

BIBLE COLLEGE UPDATE

BRIEF HISTORY

Southwest College of Biblical Studies is still offering Bible & Theology courses at R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego. We started in the summer of 1990 with the name Southern California Bible College. Upon recommendation of the previous administration and with the sponsorship of Lincoln Acres Community Church the prison education program underwent a restructuring and name change under the direction of Bruce Leary.

COURSES OFFERED

During our nine-year tenure we have taught every book of the Bible, several more than once. The current course being taught is Old Testament History Books 2 (1 Kings - Esther). How humbling it has been to realize the actions of the kings of Israel & Judah are no different than the prideful, self-centered behavior we exhibit in our daily lives. God was faithful; the children of Israel were not. The previous course taught was Bible Study Methods in Philippians. The men were taught 16 study methods to use in digging the truths out of the book. It has been a pleasure to watch these prison inmates share their discoveries with the class.

STUDENT RESULTS

Many of our past and current students are using their Bible skills in service for the Lord. Some of the prisons do not have active chapel programs, or lack opportunity for fellowship. One student transferred to a level II prison. He grieved over the lack of Christian fellowship. He began witnessing, led a number of men to the Lord and started a daily prayer and Bible study in his dorm's day room. It is reported there is standing room only! Pray for Donald! Some of the men at Donovan are involved in leadership roles in their chapel programs. We count it a privilege to teach the Bible study skills needed for the men to lead others. Our students do make a difference in the spiritual climate inside the prisons.

OTHER PRISONS

Two other prison chaplains have asked us to come and offer courses to their inmates. One is Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe, CA; the other is the CTF (California Youth Authority) in Chino, CA. What a privilege it will be to teach Bible college courses at these two locations. Studying God's Word changes lives. Hopefully, additional funds will be available to make this new opportunity possible.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

When one of our inmate students transfers to another prison, we probably will not always be able to offer a course at the prison where he went. So, we are in the process of developing & writing these same courses to be used in a "through-the-mail" format. We currently have two seasoned students taking courses this way; they are in prisons up north. We have received several requests to take classes through the mail. We will take on more students as the time and funds become available.

STUDENT TESTIMONIES

It has been an absolute shock to discover an exceptional college curriculum here at the prison. Initially, I expected a mere blase' Bible course, but Southwest College of Biblical Studies provides academic studies comparable with any community college or other Bible college. My congratulations to the entire staff, and may the Lord bless you as you continue. (R.C.)

When I started taking classes, I did it solely to gain units & please my family. I gratefully found that not only have I learned how to study the Bible, but the classes are changing my life; I am a wiser man in my daily life; I am more concerned about "doing" rather than just "knowing". (Stephen)

After taking these courses I am more equipped to present the Word of God; for this I am forever thankful. When I read a New Testament epistle, I now concern myself with such things as who wrote the letter, who received the letter, and why was the letter written. I can hardly wait to study a Bible book now. (Anonymous)

A COLLEGE COURSE EXAMPLE

In the course Bible Study Methods in Philemon, one of the methods is the "Biographical" method. The students are to pick out all the people in the book, select one, and look up all verses in the N.T. about that character. As a class we picked John Mark. The verses indicated that this young man had a Christian mother, his family hosted church in their home, he met Paul & Barnabus and subsequently accompanied them on a missionary journey, but that Mark deserted them & returned home. After that Paul did not want Mark on any missionary endeavors. The men in the prison feel like failures & that no one else wants them. Can you imagine their joy and relief when they read that Barnabus wanted Mark to go with him? Paul even gave his blessing to Mark's future ministry (Colossians 4:10). Mark served with Paul & Peter. In Paul's last epistle he longed to see Mark (2 Tim 4:11). A second chance is all any of us want. Our students gain hope and strength from studies such as this.