

## *Shocking the Guards*

The guards rushed in wondering what all the commotion was about. The applause was growing in volume and they wondered what was happening.

It was the morning of April 20, just before I had to fly back to the USA. We had time for one more evangelistic event. We waited patiently outside the Masaya prison while the guards got the 180 hardcore prisoners together and calmed them down. These tend to be the worst of prisoners, and very rarely does someone have the opportunity to address them. They tend to be unruly, and no pictures are allowed.

We had brought with us some of what we call "tools" - rolls of toilet paper, bars of soap, toothpaste, and 110 pound bags of rice and beans. Unlike most prisons in the west (or all prisons in the USA), these prisoners are not provided with much of anything while incarcerated. If their friends and families don't bring it to them, they go without.

I began to preach in this prison, and I could hear them muttering and not paying much attention. But as I got into the message, they became eerily quiet. Since I'm blind, I wasn't sure if they had fallen asleep or were really attentively listening to me, but I pressed on with the message the Lord had given me. At the end of my preaching, I shared the three types of freedom:

- 1) Freedom from the Penalty of Sin through faith in Christ alone which is a free gift (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- 2) Freedom from the Power of Sin, which is for believers and comes through learning how to live in God's grace (Titus 2:11)
- 3) Freedom from the Presence of Sin, when the Lord returns or we pass away (1 Cor. 15:35 -56)

Then I gave my normal basic Gospel invitation regarding the first freedom above - to trust in Christ alone for their salvation. And immediately they responded. Before I could repeat it once more, which is my custom, they began to applaud. This applause became so thunderous that the guards were shocked and startled and rushed in to see what was going on. They had never before seen such a loud and positive response by these 180 prisoners to the preaching of God's Word. 35 of the men immediately raised their hands on my first invitation to let us know they had understood the message of God's grace and that day had made the decision to trust in Christ alone for their salvation. But because my customary second/repeat invitation was interrupted by their loud applause, we believe that far more may have made that saving-faith decision based on their reaction.

So how do we reach others for Christ in the most effective way? This is one question we are always considering when moving into new demographics. And recently, we have had many opportunities like this one above within jails, prisons and with police officers. The Scripture does teach to remember those in prison in Hebrews 13:3. So our approach to this target group has followed our normal strategy - to provide some material needs to those we want to reach in order to gain a spiritual result - a hearing for the gospel of grace. The rest of the stories below also demonstrate how effective this approach has been in opening doors for us, and we remain in your debt for praying and providing such materials which we refer to as "tools". And just as everyone knows, having the right "tool" makes the job easier.



## *Tools for Opening Hearts to the Gospel*



## Tools for Prisoners



*Dean in Jail*

In addition to visiting the Masaya Prison this year, Francisco Caldera, our Field Director in Nicaragua, had also lined up meetings for us in 2 jails in the Masaya area. Some of the "tools" we discovered these prisoners needed were pans for cooking, hair clippers, and basic food and hygiene items. So we took them such "tools" in the Nandasmo and the Nindiri Jail just as we had done in the Masaya Prison. The results of showing them such love by providing such simple and relatively inexpensive "tools" was nothing short of amazing.

On my trip to Nicaragua in March, we had almost half of the 18 prisoners in the Nandasmo Jail indicate they had never understood before that salvation was a free gift provided by the death and resurrection of Christ, and they made the decision to trust in Christ alone for their salvation. And then in April, on my second trip to Nicaragua this year, we once again returned to the Nandasmo Jail, and this time more trusted in the Lord. Also, in the Nindiri Jail in Nicaragua, it was quite similar. In March, we took in some "tools" for them,

and in April, my second trip to Nicaragua, the Lord gave us more new believers in this jail.

In these two jails, I asked the guards, at the end of my preaching, if they would allow me to go into the cell and get a picture with them around me. The guards questioned me if I really wanted to do that. "Sure", I said, "some of them are my brothers." The prisoners were overjoyed that I would join them, even if it was only for a few minutes. I wanted them to know that there were those who cared and that I stood with them as a brother.

Then in May of this year, I made a mission trip to Kenya. Ken Gatithi, our Field Director for this country, lined up a time for us to visit the Ruiru Prison with 600 prisoners in attendance. It was a hot afternoon but we were fortunate that we could meet outdoors under some trees.

The "tool" we used to gain this entrance and hearing was simply to provide a few decoders to their TV sets that would allow them to operate on a digital signal. I shared with these prisoners a similar message and reminded them we are all prisoners in a sense. Galatians 3:22 says "the whole world is a prisoner of sin", but we can have total freedom from its penalty by God's grace. At that event, we estimated that 55 trusted in Christ alone for their salvation.

## Tools for Police Officers

Francisco and I sat at a table in the Yayabo Hotel visiting and brainstorming with Co-Commissioner Morales and Captain Nelson about how to reach teenage gang members in Nicaragua. You may remember reading about them in a previous prayer letter. They both trusted the Lord about nine months earlier at a meeting they had helped to set up. Co-Commissioner Morales was promoted from Captain a few months ago and Inspector Nelson lost one of his eyes from a protestor who shot him with a slingshot while he was riding his motorcycle.

Both of these police officers have played a pivotal role in getting us into jails and prisons. They also make arrangements to help me get through customs at the airport. In fact, when I arrived at the airport on my last trip, Francisco picked me up and while driving away, asked me if I could see the lights. "What lights", I asked. "You know I'm blind." He said Morales had lined up a police escort all the way to our hotel, with flashing lights from police cars.

Well, during this brainstorming meeting in the hotel with Morales and Nelson, they mentioned they could really use some basic police equipment (handcuffs and batons) for many of their other officers. I was a bit shocked by this and asked why a police officer would not have such basic "tools". They explained that the police officers in Nicaragua are only paid \$180 a month and are expected to purchase their own basic equipment.

I mentioned this need by email to several of our prayer partners in the USA, and lo and behold, the Lord provided through them some of these items, which I took in with me on my April mission trip.

Then, on this mission trip in April, I held a special meeting for 8 other police officers to distribute some of this equipment to them. It gave me the perfect opportunity to preach and share the Gospel with them. All 8 police officers indicated to us, that they, too, made that same critical decision to trust in Christ alone for their salvation. They had never heard God's message of grace and the free gift of eternal life through faith in Christ. It was a bit ironic that the pursuers of gang members and criminals became themselves, the pursued ones, by the grace of God, and were captured by His love.



*Police Officers Receive Tools*



## *Tools for Communities and Schools*

"A muzungu wants to come and speak to our student body? That would be wonderful! Many of our students have never seen or heard from a white man before." This is a common response from the Head Master of a school in rural parts of Africa. A muzungu is the Swahili word used to refer to a white man in Kenya. (In Nicaragua we are known as *norte americanos*, North Americans. The word American, in their minds and rightly so, includes those from Mexico and Central America.)

Now, in addition to working with the police and prisoners which we shared above, we also continue to work and provide "tools" to communities and schools, which has been our standard operating strategy for these target groups. These include such things as clothes, rain harvest tanks, wells, hydro pumps, first-aid kits, goats and paint for school buildings.

Last April again, while I was in Nicaragua, Francisco lined up a meeting at the high school for me, the *norte americano*, where his two older daughters attend. We provided a "tool" - a first-aid kit, something very small and inexpensive, but very much appreciated. The student body of 600 was present at my preaching and the Lord gave us around 100 who responded to the Gospel.

In Kenya, Ken has been laboring hard and providing "tools" by working the past months with all kinds of communities and schools in rural areas. From lining up teams to paint and repair debilitated schools, to installing hydro-pumps and rain harvest tanks, to purchasing and distributing goats to needy widows. His cultivating of the ground in this way really opens the door wide for me, the muzungu, to walk through and share the Gospel. In fact, on this one trip to Kenya in May, we saw just over 900 come to faith in Christ when I preached at 8 different events. It was truly one of our most productive harvests which the Lord has given us.



*Goats for the Widows in Kiuru*

## *Tools for Opening Hearts to the Gospel*

### *Tools for Sports Teams*

I was led to the pitcher's mound and given the honor to throw the first ball before the beginning of the game. Everyone was in good spirits and no doubt wondered if this blind man could even come close to getting it over the plate. I had the catcher make some noise, reared back, and let it fly. It was off the plate. No strike, but it didn't matter. 10 minutes earlier, God had used me to throw a strike into the hearts of many of the teenage boys and, Cecil, their coach.

It was March 15 when Francisco came by to pick me up. It was the rainy season in Nicaragua and was going to be another hot and sultry day. Francisco's high blood pressure issues had calmed down and we took off for Las Flores with baseball bats, balls, and catcher's gear which I had bought and brought with me on this trip. The team gathered around us, all 18 of them, eagerly waiting for the distribution of such badly needed equipment (or "tools"). The catcher had been using a burlap bag full of sponges for his protective vest and had no shin guards or other protective gear. This is hard ball, not soft ball, and these teenagers were between 14 and 18 years old. They politely stood in a semi-circle around us and listened curiously to what I had to say with Francisco interpreting for me. I shared with them the details of the plan of salvation and wondered if it was penetrating their thoughts. When I gave the invitation to trust in Christ alone for eternal life, more than half responded, including even their coach, Cecil. God had just used me to throw a strike, right into the hearts of these young men.



*God Throws Strike in Hearts of Baseball Team*

Thank you so much for being a vital part of all that was mentioned above. Your prayers and support for the needed "tools" opened doors for our teams and me to go through and simply explain the gospel by putting the cookies on the lower shelf with easy-to-understand words and illustrations.

*Dean Chollar*



# Praise

1. For the more than 1,000 individuals the Lord allowed us to reach with the Gospel of grace in the past few months alone.
2. For the wonderful team members and Field Directors who work tirelessly in God's harvest.
3. For God, who works in and through us all for His good pleasure.
4. For you, our prayer partners.

*June 2015*

# Prayer

1. For the health concerns for Francisco and Jasmina Caldera in Nicaragua. Francisco has high blood pressure and Jasmina, his wife needs a second surgery.
2. For the needed "tools" so we can continue an effective harvest in these countries.
3. For our 2 schools in Liberia and Ethiopia with over 320 students total.
4. For follow up on all these new believers.
5. For the Sports Camp in Nicaragua this June 6 – 14.

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## *Sports Camp for Nicaragua*

Allen Mann is taking a team of 12 American adults and teens to Nicaragua for a Sports Camp from June 6 - 14. They will be following up with the teenagers and gang members we are trying to reach in Nicaragua.

Allen says: "Our camp will host 100 at-risk Nicaraguan youth and will train them in basketball, soccer, volleyball, and baseball. There is also a pool in which they will get to spend some time. Many of these youth have trusted Christ through CrossWay International's previous visits and now we will have a week-long opportunity to disciple them through relationships, one-on-one time together, and twice-daily Bible lessons that will train them in the Christian walk. In addition, God has given us an unexpected ministry through this! Because this is a large endeavor rarely seen in Nicaragua, the local law enforcement has offered a police escort to the camp AND 5 officers to stay the week! We are preparing to minister to these officers as well!"

Allen expects up to 100 teenagers to attend and is praying that the Lord will provide funding for this challenging event. He has held camps in the USA with his previous ministry, and is well qualified to lead such an event, but this will be his first one in a foreign country, so we appreciate your prayers.

