

**Southwest College of Biblical Studies
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Bruce Leary, Director

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Dear Friends,

I guess some may consider me to be an unusual college teacher. Seldom does a class session go by that I don't shed tears in front of the men. The Lord so moves us as we minister & teach these brothers behind prison fences.

I was teaching Bible Study Methods in Colossians last week; we were doing a "Biographical" study on Epaphras. He served time with Paul; he served as a courier between Paul & the Colossians church; he taught the believers; he showed concern for their growth; he prayed fervently for the believers; he was excited to serve the Lord & the people; Paul had great confidence in him.

In my heart I told the Lord how much I wanted these qualities in my daily service. Around the classroom men spoke up and echoed their desire to be a man after God's heart; I felt the tears again. I thanked the Lord out loud for having the privilege to experience that moment with them. Right there in that prison our lives were all changing together. Isn't that what studying God's Word is for?

The next night we were conducting an "Attitudes" class as part of a leadership program. We had talked about failure & past dysfunction. One of the students shared how he had been conceived due to a rape & that no one wanted him; he was told repeatedly that he was no good & would amount to nothing. I felt the tears again. He looked at me & thanked Liz and I for creating a "safe" place to share the wounds of the heart. There was silence in the room.

Teaching Prison Inmates How to Study the Bible

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It was the perfect moment for what we did next. I passed out a poster for each student: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans of welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11).

Thank you, Lord, for allowing us to enter the private lives of these men – to talk about past failure, daily faithfulness & pending success. Thank you for opening the doors in the prison so that we can teach the mighty truths of God's word so as to build character & integrity into men long thought hopeless & worthless. We love them; God loves them; they love us. To feel the hug of a man converted from the Muslim faith to the light of the glorious Gospel & to hear him whisper "I love you". Well....I think tears will sum it up.

We get to do this every week. Would you pray for us. We need protection from the "evil one"; we need additional funds to operate this college & to support our family; we need "a calm" to hover over the prison so that God's word can be taught without opposition.

Also, pray as we are asked to take these courses to other prisons. We need funds for the additional travel & expenses, time to properly prepare course materials, and wisdom to follow God's leading.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYER SUPPORT & FOR YOUR GIVING. I am very encouraged. Because of your teamwork with us, prison inmates are doing the very thing the devil doesn't want – they are studying the Bible in depth & their lives are being affected.

Cordially,

Bruce Leary

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