

Transforming People on Both Sides of the Bars

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[0 : 00] I do want to share a little bit about OJPM as well as then you know weaving that in with the message that the Lord is laid on my heart.

Working through that, the mission statement that we have at Oklahoma Jail and Prison Ministries is transforming people on both sides of the bars.

Now I have to add to that a little bit. I know Tom has, but there are not many jails today that have bars in them. If they have bars, they are really old.

Now we've got some old facilities, but you've got to go way back to get the bars. But I think that communicates to most people. Transforming people on both sides of the bars.

Obviously, getting to take the gospel. And wherever we go, we're in 12 county facilities now, county jails. Oklahoma County is kind of our home base. It's the largest.

[1 : 15] It has two. Some counties have two. They have the main jail and then a juvenile facility. And so we've got full-time chaplains in each of those. We are over in Rogers.

I don't want to point. Over in Rogers County. Is that right? Am I pretty close? That's where I'm going. Rogers County over here. We just opened up in Mays County, which is prior for those of you that may not know.

So over this way, we're in Garfield, in Enid, and Muskogee, McIntosh, Oklahoma, Canadian, Cleveland. I go on Bryan County.

So we're 11 counties, 12 facilities. We will see about 1,500 inmates a month. And our main model is one-on-one.

We call it kneecap to kneecap. A lot of places will have an office or some kind of space. It will set up little cubicles. And our volunteers, the men with men and the ladies with the ladies, will sit down, have about 30 minutes, 45 minutes.

[2 : 26] Now, county jail ministry is completely different than DOC. I think you guys have some ministry at DOC, the Department of Corrections, which is state.

You've got the federal, state, and the counties. There are a few municipalities. Midwest City has their own jail. But most of the municipalities tie that in with the county jail.

You get to DOC, and you, for the most part, the men and women decide they're going to do their time. Security is not as high. Obviously, security is there.

But to break out of a state penitentiary, you've got to go through, I don't know, eight, ten doors or something to get out. County jail, there are not as many doors, not as many layers.

Plus, sometimes you're being transported to the courthouse for a court date. And so sometimes you're out in fresh air. But the main thing about the security is that somebody escapes from DOC.

[3 : 26] You know, it's going to be in the paper. But whose name are you going to put to that? Probably no one. But county sheriffs are reelected every four years.

And so if there's an escape from a county jail, you can be guaranteed the county sheriff's name is going to be front and center. And so security is much tighter in a county jail.

There are very few resources, very few services. There's no GED. There's no anger management. There's no basket weaving. None of that. They are just simply in there.

They don't know if they're going to be there a day, a week, a month. They're waiting for a court date or something. And so they're in limbo. Literally, they are in limbo. They don't know what's going to happen.

So it's very difficult to set up because of limitations of financial resources, limitations in space availability. So we're just thankful that we have a little window.

[4 : 25] And it is frustrating, Pastor, to not be able to disciple, to not be able to follow up. But the window we have, and it's the first time in my ministry, you know, pastoring, starting a church, being

evangelism director.

Sometimes you had something you specialized in, but you still worked for the 360 degree of developing disciples of Christ.

But in our ministry, we have a very small window. But it is a window. And it's a door that we sit down for 30 minutes, maybe 40, and share the gospel with the men and women.

And again, these men and women, a lot of them, some of it's not their first time to be in jail. A lot of them, it is the first time. Even if it is the second time, it's still the first time.

It's still not the first time that they plan to be there. And so there's still a lot of resistance of being in there. And they still haven't come to grips with what all is going on.

[5 : 27] And they're, you know, they're still struggling. They're still saying, my life has been turned upside down. And so we can very clearly get to the point. Some of them will say, oh, yeah, I was raised in church.

Oh, yeah, I'm a Christian. Well, we drill down on that. What's that mean? Tell us about that. And we'll make sure they understand what the gospel is all about and lay that with them.

Now, we do have Bible studies for the ones that are going to be there for a while. We give them Bible studies. They do them in their cells. We don't have a Bible study with them. But anyway, that's our ministry.

And so what happens, not only are we sharing the gospel with the inmates, and there's transformation there, but our volunteers are transformed. Because if you've been on a mission trip or the church has had mission trips, to Latvia or wherever, people come back and give reports.

And it's not just a day. It's not just a week. It's not just the people come back transformed. Because they've had to go so far out of their comfort zone to go to Latvia, to go to wherever it was.

[6 : 36] They've had to be so uncomfortable. And you know what? I'm 61 now. Now, I have a pretty comfortable life. I have spent 61 years fine-tuning and customizing my life and weeding out those things I really didn't like.

My mother's here. You know, I don't have to eat some of the things I used to have to eat when I was a kid. That's what happens when you get older. And so, as adults, we can get pretty comfortable.

Even when we are talking about serving the Lord. But when you go on a mission trip and when our volunteers go into county jail, you've got to leave your cell phone in your car.

Now, if you're like me, that's my brain. You know, my memory's not as good. But boy, that cell phone has everything I need.

It's a crutch sometimes. It's my pacifier sometimes. And so, just that one thing alone, you've got to leave your cell phone in your car and be in there.

[7 : 49] If you lose your cell phone or you misplace it, it may take 10 minutes. It may take 30 minutes. It doesn't take long to realize, oh, my goodness, where's my phone at?

And we start freaking out because we can't lose that. It's valuable. It's got important information in it. It's our lifeline with the world. And so, the transformation happens even in our volunteers because they've had to do a background check.

They've had to go and not be searched per se but go through security. And then they hear those doors lock. And we'll mention that in just a moment. And they're inside.

And they're scared. And they're saying, Lord, help me. What am I going to say? Now, they know their Bible for the most part. But what if they ask me a question?

I don't know. And so, so far out of their comfort zone, transformation takes place there. So, I want to share just a few things about transformation. What I think leads to transformation.

[8 : 53] And I want to start off by saying I want to use transformation and compare and contrast it to transaction. Because we'll talk, you know, if you got in a discussion with somebody and really started doing some homework, you have transformational and then you have transactional.

What do you think the difference? And, you know, it's not that one is better than the other one. Transactional is not bad. But transformational, the simplest way for me to say it, it begins on the inside.

And it then works its way out. And you're transformed. Transactional begins on the outside. Oh, I've got some, okay, here's the list of things that I now have to do.

Or here's the list of things I can't do. And so, I'm going to make an agreement to do these and not do these. And there's a transaction that takes place.

And it's from the outside trying to work its way in. And, you know, there's a time and a place for that. But it cannot happen unless it's first begun on the inside and works its way out.

[10:09] And, I mentioned for about four years, emails. I still write a few letters. Some, obviously, thank you letters.

And I close my emails or I close my letters with unleashing the captives. And I get that. The Lord laid that on my heart four years ago from, well, probably maybe three years ago, from Isaiah 61.1. This is the famous verse that Jesus used and referred to. It said, The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, who's anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners.

And so, you know, Tom, I do have to be careful about unleashing the captives. I didn't want to say unleashing the prisoners, but, you know, a spiritual releasing the captivity in the hearts.

[11:18] And then another passage along the same time that I was wrestling with and memorizing is 2 Corinthians 3.18. That says, And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the glory of the Lord, and are being transformed into his likeness, with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

And so, as I've prayed over those and wrestled with those, I've seen, I've come up with three things. There's more than three, but three that I want to share this morning about how transformation can take place in your life.

You've got an outline, I believe, there in your program. If you follow along and make a few notes there, you know, the, I've said this before here, the shortest pencil is better than the longest memory.

Make a couple of notes. You can use a pen if you'd like. You could even use your tablet or phone if you like. But make a couple of notes. I think the Lord is going to prompt you this week to let them even sink further into your heart and mind.

Three things about how transformation takes place. The first, transformation can take place when you face the reality of your own sinfulness and completely yield yourself to Jesus Christ.

[12:50] For the inmate, when those metal doors, is what they are, when those metal doors in a cinder block building with cement floors, it has a distinct sound.

There's an echo. It's cold. It's hard. It's noisy. And when those doors shut, it sinks in for the inmate. My life is never going to be the same. And then when it comes to the point that the judge, for those that are guilty, and those that are sentenced, when the judge pronounces guilty, that is a, that is an amazing thing.

We go through our lives thinking certain things. You know, we may get applause, especially, you know, doying, playing the piano, or singing, or something, and the people clap.

Daniel, the people, you know, sometimes you can tell, okay, that went, that went pretty good. I think the Lord is honoring that. And, and you, you get some feedback on that. Sometimes you get a new blouse, or a new shirt, or some new shoes, or something, and somebody might say something nice.

[14:10] Or maybe in school, you know, you, you get a grade, a pretty good grade, and you, you, you, you get some confirmation here and there. Of course, our mind is always playing tricks on us, but to hear a judge call your name, and say, you are a guilty person, and you're sentenced to this sentence.

That is a significant thing that you have to deal with as an inmate. And even for us, we're not in a physical cell, but in our minds, and in our hearts, we can just, as certainly, be held captive to thoughts, to imaginations, to oppression, to challenges in our life.

And when we can come face to face with the reality that we are in a hopeless situation, we've either created the hopeless situation ourselves because of our sin, or that's just what has come upon us in our life.

And when we can reach that point and then completely just give up to the Lord, that's when transformation begins to happen. In Isaiah 61 that I quoted earlier, and I, I mentioned that Jesus used this at the beginning of his ministry, and in Luke chapter 4, when he went there to the synagogue and picked up the scrolls, and he read this passage and a couple of others, and then he sat down, and then he said, you know, this has been fulfilled today in your presence, and everybody like, what's going on?

And then later on, another significant point in Luke chapter 7, John, who by the way, was in jail, and he sent some of his disciples, go find Jesus, and can you just ask him one more time?

[16:15] Now John had already proclaimed this is the Son of God, this is the Messiah at Jesus' baptism, and yet he was still wrestling with that, he still was, you know, things weren't going well, and at that point, when the disciples of John came to Jesus, Jesus told them, you go tell John, and he listed several things that he was doing in his ministry, and a couple of them came out of this Isaiah 61 passage as his way of confirming, you know, he could have responded, he could have said, what are you guys doing here?

What in the world? You go back and, nobody, he gave a confirmation, yes, John, it really is me. Well, the first word is spirit.

I say the first word, the key word, the spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me. It's all about the working of the spirit. John 16, 8 tells us that Jesus saying, hey, I'm, I'm leaving, I'm sending the Holy Spirit. He's going to be your teacher and your comforter and your guide, and it says, when he comes, he's going to convict the world of, of sin and of righteousness. Now, we understand being convicted of sin.

I think most of it, you know, we understand what it is to feel guilty. But how are we convicted of righteousness? You could look at it several ways, but one way is the Holy Spirit affirming the work of Christ in your heart and mind.

[17:49] You could have it as stated in the Bible, well done, thou good and faithful servant. You could have it as when Jesus told them, peace be upon you.

Confirming the righteousness of Christ in our hearts and then of judgment. And so the Spirit is involved in every aspect of the ministry of Jesus.

Follow along with me as I just kind of note a couple of timelines in Jesus' life. We just had Easter, I'm sorry, Easter's coming up, Christmas a couple of months ago, Luke chapter 2, famous Christmas story, the angel comes to Mary and tells Mary she's going to have a baby.

and she's like, what? What? And then it's recorded in Luke chapter 2, verse 34. How will this be? Mary asked the angel. I'm a virgin. And the angel answered, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't get a lot of attention at Christmas, but here in the Christmas passage, it says, the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

[19:05] So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. It was the Holy Spirit that put Jesus in the womb of Mary. Then you go on and see the different miracles that Jesus did and He was constantly praying to the Father and acknowledging the power was coming to the Father, but we realize it was the Holy Spirit at work in those miracles as well.

And then there was the crucifixion that's coming up at Easter. The suffering, the crucifixion, and then the resurrection.

Romans 6 is a great passage, but I want to mention this one in Romans 8, verses 9 through 11. You, however, are controlled not by sinful nature, but by the Spirit.

If the Spirit of God lives in you, and if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who lives in you.

[20:27] In order for this transformation to take place, when you come to the end of your rope and just say, you know, my sinless, my sinfulness, my hopelessness, it is the Holy Spirit that's at work.

1 Corinthians 3.16 says, don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? The other word I want to mention there, the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord.

Sovereign Lord. That is a powerful, powerful thing. 1 Corinthians 12.3 tells us, wherefore I give you to understand that no one that calls on the name of the Lord can say Jesus is Lord without the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Spirit that works within someone and prompts them to be able to say, and, you know, normally in church we would see that as, you know, a hand raised or a hallelujah.

Sometimes there would be somebody that said, praise the Lord. Jesus is Lord. And that's one aspect of it. But the other aspect of it is one we don't see as often that we saw in that parable of the two people that prayed.

[21 : 52] The Pharisee that was praying there and he just said, God have mercy on me. I don't think he'll even hear my prayers.

What he was really saying was, Jesus is Lord. I am nothing. The other guy that thought he, you know, he was so religious, God didn't hear his prayer.

So that sovereign Lord is so key. Romans 10, 9 says that if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord.

and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. So, when you realize the sinfulness of your life and you totally, completely yield yourself to Christ, transformation takes place.

The second and third one that I want to mention here. The second one, when you reach, when you react to the out of control circumstances you face.

[23 : 00] Now, we all react. Maybe it wasn't, I don't know, Sunday mornings does seem to kind of happen a lot. Things seem to do to get out of control on Sunday mornings a lot.

Maybe this last week, maybe it was traffic, maybe it was a bill that came, maybe it was something somebody said, something somebody didn't do.

This week, this month, it could be physically your health. You went to the doctor this last week, this last month, and you, you did not get good news.

Something going on in your life, and it is getting out of control. I touched on it earlier about the, out of your comfort level.

Well, out of comfort and control to me, are sisters. A lot of times, my comfort is tied up in my control.

[24 : 09] And if everything's going the way I want them to go, I, things can be pretty good. But when things start going against the way I want them to go, how do we react?

Do we just kind of withdraw? Do we lash out? Do we find something to eat? Find something to drink? Find something to take?

Find something to buy? Why? What? How do we respond when things are out of control? Well, if you want transformation to take place in your life, react by, by, by just yielding to Jesus?

What? What, what does that look like? You know, they, in football, it's called taking a knee. when you catch a punt or the kickoff, you, you, you take that knee, you're saying, oh, oh, don't, don't hit me, I'm, I'm giving up.

Or I'm, I'm safe. Home, home base, maybe, and if you're playing, take, hey, home base, just giving up. I don't think that's a difficult concept to understand.

[25 : 32] But it is difficult to do. That brings transformation. I mentioned already the, the word sovereign in Isaiah 61. The passage I think of is 1 Chronicles 29, 11 through 13.

David is trying to put together the temple. And you know what happened to King David, the greatest king? Yeah, we talk about Solomon being the wise and everything, but David was really the great one, one after God's heart, one that really got everything going after Saul kind of, you know, tripped coming out of the gate.

God told David, no, I don't want you to build the temple. You have blood on your hand. You've been forgiven. You, you do great things, but I, this is a special project.

And so it was going to be for his son. And so they said, we need to take a collection. And they collected so much, he had to, he had to say, whoa, that's too much.

And so in my mind, I just imagine this giant pile, you know, whether you see Pirates of the Caribbean or Indiana Jones, you know, there's just that giant pile of gold chains and necklaces and rubies and precious stones and nuggets of gold and all that stuff.

[26 : 54] That's kind of what I imagined because that's what they were bringing for this to build the temple. And David had to say that, oh, we've got enough. And he was so overwhelmed by the sovereignty of God that he said, thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty.

For all that is in the heaven and earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all, both riches and honor come of thee. And in thine hand is power and might. And in thine hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all.

Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name. That's really, that's the natural, I mean, I know a lot of times we say the natural thing is to rebel and whatever, but to me, you know, this point is really more toward you as Christians.

Christians. You know, the first point was more toward the non-believer to yield to Christ to become a Christian. This point is for us as believers to, it just should be natural that at some point we give up the fight and we just acknowledge what God is capable of doing because he is the only one that can do it.

and then the third thing, when you respond, third point of transformation that I saw from this passage, when you respond to God's call to serve and share with others and completely yield yourself to Christ.

[28 : 31] Really, transformation is about completely yielding yourself to Christ. I just came up with three applications of that that are in our lives that I see in this passage.

You know, it's an amazing thing. I mentioned earlier about the inmates. They go through all these different things. A lot of them, you know, their point of things being out of control is when their family quits visiting.

and that's when they start squirming. And that can happen pretty quick. And one thing we cannot do is give messages, and yet that's what they're wanting us to get a hold of their girlfriend.

And you know what happens when their girlfriend quits visiting? They lose contact with their son, with their daughter.

Now, maybe they weren't so upset about the girlfriend not visiting, but the girlfriend has their children, or their mother has their children, her grandchildren.

[29 : 54] And when they lose that contact, they start squirming. because they see their life drifting away from them while they are locked up.

Well, those that can yield to Christ, think of a gentleman named Ray, R-E-Y, Ray, L-R-A, the king, in Cleveland County.

They have pods, for the most, most of the county jails have pods. He was the preacher, he was the minister of his pod. And his demeanor, his attitude, everything was positive, and he was, it wasn't going to be long, he was going to state pen, what they call pull their chain.

He was going to be transferred. But he was prepared for that. He might have even been state pen before, but he was seeing his time as something that God was going to use him to minister to others.

And it made all the difference in the world, in his heart, in his mind. And the same thing for you.

You've got all kinds of freedom. You can do most anything.

[31 : 16] I mean, we whine and we fuss. We can't do as much as we'd like here and there, but we can do so much. So much more than most can.

And for you, it's, are you allowing God to use your life to make an impact in your neighborhood, at work, at school, in your family? Yielding control of your life to Jesus.

Because in Isaiah 61, it also said, I've been sent. I've been given orders. I've been given direction by God.

And every one of us have been sent. And what a beautiful program. Of course, some nice pictures on there, but beautiful program. And look at that, all laid out.

This looks exactly what we saw at the museum yesterday. No telling how many thousands of dollars they'd spent on a timeline of the Price Tower. You know, when the dream began, the different family members going up to Minnesota to see Frank Lloyd right.

[32 : 24] And then the different changes and transformations all through the year. And Phillips bought it, and then Phillips turned it back over to the foundation. It's been remodeled. And just to communicate.

What a beautiful way to communicate the options, the opportunities that pastor, the church has put together. prayer for each of you to plug in somewhere as God is challenging you to step out of your comfort zone because he wants to transform you as well as someone else.

to to to to to I'll see you next time.