

Keeping in Touch

Southwest College of Biblical Studies

Bruce & Liz Leary – September 2005



A New Challenge

Several months ago we lost our prison clearances due to a mistake that I (Bruce) made while taking pictures inside the prison. I have felt deeply grieved about this. As of today, we have been cleared to come in as regular volunteers.

The Good in all of this

The time away from the prison did give me more time to grade courses & create new ones, but how we missed the men. Our daughter's pregnancy was considered an "at risk" pregnancy, so Liz & I spent a lot of time at her house taking care of her & our two-year-old grandson, Caleb. During that period, I installed an irrigation system in their back yard, & then planted grass, plants, and a garden. Then, I would stagger home to grade courses & study. James Aaron, "Jamey," was born healthy and whole. We all rejoiced at the miracle.

I also had the privilege of flying back to West Virginia to help my son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter move to a new town so that my son could continue his medical school requirements. Liz flew back a month later to visit them & to have a much-needed vacation.

I have desperately missed "my prison boys", **but it has been an honor to have some quality time with our children.** My younger son called several times during that period to share the victories & the challenges of his life. He has been a great encouragement to us.

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“Expand our Ministry, Lord!”

Liz and I had been praying for God to expand our borders of ministry & our effectiveness. We had no idea what He might be planning.

While attending the annual conference of our mission, Missionary Gospel Ellowship in Turlock, CA, there arose a rather urgent



administrative need in the mission headquarters. Liz & I agreed to stay and help out. I was later approached by the director of the mission to consider becoming the Director of Operations. I have agreed to serve in that capacity until the end of the year, and then evaluate things. That means that we will relocate at least temporarily to Turlock, CA. So, we are on loan from the Bible college to the MGF office. However, we will continue servicing our inmate students from there out of our new Central California Field Office.



Some Open-Door Encouragements

We experienced car trouble all July and kept our personal mechanic quite busy fixing first one thing and then another with our car. We traveled to Turlock thinking everything was okay. However, while in Turlock, the alternator was not charging the battery so we did not leave for home right away. While I was stalling, trying to figure out what to do about the car, we were asked to stay & help the mission. We did get the **car fixed** at a car-repair place on the same day we were told they had no time for us until the next day. Liz drove the car home to Pine Valley while I stayed in Turlock, and discovered even yet other repairs that were necessary. Our at-home mechanic thought we needed a car that would be more trust-worthy for long trips.

When Liz got home to Pine Valley, she discovered a **check in the mail** that would cover the cost of a good used car! Praise God! We bought a 2004 Ford Taurus.

The salesman & the sales manager both loved the Lord and were interested in prison ministry. They lowered the price of the car over \$2000.





The director of the mission offered us **housing** right there in the mission headquarters. This is a major provision from the Lord because rent & house prices are extremely high in the Turlock area. We have two rooms upstairs plus a bathroom, not to mention kitchen & laundry privileges. Thank you, Lord, for this wonderful place to stay for the present. Within minutes of making our need known, a home was found for our beautiful 3 year old **Rottweiler**, Kayla. A young family with a toddler and a newborn baby, from our Pine Valley church, adopted her. Kayla was raised with a baby, so having the young ones is especially good for her! The family had just finished fencing in an acre, so Kayla will have lots of room to run! And, after praying for several years, God blessed us with two awesome new computers, built just for our needs! Wow! All these answers to prayer showered on us just in time for our new chapter in ministry.

We have attended 4 or 5 churches in the area during our visits to Turlock. This time, we met a pastor at an MGF prayer meeting one Wednesday morning. He came & got us later in the day, took us on a tour of his **church**, took us out to dinner, and just loved us. Needless to say, we have felt drawn to his congregation. This is a real answer to prayer since we were concerned about finding a place to worship & to serve that was not too big & impersonal. We think we may have found it.



There are at least **13 prisons** within 140 miles of our new location in Turlock. We have a number of students housed in some of these prisons. We would like to offer 2-day seminars in these prisons, and to minister to the chaplains in any way possible. Due to the unstable atmosphere in the prison yards scattered across the state, we will temporarily discontinue any attempts to conduct on-site college classes. Ten-week courses have taken as much as 6 months to complete. Unfortunately, this has become all too common. We will, instead, continue to offer college courses through the mail and do what we can to keep our students encouraged and hopeful.





Pray for us. This is a major change in our lives. We must leave family members behind; we must leave our home behind. We must say goodbye to a church we helped start 28 years ago. We will live in a town that is new to us (Turlock, California). We will assume responsibilities that we have not had before. Some of the duties in the mission headquarters will be a stretch of my abilities, and of my background. Please continue to stand with us in prayer. We need permanent housing at some point in the future. We also need a location for the Bible college field office where we can receive, grade, and send out college materials for our students.

THE BOTTOM LINE

We asked God to expand our ministry – and He has. Not only do we have the privilege of servicing the academic needs of prison inmates scattered all over California, but we also have been asked to provide administrative support for over 100 missionaries serving all over North America.

My normal reaction to an opportunity like this would be to back away & consider all the reasons why this could never happen. Thank the Lord, it didn't happen that way this time. Instead, the Lord gave me a peace & a determination to pursue this added ministry. I have not felt this kind of contentment & excitement for many years. Liz & I are both willing & excited as we anticipate wonderful new opportunities to share Christ's love with others.

It blows my mind that in the process of accepting this administrative position for a period of time, it has brought us to within driving distance of over 13 prisons. What comes next we are not totally sure. One thing we know – this is the right thing for us to do right now.

If ever we needed prayer support, we need it now. If ever we needed your financial help, we need it now. There are higher gasoline costs,

future housing costs, and future office expenses. **We covet your prayers and ask that you join us in this new adventure.**

Liz's Hearing with the CA State Personnel Board **will be October 26 & 27 @ 10 AM.** Mark your calendars and pray for her. She will be cross-examined from 10 until about 5. Pray for clarity of mind and peace as she stands up to the cross examination. Last time in court, she had a horrible headache. She is asking for her name to be cleared, for re-instatement to her position and for back pay. Her prayer continues to be for God's perfect will in this whole long fiasco. There are several ministry opportunities for Liz in the Turlock area, which may possibly allow supervised hours towards her clinical license. We both ask for your prayers in the logistics of all these matters.

We are still in ministry because of your faithfulness in giving financially and by your standing with us in intercessory prayer. We cannot do this "battle-front" ministry without you! God has used each of you to bless our lives and the lives of our prison Bible College students. These men have told us we are God's living object lessons. They watch to see if our faith is real and if we still love and care about them. Through your gifts of prayer and financial support, they have seen God work in our lives.

God is the God of second (and more) chances. Our students learn this truth in their studies. We have been blessed to see the Holy Spirit work in our lives and in our students' lives. Even family members write or phone to say they have seen positive changes in their loved ones' lives. Our passion is building God's Word into the lives of these men. We are not stopping our prison ministry, instead, we are expanding our prison ministry by allowing God to broaden our way of thinking about how we can best keep a vital prison ministry relevant to changing times. We are thinking "outside the box." We will keep you posted!

In Christ's Service,

Bruce & Liz Leary

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