything that was so obviously a work of God and, trust me when I tell you, I have seen God work in my Saints Prison Ministry career. Starting with my personal journey into full-time ministry, carrying through my time as a missionary-athlete, and now in my 13th year as Executive Director, God has shown Himself more times than I can recall.

But this was different - this response was an awe-inspiring validation of the path our leadership chose to get that vehicle back on the road. But this article isn't about the van - this article is about the reaction of Christians to the news. As many times as I have recounted the chain of events is the same number of times that I have heard some form of the phrase "That's amazing!"

Those reactions started my wheels turning. I am a man that loves parsing the English language - I think effectively, but others might tell you it is to a fault. I began thinking about being amazed and it led me to this question: why are we still amazed at what God can do?

Before you read too much into that, I am not suggesting that we take God's blessings for granted. But when does the divine providence of the One who hung the moon and stars, who created all life as we know it, stop being amazing and start becoming anticipated.

I started trying to answer that question by defining the word. Merriam-Webster's definition is short but clear: feeling or showing great surprise or wonder. Cambridge Dictionary's definition is even more succinct: extremely surprised. Many other sources were consistent in using

the word surprised in the definition. After a few minutes of searching, I was even more concerned with what has become a typical reaction of fellow believers. In my mind, the question crystallized:

If Jesus told us "Ask and it shall be given", why are we extremely surprised when He is true to His Word?

I like to joke, and I often use people's words - along with some verbal misdirection - to set them up for a punch-line. I have a friend who revels in knowing me well enough that it is akin to having "inside information"; while others are laughing at the trap I have sprung, this friend just gives me a wink and says, "I saw that coming!"

Is it blasphemous to feel that way about God's provision for us when our human efforts fall short? If we "turn it over to God," as every preacher in America has told us to do repeatedly, is it okay to feel like my friend who saw it coming when He answers, or should we really be extremely surprised each and every time?

I don't have the definitive answer, nor would I presume to be able to answer on behalf of every person who reads this article. But, when discussing the van repair appeal, I can speak on behalf of our Board of Trustees because the path chosen was a group decision. When posed with the proposed email approach, most if not all of the responses were the same; "yes, and I can't wait to see how He answers this need." Never a doubt is not hyperbole in this case...each member of our Board fully expected that God would honor this request to His glory and to continue the growth of His Kingdom.

I could almost envision 11 Board members sitting around the table, waiting to wink at each other and say, "I saw that coming!"

## Central Louisiana Crusade

Our Central Louisiana Crusade team played five games that were attended by over 850 inmates. There were 72 professions of faith!





# FROM THE INSIDE OUT

*Correspondence from behind the walls*

I want to let you know how much I appreciate your love and dedication to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For the last 10 years (probably more), you brothers have been consistent in sending me a birthday card which always arrives before or on my birthday. Despite the fact that I have family who take care of me, your card brings joy to my heart and soul. It reminds me of God's love and that I belong to His family of believers and that I'm never alone. If your birthday card brings me that much joy, imagine what it does for those brothers that do not have any family to support them. I say this to encourage you and never allow the enemy of our souls to convince you that your endeavors for Jesus are ineffective or waste of time. Continue to serve the Lord and in due time you will reap a harvest. Your ministry is a constant reminder of what God's love can do for those that are wholly committed to doing His will. You brothers are truly "Saints." I continue to pray for your ministry just as your ministry continues to pray for me.

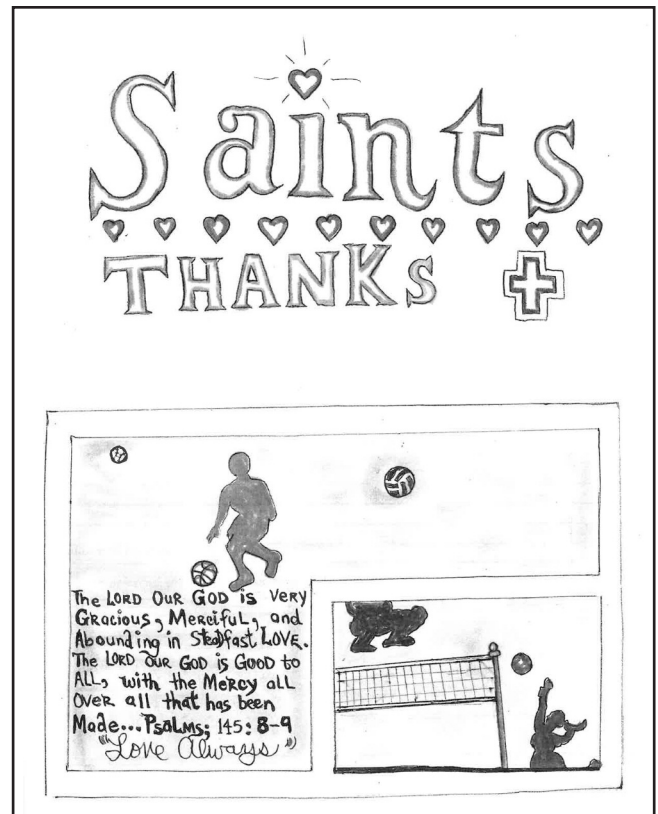
- Robert C., Five Points CF, NY

Thank you for writing me back and sending the birthday card. It was an honor to play against this program. I had so much fun and will relive that moment anytime. I remember when we were told that our team will be one of the teams playing ya'll. I was more than excited. I believe I told all my family members that we were playing ya'll. I was shocked at the game. We had the losing record but in the beginning all I kept telling my teammates is that I wanted to play the church people. It was great to play against ya'll It was the most fun I've had since being in prison. Thank you guys a lot.

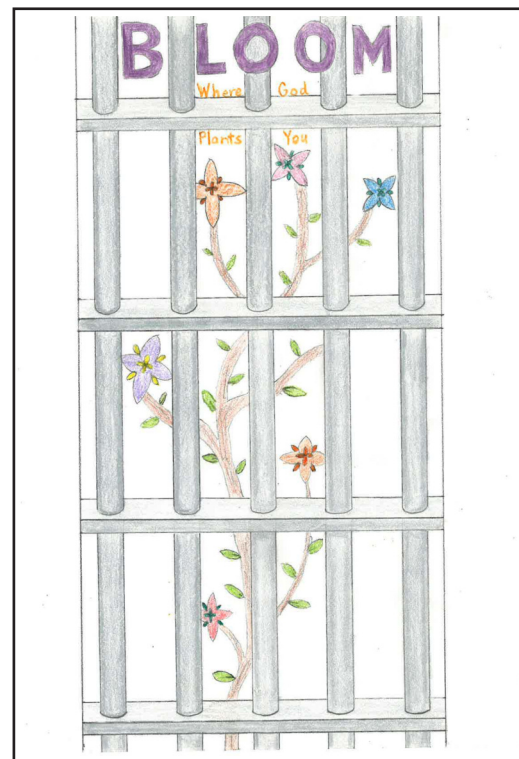
- John W. Central CC, IL

I'm so blessed to have real men that I could call my friends. I come in here and everyone I thought was my friend wasn't. They walked away from me like they were leaving me. In the beginning, it hurt me but God came into my life and showed me what a real friend looks like. I was sitting in my cell telling my cell buddy that you all write me every birthday and I never write back. I just had to write you all back to say thank you for never forgetting me and showing me the love of God. Most of the time in places like this its more hatred than love. The letters on my birthday make me feel and know that I'm not forgotten. I pray that God continues to bless your ministry and keep growing the love that you all have. I love the Lord and will always hold on to Him no matter what I go through. I'm on my way home soon and I just pray that the Lord protects me, provides for me and leads me in the way He wants me to go. I want to thank you all again and ask the you keep me and my brothers in here in your prayers. Also pray for my family on the outside. God bless you and may the Lord keep using you all in a way that keeps changing lives.

- Robert H., RCI Hagerstown, MD



Milton M.



Norman A.



## NE Golf ournament Photos



## SE Golf Tournament Photos

