

SPOTLIGHT

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Dear Brother: Being a Living Testament of Love

By Tina Park

Dear Brother,

Its been a while since I've written you; I'm sorry for keeping you waiting. I can give you a long list of reasons but in the end, they are only excuses. Growing up, I never thought that you would leave home to join the army, especially during war time when you actually have to fight. I still don't understand why you joined. Why would you go to war when you know that you're risking your life? I know you don't want to hear this, but it's hard for me to pick up your calls and force myself to act optimistic. Since you already made your decision, I guess I should be supporting you. I know all you see are long letters from time to time and care packages every month, but more importantly, I want you to know that you are in my thoughts and prayers. It's strange thinking that if it's in God's will, you might be gone in a second. Or wounded beyond repair. While I am in the comforts of Los Angeles, working 9 to 5, you are witnessing horrible things that I will only see in movies or read in books. I complain about my routine, uneventful days, while you are looking at violence and death face to face. To be honest, I can get so immersed in my own life that I can forget about what you're going through. I'm sorry. I'm sorry for my selfishness. I hope this is the last letter I write apologizing to you. My prayer for me is that God would strengthen me to be a selfless sister with compassion for you and your friends out in war. My prayer for you is that you will find comfort and peace in God alone. Although I cannot be there with you, God is. Know that you are loved and missed by everyone back home.

Love, Your sister

By David Yang

Jesus came not to help the healthy but to save the sick. Too many times, our culture focuses on the wrong things. We do what is comfortable and not what is challenging. We do what is easy and not what is right. Instead of looking prospectively on what can be done in the future, we focus too much on issues of the past. It is true. We have become our own worst enemy. This month, Good News Chapel is asking the congregation to participate in Angel Tree, a ministry that reaches out to the children of inmates and their families. The goal of the ministry is to help transform the lives of these families and to reconcile them to God and each other. Over 2.3 million Americans are presently serving a prison sentence in a local, county, state or federal penitentiary. Of these 2.3 million, 2.1 million are men and 208,000 are women. Of the prison population, 42% of the inmates are black, 40 % white, 16% hispanic and 2 % Asian. Many of these inmates are serving time for crimes that are simply unjustifiable. Many of these inmates will likely spend the majority of their remaining life in the prison system. Today's American prison system is a revolving door. It is a fact. Inmates are released without any job

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A Fatherless Generation

By Angie Oh

"Just imagine your earthly father... and multiply it by infinity!" Those were the words of a pastor who was trying to illustrate the immeasurable love of our Father in heaven. Perhaps when the other kids heard it, they imagined an infinitely loving, faithful, giving, and powerful God. When I heard it, on the other hand, I thought, "Really? Then is my heavenly father an infinitely absent, unfaithful addict?" About 50% of children in the US have spent some part of their childhood without a father. And the fact that the other 50% live with their fathers does not necessarily imply that those fathers are good role models for the children. Let's face it. We live in a society where many children will not experience the love and care of their earthly fathers. Every child has a different experience. For me, growing up without a dad was not easy. I would force myself to keep my mind busy during holidays and birthdays. Seeing my mom work overtime to make sure my brother and I were able to live "normal" lives made my heart ache, and each time someone used the phrase, "Daddy's little girl," I would choke up. Although I've now been blessed with a wonderful stepdad, and although with God's strength I was able to forgive my biological dad in his sinfulness, I am still in the process of being healed of my past hurts.

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cont. of "Being a Living Testament of Love" by David Yang

prospects and in most cases, without any place to go. As such, many inmates find themselves right back to being incarcerated with little hope of true change.

In reflecting on Jesus' ministry on earth, I always come back to a singular constant. God loved and loved all. And it is telling that the most compelling stories of the Bible are not from those you would expect. The subjects of God's greatest lessons are from the poor and not the rich, the sinners and not the saints. God chose the Samaritan to teach us the importance of love (Luke 10:25-37). God chose the prostitute to teach us the importance of doing what is right (Joshua 6:22-25).

Jesus's ministry was truly revolutionary because his love was blind. And so should our love. Yes, prisoners may have committed egregious sins in their past but God gives them a future. It is easy to forget that inmates are mothers and fathers to children. And while the acts of the past may have placed an inmate in a prison cell, the future can provide a living testament to these families that a person can truly change. Jesus was our testament. He proved that people could change by doing the most revolutionary thing he could: loving people without warrant. It is our turn to take up that cross. †



cont. of "A Fatherless Generation" by Angie Oh

It's amazing how much our relationships with our parents can affect the way we view God. Throughout my walk with God, I struggled, feeling as though God were a distant, disappointed god who would eventually give up and abandon me. What I have been learning is that although God knows of my sinfulness more than anyone else, he also loves me more than I could ever imagine. God is a god who wants to heal us and fill our hearts with a peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

I give you a glimpse into my personal story in hopes that God will encourage you through it. To all fathers, my prayer is that God would make you into loving, God-fearing leaders of your respective family. To those of you who grew up with one parent or no parents at all, let us be encouraged in knowing that we have a perfect heavenly father who wants to heal us and loves us so much.

I also pray for all the children who have one or two parents in jail during this holiday season. Through the simple act of preparing gifts on behalf of the parent(s), I hope that God would really use GNC as his hands and feet to bless these children. †

Mike's Picks

monthly music recommendations

"Hey Church! I just picked up this album off itunes and it's already been a great blessing to me. Steve Fee is one of the worship leaders from a church that I used to visit in Atlanta. The band has found a way to craft their songs into music that is modern, relevant, and energetic while maintaining their identity as a WORSHIP BAND. One track, "Send Me Out", really challenged me to remember that I am called to live a radically kingdom-minded and missional life. I hope you pick this album up and enjoy blasting it in your cars through LA traffic!"

–Mike Lee, praise leader

1. Glory to God Forever – Fee (Hope Rising)
2. This is How we Know – Matt Redman (We Shall Not be Silent)
3. Yahweh – Hillsong (Faith + Hope + Love)
4. Speak, O Lord – Keith and Kristyn Getty (In Christ Alone)
5. Greater than We Can Imagine – Sovereign Grace Music (Psalms)
6. Because of Your Love – Brenton Brown (Because of Your Love)
7. Desert Song – Hillsong (This is Our God)
8. How He Loves – David Crowder Band (Church Music)
9. Lord of Lords – Hillsong (Saviour King)
10. Unashamed – Starfield (Beauty in the Broken)

*Album of the Month: Heaven and Earth by Phil Wickham

***GNC Outreach is partnering with Angel Tree Prison Fellowship during this holiday season. We will be serving prisoners from County Prison by donating gifts to their children for Christmas (www.angeltree.org). In January, we will be sending care packages to U. S. Soldiers deployed overseas. For more information, please visit www.gncoutreach.blog.com. If you are interested in writing, drawing, sharing ideas, or editing for Spotlight, please send an email to gnc.outreach@gmail.com.**

» A Midnight Mission...

On Dec. 5th, 23 volunteers arrived at the heart of Skid Row to serve and ready to make a difference. With 30-40 bags of donated clothing, hair nets on, and aprons tied, GNC offered a helping hand to a selfless organization. Upon meeting people, serving them dinner, and welcoming them, we caught a glimpse of people's hearts and how much we should help them. We met Mai, a young leader of Midnight Missions that walked us though the organization. Explaining the origins of homelessness in Downtown LA and the need for Midnight Missions to exist. The facility was huge, housing hundreds of people a night and providing bathrooms, showers, and a sanctuary for men, women, and children. Midnight Missions is a place that helps the homeless jump back into living a normal life. They build people up in a 6 month program; helping people to find jobs, a place to live, and help them gather all their paperwork so they can pursue a successful life. Its organizations like Midnight Missions that help the homeless and build them up to become confident people and to help them believe that they have a second chance. Please join us next time when we go back to Midnight Missions!