



Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

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BEREAN IN THE SUNSHINE STATE

A partnership made in Heaven and ordained by God.

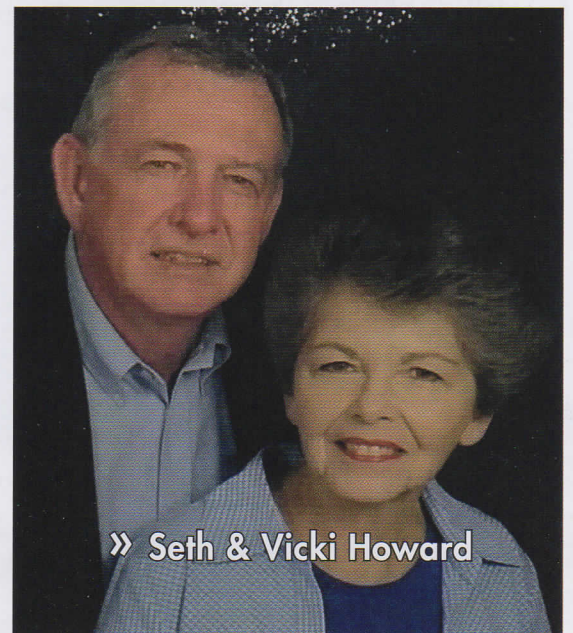
When the Holy Spirit moved in Ed and Paul Meister to begin a prison ministry centered around the Peoria, Illinois area so many years ago, never in their wildest dreams could they have predicted how far that ministry would spread. Today, Berean Prison Ministry (BPM) is blessed to be impacting inmates in all 48 continental United States as well as internationally in Romania and Russia. Relationships and partnerships have been built with hundreds of volunteers who send out Bibles, grade Bible studies, counsel inmates, and provide food and other necessary services to inmates in many facilities. A unique partnership not known to many in the Peoria area has developed in LaBelle, Florida with a man named Seth Howard.

Seth's story in prison ministry starts before he became involved with Berean. Passionate about the Word, he had always known that he wanted to somehow be involved with some type of ministry to reach the lost with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. One verse that influenced and inspired his passion for the ministry was 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, and a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Seth and Vicki, his wife, prayed for guidance and for the Holy Spirit to nudge them in the direction they could best serve His ministry.

In 1997, it happened: Seth was asked to give his testimony to the inmates of the

Hendry County Jail. With his Bible and his guitar, he sang to the inmates and shared about Christ and His impact in Seth's life, knowing that the Holy Spirit would work through his words. He was not wrong - at the end of the service, 17 men made the decision to turn their lives over to Jesus and become a "new creature in Christ". At that moment, Seth knew that God had showed him where he would be best placed to further His ministry.

Ephesians 3:20 tells us that, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." God's plans for Seth and Vicki would expand beyond the walls of Hendry County



» Seth & Vicki Howard

FLORIDA BIBLE STUDY STATISTICS

A CHARACTERISTIC UNIQUE TO THE LABELLE PRISON MINISTRY, IS THAT NO MAIL IS SENT OUT TO THE INMATES - EVERYTHING IS DONE "FACE-TO-FACE". VOLUNTEERS PERSONALLY VISIT THE INMATES TO COUNSEL AND HOLD SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDIES AND WORSHIP SERVICES.

- *75-80 INMATES ARE ACTIVELY WORKING ON BEREAN BIBLE STUDIES AT ANY GIVEN TIME*
- *IT GENERALLY TAKES ABOUT 25 WEEKS FOR INMATES TO FINISH THE 50 INDIVIDUAL STUDIES*
- *25% FINISHED THE STUDIES AT COUNTY JAIL (SOME ARE RELEASED/TRANSFERRED BEFORE COMPLETION)*
- *ALMOST 100% FINISH ALL 50 STUDIES AT MOORE HAVEN CORRECTIONAL STATE FACILITY*

Jail in the future. Not only would he minister to the male inmates in Hendry County Jail on a weekly basis, but he would also be granted the opportunity to do the same in Moore Haven Correctional Facility State Prison and Glades Detention Center (both in Moore Haven, FL) as well. Seth is joined by fellow Christian brothers Carey Soud, Ronnie Revels, and Wayne Simmons spending countless hours each week driving the many miles to personally meet and interact with inmates.

Seth and his fellow volunteers worked inde-

pendently for several years before Vicki's uncle, Wendell Gudeman, suggested they get in contact with Ed Meister in Peoria to see if Berean Prison Ministries could offer any support. In 2005, Seth and Vicki, along with Wayne and Cindy Simmons, made the long trek from Florida to Peoria to meet Ed Meister and see how Berean operated. It was Seth's hope that their small Florida operation could form a partnership with Berean. He was given the opportunity to attend services at the Peoria County Jail with Ed and did Ed ever work him hard! Seth had five services that Sunday and a partnership to connect the two distant ministries was formed.

Over the years, Berean Prison Ministry has provided Bibles and Bible studies to the South Florida ministry led by Seth as well as donations of personal items that have been distributed to inmates and nursing homes in the area. The donations of personal items have had a big impact on the facilities where they have been distributed. God has consistently proven that he provides to those in need.

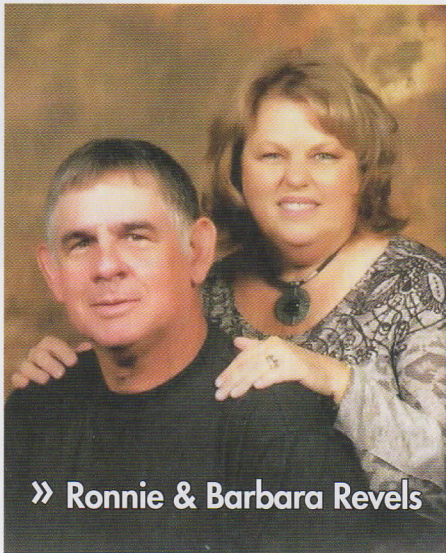
In 2006, Seth met with the Head Chaplain of the Florida prison system, John Booher, and he helped Seth get involved with ministry at Moore Haven State Prison. Two years later, Chaplain Booher transferred to Glades Detention Center and asked Seth to help get the ministry up and running at that facility also. Seth and fellow volunteer, Ronnie Revels, jumped at the chance to serve Christ at the Glades facility that houses mainly illegal immigrants.

A big challenge for prison ministry volunteers in South Florida to overcome is the language barrier. Since most of the inmates cannot speak or understand much English, Seth and the other volunteers have had to find ways to communicate. One of the many ways that the Holy Spirit has provided for prison ministry volunteers is providing bilingual inmates to translate the services to their fellow inmates who don't understand English.

Seth's schedule over the past few years has been one that would intimidate many people and Vicki has been



» Glades Detention Facility



» Ronnie & Barbara Revels

the life of an ordinary man serving an extraordinary God.

On Sundays, Seth and Ronnie give services to the inmates at the Glades Detention Center. Tuesday evenings are dedicated to interacting with the inmates at Moore Haven Correction Center. Wednesday evenings are spent at Hendry County Jail, where everything started in 1997. However, after 17 years of not attending church worship services on Wednesday nights or Sunday mornings, Seth has turned his Wednesday responsibilities over to his trusted brothers in Christ, Ronnie and Wayne. Seth and Vicki now enjoy worshiping together on Wednesday and Sunday evenings.

Seth and Vicki's church, the Caloosa Baptist Church, has other members - like Joan Norton (originally from the Peoria area) and Gailen Hart, helping out the prison ministry by grading almost every one of the Bible studies completed by inmates. The Hendry County Jail has also started outreach to the female inmate population, led by wonderful volunteers, Cindy Alexander and Martha Way, who provide Bibles and Bible studies to the inmates.

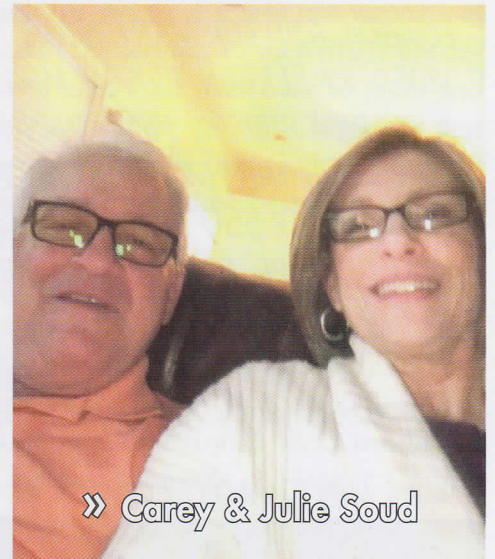
with him every step of the way, working behind the scenes to ensure that Seth and fellow volunteers can focus on working directly with the inmates. Each day as he drives his truck down the highway, he thanks God for the privilege to witness to the lost and for the partnership with Berean. Here is a small glimpse in

The ability to now reach the female inmate population has been an added blessing to the ministry.

Mr. Howard has seen the powerful impact of the Holy Spirit in the lives of inmates over and over again in his time spent with prison ministry. One such example is that of Sylvester, an inmate who received Christ as his Lord and Savior and, upon his release, entered into the ministry himself. Or Baktash, an Iranian, who was hungry to learn more about God and Jesus Christ, who loved Baktash enough to die for his sins. Now a believer, Baktash has a real burden to pray for his Muslim family and friends. Robbie, a friend of Seth's son, has also made a big change in his life due to his relationship with Christ.

God has impacted and changed the lives and circumstances of many people that Seth has had the pleasure of witnessing. He loves to see what happens when people put their trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. These stories reinforce his efforts despite the long hours and personal costs he experiences. Seth and Vicki's children are proud of the work their parents put in with the inmates, though they don't understand why their parents do it. One thing is for sure, Seth and Vicki know why, and maybe one verse written by Paul can help explain it:

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this



» Carey & Julie Soud

PRAYER REQUESTS

The power of prayer is a remarkable thing and we see that power in work every day in the lives of those we minister to in prison and out. Here are some of our current prayer requests. Please join us in praying for the following:

- Pray that God will open the doors to more prisons in the US and in Romania and for the volunteers that will be needed to minister in those prisons.
- Pray that the doors of ministry will be opened in Hungary when the Berean representatives return to Romania this

next spring where they will pursue opportunities to begin ministry in a new country.

- Pray for the men and women in the jails/prisons served by Berean who have put their faith in Jesus Christ. Pray that they will continue in their growth to become great men and women of faith and that they would continue to receive encouragement from the Word and their brothers and sisters in Christ.

world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power that may be of God, and not of us" (Corinthians 4:3-7).

We are thankful for the partnership with Seth, Vicki, Wayne, Ronnie, Carey, and others who seek the Holy Spirit's guidance to reach inmates for Jesus Christ. We pray that this partnership will continue to grow and be blessed.

THREE INMATE PROMISES

BIBLES ARE PROVIDED TO THE INMATES IN SOUTH FLORIDA, AND FOR MANY YEARS THEY WERE PROVIDED BY BEREAN PRISON MINISTRY. RECENTLY, A FLORIDA PRISON FUND WAS ESTABLISHED TO HELP FUND THE LOCAL PURCHASE OF BIBLES. APPROXIMATELY 550 BIBLES ARE DISTRIBUTED PER YEAR. BEFORE RECEIVING A BIBLE, AN INMATE MUST MAKE THREE PROMISES:

- *HE MUST WRITE HIS NAME IN THE BIBLE*
- *HE MUST READ IT EVERY DAY*
- *HE MUST TAKE THE BIBLE WITH HIM AND CONTINUE READING EACH DAY WHEN HE IS RELEASED OR TRANSFERRED*

FINANCIAL NEEDS

We thank God for all of you who have faithfully supported us in the past, and humbly ask for your continued support to purchase Bibles, postage for the Bible study program, and support for travel expenses for our Romanian volunteers.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I am reminded of the words of Solomon, "a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgement," (Ecclesiastes 8:15). As Berean Prison Ministries enters a new year, our focus is fixed on time and judgement. 360 volunteers are sharing their hearts and time with men and women serving out sentences in jails and prisons, bringing light and hope during a dark time in the inmates' lives. With the Word the captives can be set free of judgement.

We live in a technological world geared for speed. Twenty-four hours a day is an insufficient amount of time to complete all we have scheduled on our calendars. Hurry, hurry, hurry; we're always in a rush. Perhaps for all of us it's time to reevaluate our time. "Be still and know that I am God," Psalms 4-6:10, speaks well to our use of time. We all have 1,440 minutes in a day. Once spent, they are gone. The time cannot be carried over to the following day, or held to be used months down the road. We must live in the present.

This leads me to a final reflection on the prison ministry. Prisoners have a lot of unfilled time while they serve out their sentences and prison ministry is one of the ways they can productively use some time. While the many Bibles and Bible studies that go to prisons all over the United States, Romania, and Russia may originally start as a way to fill up some of the long days of incarceration, they find fertile ground. So to do the worship services.

To the volunteers of Berean Prison Ministries, know that God is working through you with wonderful results. We are so very thankful for the time expended in carrying out the Father's important work in our ministry. Last year we sent out approximately 15,000 Bibles to prisoners in the United States - and that wouldn't be possible without the willingness to serve of all our volunteers! The Word is reaching the hearts of both those incarcerated and their family members, preparing loved ones for judgement.

Blessings,
Ken Hoerr

HAVE A BLESSED 2017!