

## SECTION B PRISONS AND PRISONERS

- i. **Personal Stories**
- ii. **Bible Stories**

### i. **Personal Stories**

#### a) **See the Social Justice Statements:**

I was in prison and you visited me

<http://www.ncca.org.au/files/sjs-2011-screenfile1.pdf>

Building Bridges, Not Walls, Prisons and the justice system

<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/CONTENT/PDF/Social%20Justice%20Statement%202011-2012.pdf>

#### b) **Incubator for a lifetime of crime, violence and prison...**

More children than ever before are being removed from their families and placed into state care around Australia. They are victims of abuse, neglect and often the progeny of broken and drug-addicted parents.

But new research shown to Lateline reveals the very system that's supposed to protect these damaged children is tragically failing many of them, serving as an incubator for a lifetime of crime, violence and prison.

In some cases, the failures are so profound that the children pay with their lives.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-05-30/child-protection-is-failing-children-report/4043130>

#### c) **Interview with Christopher Binse, former Goulburn Gaol Inmate**

CHRISTOPHER BINSE, FORMER INMATE: A lot of people don't realise and understand when you're in gaol... it's a different life. It's a different world. What... These rules of society don't apply in there. Really it's a dog-eat-dog. It's a jungle, seriously it is.

CHRIS MASTERS: But in the last quarter of a century in particular, efforts have been made to escape the legacy of a prison's history described by one royal commissioner as "brutal, savage and sometimes sadistic". Few outsiders have seen more than Tony Vinson, who first saw the inside of a gaol as a NSW parole officer in the 1950s. Twenty years on, as Chairman of NSW Corrective Services, then Dr Vinson struggled with sometimes violent criminals and hostile staff as well as an unsympathetic public to change a seemingly intractable system.

PROFESSOR TONY VINSON, SYDNEY UNIVERSITY: Who wants to build a career... based on other people's suffering? Who wants to derive any kind of satisfaction from incarcerating other people? The only ambition you should have is to contest those deep-seated biases and prejudices which exist in the community. And which I found to be unmatched by the people I was dealing with.

For more... <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2005/s1499699.htm>

### **d) A Chaplain's Story**

Most Fridays I will be at a local prison where I meet with a range of men, from a variety of backgrounds with an array of stories.

Mostly I just listen. But invariably I leave there enriched for the experience and better informed about the world in which we live.

These men often share some discerning insights, as was the case recently.

This particular person said to me, "A mistake is not just a mistake. It's a decision we have to live with."

As he reflected further on his own life his follow up comment was, "Now I'm just grateful for every heart beat..."

May be there's some wisdom in these couple of nuggets. I share respectfully...

*Craig Bossie*

### **e) A Story from Prison - extracts from Reflections on Prison by XX**

#### **First Night in Prison**

Following sentencing I was taken to the holding cell where my belt and shoelaces were removed. An hour later I was transported to ... Prison in a van especially equipped to transport prisoners. I had a compartment to myself and through gaps in the window, could see the route we took ....

On arrival at ... I was taken to the processing centre, where I was photographed stripped naked and forced to squat over a mirror. My clothing was bagged up and placed into a property store. I was given a pair of black overall to put on and a pair of running shoes. Following a short period in a holding cell I was taken to a supervisor's office to complete admission with the prison nurse. ... I was transported a short distance by a secure van to ... I was not prepared for what happened in this hell hole.

I later learned one of the purposes of ... is to see how a prisoner will react to solitary confinement and the strict regime of inane rules and practices. On arrival in ... prisoners are stripped of clothing, ordered to squat over a mirror and then are given an oversized T – shirt made from white canvas like material. ... I was led to a cell 4x 2, which contained a fixed bench, fixed bed, stainless steel toilet with no seat or lid, a small stainless steel sink and an intercom button. There were two canvas like 'blankets' that matched the T shirt material were give as bedding. The cell was designed so that no self-harm was possible, or that this new prisoner can see other prisoners, nor they him. However I could hear the prisoners in the adjoining cells, who wanted to know who I was and what I was in for! I did not reply and only spoke to 2 - 3 guys the next day. Evidently he was there for punishment as he had threatened a guard with a blade taken from his standard issue razor.

Tea was delivered in a paper bag. It contained the letters 'FF' which I later learnt stood for 'finger food'. It consisted of a roll with a large piece of beetroot and some unidentified fried object. I promptly binned it and tried to sleep until morning.

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For more stories, contact the South Australian Council of Churches – [sacc@picknowl.com.au](mailto:sacc@picknowl.com.au) or (08) 8215 0300.

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## ii. Bible Stories

There are dozens of references to prisons and prisoner's in the Bible – from Joseph's imprisonment in Genesis 37 to Satan's imprisonment in Revelation 20.4. Probably the most renowned prisoner was the apostle Paul.

Genesis 39:1-41; 44 Joseph is sold as a slave in Egypt, then falsely imprisoned, but with God's help, he ends up ruling over all of Egypt.

Judges 14:1-16:30... With God's help, Sampson destroys his prison, his final and greatest victory.

1 Samuel 18:28-31:17. With God's help, David is on the run from the law of King Saul.

1 Kings 22:1-39 Micaiah is imprisoned for telling the truth.

2 Kings 25:1-30 37 years after Babylon captured Jerusalem, Jehoiachin, King of Judah, is finally released and honoured.

2 Chronicles 16:1-13 Hanani is imprisoned for telling the truth.

2 Chronicles 33:1-20 Prayer releases Manasseh, king of Jerusalem, from prison.

Jeremiah 37:1-21 The prophet Jeremiah spends time in a low security prison.

Jeremiah 52:1-11 Zedekiah, king of Judah, dies miserably in prison.

Psalms 66:8-12, 68:6; 102:20; 107:8-21, 142:7; 146:7

Isaiah 42:6-7; cf 61:1.12

Luke 4:16-20

One of the striking tasks expected of the awaited Messiah was to "bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness". This is precisely the role Jesus claims for himself at the beginning of his ministry.

Matthew 5:25 Jesus gives good advice on how to stay out of prison.

Matthew 18:21-35 The wicked servant is jailed, because he would not forgive.

Matthew 25:31-46 God even (*especially?*) loves prisoners.

Matt 27:26 Jesus' entire ministry of feeding the hungry, healing the sick, forgiving the guilty, embracing the outsider, loving the enemy and confronting the oppressor was a fleshing out of his proclamation of release to the captives. Ironically it cost Jesus his own freedom and his own life to do so, with the convicted murderer

Barabbas being the first literal prisoner to benefit from it!

Mark 5: 14-52 Pontius Pilate releases the prisoner Barabbas instead of Jesus.

Mark 6:17-29 John the Baptist is beheaded in prison.

Mark 15:15 see comment on Matt 27:26 above

Luke 19:10 "*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost*".

Acts 4:1-21 Peter and John are imprisoned for preaching.

## PRISONERS, PRISONS AND RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS 4

- Acts 5: 14-52            An Angel of the Lord opens prison doors to free the apostles.
- Acts 5:19, 22-23; 12:6-11, 16:25-36  
Paul was not alone in this experience. Peter and John were also repeatedly thrown in jail, and like Paul, they too were sometimes busted out of jail by divine intervention.
- Acts 8:3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:10  
Prior to his conversion, Paul imprisoned other people. He locked up countless Christian believers, both male and female, and on occasions cast his judicial vote for their execution.
- Acts 16:26-39            An earthquake destroys the prison, but Paul and Silas do not escape, instead, *they pray and sing hymns all night.*
- Acts 21:27-28:31        Paul is arrested, conspired against, tried, but never sentenced yet he spends many years transferred from one jail to another.
- 2 Corinthians 6:5cf.11:23-28    Paul speaks of enduring numerous ‘afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonment, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger.
- Ephesians 2:14-17        What former prisoners need most is a community of people who truly understand both the grace and the discipline of forgiveness, a community that loves its “enemies” and welcomes strangers, a community that breaks down the dividing walls of hostility and preaches “*peace to those who were far off*”. This is what Christ did, and this is what those who bear his name should also do.
- Phil.3:6                    See comment under Acts 8:3
- Hebrews 13:3             The New Testament expressly calls on believers to demonstrate practical care for those in prison. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.

### **This list was compiled from two sources:**

A document called Some Great Prison Stories from Prison Chaplain Ross Paterson - Salvation Army Chaplain at Mount Gambier Prison

Crime and Justice a publication from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand 2011 [www.presbyterian.org.nz](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz)

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