



Change: Silent and Sudden

will they ever change?

It's been said that "nobody likes change." Really, though, change is one of the deepest desires of our hearts - change in our circumstances, in the world around us and, especially as we gather with family during this Holy season, we want to see change in those who've been in our prayers for years!

While we wait for answers, it helps to remember that sometimes the most incredibly significant, life-changing events can't initially be seen or understood - especially when they involve the human heart. That's something volunteer Deborah Lefebvre knows a lot about. She's been helping hearts heal and watching lives change for a long time.

getting unstuck

For more than 10 years, Deborah has been involved with Celebrate Recovery (CR), first at Carole Young and now at the Henley Unit. CR is a 12-step, faith-based program that helps people recover their lives by uncovering and acknowledging their deeply rooted problems. However they got stuck on the wrong path of life, CR can help them get back on track.

Anywhere from 12 to 60 inmates sign up for the 16 weekly CR meetings that always begin with songs of praise and worship. They all love the music, but getting them to participate in other ways can sometimes be challenging. After the group reviews their study material, they split into smaller groups where the women get a chance to share what's on their hearts. Lacking confidence and fearing what others might think, some of them are reluctant to join in. The conversations can get deep, and while there's not a lot of drama, there are lots of tears.

As time goes on, the inmates who are growing in the Word begin talking freely about their love for the Lord. Those who've changed want to see even more change in themselves, and they're making prayer and study their top priorities. They're more interested in God's will than in what they want to do when they return to the free world.

it's hard to explain

Most of the inmates who come to CR classes are there because they want to change. Their biggest obstacle is forgiveness - from those they've hurt and from themselves. The most frustrating aspect for team leaders is wanting to see change that doesn't happen; there are always a few ladies who aren't yet willing.

While Deborah celebrates the observable differences in many of the inmates, she understands that change can happen even when it's not yet visible. Deborah says, "As for real life changes, only God can see those." And she adds this thought:

It's hard to explain change. In the beginning, it's mostly silent.

Silent. And still. And small. Our God does things in secret that we one day see "suddenly." We're about to celebrate one such event, when a baby's form was knit together in secret in the womb of a yielded Mary. Then, suddenly, at the appointed time, a Son was born, and a holy, world-changing shift took place.

great expectations

God can use the most unimaginably creative ways to bring about dramatic change. We don't judge by what we hear or see because the Spirit works in silence on things unseen until, at last, they appear. Meanwhile, we persevere - faithfully praying, obeying, and anticipating as we trust Him through the silence. We can have peace and a calm, quiet spirit when we trust the Desire of all nations with the desires in our heart.

*Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee. - Charles Wesley*



Volunteer Deborah Lefebvre (far right, yellow shirt) with Celebrate Recovery Graduates at Carole Young.

help wanted

Deborah wasn't looking for a way to minister in prisons when she found one. "I first went just to help someone else get started where they thought they were to serve, and I kept going. I feel a great blessing every time I facilitate the classes. I am called to teach, and if God uses me to teach in prisons, that is where I will serve."



Volunteers Lisa Rizo & Tara Robertson with Kaye Trickett

Another volunteer, Lisa Rizo, is an inspiration to the ladies at Carole Young and Henley. Since she herself was incarcerated several times for addiction, she knows the problems inmates face both inside and outside the prison. Now, as a CR leader, she goes back inside the walls to give the ladies what God has given her - love and compassion, and Truth that never fails.

We need more Celebrate Recovery leaders. Maybe God wants to use you. To learn more about volunteering, please contact Vicki at volunteer@charmprisonministry.org.

Your donation enables C.H.A.R.M. to facilitate hundreds of ministry engagements for thousands of inmates. Last year, more than 480 volunteers joined us as we presented the gospel of Jesus Christ to over 8,000 men and women inside the walls. Our hope is to expand into more units each year.

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Christ's Hope and Reconciliation Ministry (C.H.A.R.M.) ministers to incarcerated men and women and their families. Our mission is to share the hope found only in Jesus Christ and to see souls reconciled to God. As the lives of individuals are transformed, so are their relationships with their families, local church, and communities.

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