

consequences.

Many of the men that I talk to just don't want to hear it. You can't take that personally. Honestly, with most of the older guys, they've been on the outside for so long, when someone who looks like me (with a bunch of prison tattoos) speaks to them, they don't trust the motive. They probably wonder if I'm going to try and take advantage of them somehow. So instead of just walking up and saying, "Hey, do you know Jesus?" (which, believe me, I tried), I spend a number of weeks just being kind to them. I say hello when I see them, ask how they're doing – small interactions. After awhile they begin to say "Hi" to me first and ask me how I'm doing. Here's the thing with these guys – they tend to know when a person is being fake. If what you're saying isn't coming from a place of genuine care and concern for **them** as people, they'll know it and shut right down. They have to see and know that you care about them as people, and that you aren't just seeing them as a means of propagating the message. Christianity is not a thing. It's an action demonstrated in love, by Christ, through His followers.

And then there is that person that is not only willing to listen, but is eager to hear what I have to say. I tell them about Jesus, and what knowing Him as my Lord and Savior has done for me and in me. Personal testimony is powerful. It's living evidence of the power of Christ to change a man's heart and life. The words aren't always smooth, but they come (I thank God for that), and He always brings the needed Scriptures to mind. I treasure those times.

Well, my friends, it ends where it began: "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). Words to plan your day by, for sure. And finally, Isaiah 6:8 says, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" This is the question that God is asking, and I pray that in Christ I will always reply: Here am I Lord – Send me!



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***"The word of God is not imprisoned."
- 2 Timothy 2:9***

EVEN AS HE WALKED

Nathan L. Cothorn



You can't seriously expect me to talk to **that** guy about Christ, can you? Don't you know what he's in prison for? And yet, that's exactly what God expects from His followers. It was God's love for mankind that brought Christ to this earth the first time, and that same love characterized His time here. It didn't matter who a person was or what their station in life was: Jesus Christ came and He loved all men. The Bible says, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). That's a powerful statement: Even as He walked.

Sterling Correctional Facility is Colorado's only prison with an electric "kill" fence, and houses its fair share of the state's high-risk/ high-security inmates. At the same time, boasting flat terrain and a lack of stairs, right alongside the high-security inmates lives a growing population of old and infirm men. It's a daily parade of the canes, oxygen tanks, and wheelchairs; tough guys, gang members and hard cases; young and old, wild and wasting.

An interesting thing to note, especially when you consider the predatory nature of the environment, is that these older men are rarely preyed upon. There are three main reasons for this. First, the facility staff highly discourage it. The consequence for extorting or abusing one of these men is higher than most guys care to pay. The second reason is about perception. Old men in wheelchairs are, unless proven otherwise, generally assumed to be some kind of sex-offender. The logic is: What else could an old guy like that have come to prison for? He must like touching kids or something –

and according to the unwritten rule of the land, sex-offenders, especially child molesters, are despised and treated as social pariahs. And finally, everybody knows that if messed with, an old child molester will tell on you. So the conclusion: it's just good policy to avoid them altogether.

That was my policy, too. I would avoid these old men like they were rabid dogs, and for the very reasons I just listed. I completely ignored them, while detesting them in my heart.

You know, it's a funny thing, the heart. Especially what happens to it when you give it to Christ. He recreates it. He gives it new eyes, and before you realize that it's happened, everything changes. The same men that you once hated and couldn't stand to look at – well, you just see them differently. You look at the same man and you can't help but wonder if he knows Jesus. And that's when you realize that you're seeing that man, not for what he has or hasn't done in life, but as a person that God dearly loves. He loves him so much that He sent His own Son, Jesus, to take upon Himself the penalty of death that was that man's just due as a sinner. All so that, through Christ, he might himself become a son of God and receive eternal life. What inestimable value this man has in the eyes of God!

And not him alone, but all men; for Christ died for all men, that by His death all men might be saved through Him. It was then that I understood – who was I? Just another hell-deserving sinner saved by grace who, without Christ, would be just another lost and dying soul.

I now knew, from time spent in God's Word, what this new attitude was, this feeling of compassion and care for people – all people – that burned so hot within me. It was Christ in me, loving a lost world through me.

Most men in prison, be they old and wheelchair bound or younger and caught up in the gang life, are lost. They're in prison, many with no hope, with the older ones knowing that death is not only certain, but soon. Ok – what then? We know what the answer is.

Christ is always the right answer. They need to know the forgiveness and hope that is only found in knowing Him as their Lord and Savior. There is love and acceptance, peace and joy that comes with knowing the One who gave His life for them. They need Christ. And knowing that, it now comes down to this: How will they know if someone doesn't tell them? Isn't that the most important thing a Christian can do? Lead another man to Christ?

I won't lie – it's not easy for me to do. I feel awkward and very inadequate for the task. I still have that nagging voice in the back of my mind that says, "What will people think, or worse, what will they say if they see me talking to that guy?" These are things I just have to pray through, and sometimes it takes a lot of prayer. I don't have the strength or the ability to do any of it myself. I rely wholly on Christ for the strength, the ability, and the will to do even the smallest of tasks for Him. When you think about it, there are no small tasks when it comes to sharing the Gospel. It all matters when you're dealing with matters of eternal