



## TREASURES IN DARKNESS

### might as well go

A C.H.A.R.M. volunteer recently described her situation this way: "The enemy has attacked my intimacy with God: I can't sit still when reading the Bible, and I haven't been able to hear His voice clearly. I feel stuck in a vacuum of silence." While she was in that state of mind and spirit, she had an opportunity to attend one of our ministry events. She admitted, "I felt empty. I honestly went simply because my calendar was open."

### two of the chosen

We went through five heavy, locked prison gates. Once inside, a beautiful woman befriended me right from the start. She had been in prison for 18 years. And had 13 more to go. Yet, her eyes danced with light. She and I worked alongside each other, preparing care packages to hand out to the other inmates. As we sorted oranges and organized shampoo bottles, we talked.

We were about the same age, and I asked her every question imaginable. When I asked if she had kids, her head went down and she mumbled quickly, "They're dead."

During our short time together, we shared our love for Jesus Christ. Her testimonies increased my faith and led me to share my testimonies. At one point, she said with great excitement, "Will you wait here for me? I want to get my Bible and read you something." I would have waited for her all night.

Returning to my side, she read a passage with more passion than I have ever heard it read. She had discovered it for the first time that very week.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you were once not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10).

When she put her Bible down, we both had tears in our eyes. The Holy Spirit was "thick" and alive and vibrant between us. We loved the same Jesus. We unpacked that scripture the rest of the day.

### how can this be?

Towards the end of the event, we all gathered to worship together - side by side, our arms lifted in praise, our voices one. When the service was over, I returned to my seat and my friend asked if she could pray over me. I went to my knees.

She and I marveled that God had crossed our paths. Then we hugged goodbye. She went through to her cell, and I headed back to my world - a world that had been totally transformed.

Driving home, I heard the scripture she had shared echoing loudly in my mind. God had used this woman, imprisoned for life, to minister to me - to show me what gratitude is, to show me His fire, the fire that burns in whomever He wants it to burn.

Suddenly, I felt the Holy Spirit prompt me to pull over and google her name. Article after article about her crime appeared. I read them with utter disbelief.

She had committed a crime of double murder. *She had murdered her own children.*

I sat there...stunned, horrified...sobbing. I could not believe that this was the same woman.

### dazzling treasure

After a while, thoughts of my own motherhood began coming to mind, bringing with them deep regret. And then rising from my soul came my own confession: I too have "murdered" my children - with the yelling of my words and looks that kill and hands in anger.

That was the moment the unimaginable grace of God exploded in my mind. The epitome of a perfect example, my friend had done nothing to earn the grace of God. She had confessed sins unthinkable, surrendered her life, and fallen in love with Jesus. And Jesus had made her white as snow.

The state of Texas had wanted to give her the death penalty, but because of one small loophole, she was given life in prison instead. And there she had gained eternal life, a life now radically changed by salvation: You were once not my people, conducting all deeds of darkness...but now you are my people, with blazing light upon your eyes.

That day with my friend in prison, God gave me a miracle - new eyes and new sight and a humble heart. Now, with childlike awe, I am beholding the Father's goodness *everywhere*, like surprises in a treasure hunt.

I will give you the treasures of darkness  
and hidden wealth of secret places,  
So that you may know that it is I, The LORD,  
the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.  
-Isaiah 45:3

### still the light shines

The inmate in this story had only recently been moved to this prison, a medical facility. She has been diagnosed with cancer. Even so, the light of her Lord shines brightly through her. Our volunteer has visited her again and gave us an update: "She has additional health problems, but she said she is 'patiently enduring' towards the cross. And I walk with her there."

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.

STAY CONNECTED



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