



Ramah's Voice

a ministry of Ramah International, Inc.

Pioneering Prison Ministry

By Myfanwy Saunders

One of the most awesome things about God is He never is stagnant and often moves us out of our comfort zone. After ten years in CPC ministry, my energy was dwindling. I needed to leave or God had to renew my passion. Secretly, I was hoping He would say it was okay to pursue another form of work.

Isn't it amazing how God knows what is best for us and pays no attention to the narcissistic longings, or even whining, of our heart?

On February 3, 1998, I had literally flopped into the familiar folds of my recliner and perused the television for entertainment. Larry King seemed appropriate and I thought I could find some escape from the day by watching his current guest. His guest was Karla Faye Tucker — the first female to be executed in Texas since the Civil War. She had committed a heinous murder and was facing the ultimate punishment. Karla Faye had come to prison a sinner. God, in His redemptive love, presented Himself to her and she became His child. With glowing face, she told Mr. King that freedom was hers in every sense even though she was talking to him through bars.

As I listened, the following unformed thoughts tumbled through my relaxed mind:

- Women in prison — wonder how many are post-abortion?
- Suppose anyone ever does post-abortion ministry there?
- Sure would be a scary place to do ministry.
- If I ever did anything like that, God would have to hand write it on my garage door!!

Casually I went to bed and never gave prison another thought. The following morning, my staff told me that Sydna Massé of Focus on the Family was on the phone for me. I had never met Sydna but I knew she was an important person because she worked for Dr. James Dobson. Total curiosity filled me as I picked up the phone.

After exchanging pleasantries, Sydna asked how far we lived from Lincoln, Illinois. After I relayed we were 45 minutes away, she began telling me her reason for calling. A post-abortive inmate at the Logan Correctional Center had written her after hearing their broadcast on post-abortive healing, "Hush Little Baby." The prisoner asked if Sydna knew anyone near her who could come and talk with her. Sydna then asked if I would be willing to go to her?

Holy goose bumps shivered over me, and I knew this was a God moment. He wasn't writing it on my garage door, but He certainly was letting me know I hadn't heard Karla Faye Tucker by chance. Without any more words I quickly said, "Yes, I'll go!" Sydna then wrote "Sue" and gave her my address.

The First Step

Within a few days, a lengthy letter arrived from "Sue". Enclosed was a chaplain's business card for my use in arranging a visit. For two weeks I called but was unable to reach this person. Finally, in desperation, I relayed my dilemma to the receptionist. He said that chaplain was no longer employed there and transferred me to a Mr. Simmons who "might be able to help."

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I began explaining my reason for calling to Mr. Simmons when he quickly interrupted me. "What does your agency do?" He asked. Perplexed, I rattled through our services and resumed defining my mission. Again, he interrupted and said March was "Women's History Month" at the institution. He wondered if our agency would be interested in doing a presentation for the female population? Here I was asking to meet with one inmate and he wanted me to address them all! When he agreed I could talk about God, I told him we'd be there!

Our first day in prison was Monday, March 16, 1998. My staff giggled nervously as we read the sign, "If shooting begins, do not run, sit quietly on the grass." Many of us felt like running at that point. As we entered the gym, a sea of multiracial faces greeted us. There were looks ranging from hopelessness to unveiled disinterest. Some had come to be with their "friend" – a homosexual lover. Others were there to do something different from the normal prison schedule. A few were kind enough to look interested.

We talked first about positive parenting and presented truth concerning abstinence. As I began talking about the pain following abortion, a sick hush fell over the room. Several left the room immediately while others stared at the ceiling. A precious little gal sitting in front of me wrapped herself in her coat and hid. In one sad moment, God answered the questions I had randomly thought several weeks prior. Many women in prison were post-abortive and no one seemed to be addressing their pain.

Afterwards, we were swamped with prisoners tearfully asking us to please come and help them with their pain. I told each to mention their desire to Mr. Simmons. Later, as we enjoyed styro-foam chicken sandwiches and gray peaches in the Chow Hall, we chatted about the woes of prison life. At one point Mr. Simmons motioned to a tall, distinguished gentleman and said, "Chaplain Johnson, I have some ladies I would like you to meet." This unexpected meeting allowed us the opportunity to present our desire to begin a Bible study through his office. God allowed a casual meeting to begin a major work of His spirit.

To the glory of God, His faithfulness and persistence, we held our first post-abortion class at Logan in May of 1998. Six ladies met the truth of a healing, loving God — One who sent His Son to the cross so they could know the freedom of forgiveness and grace. Since then over 200 women have been through our program and we have branched out into new areas including healing for specific loss issues (A Time to Heal) and sexual abuse (Healing Hearts).

Ministry Inside versus Outside

There are differences in the studies with inmates and women at our center. Personally, I prefer working with prisoners. It is evident that they have done something wrong and much of the pretense is gone. They are hurting so much and desire to work through their issues that there is little need to break down protective emotional walls.

The down side to prison ministry is that inmates can be con artists so it is important to always take each story with a grain of salt. However, conning is part of the pain and should not be seen as a personal affront but a protective behavior resulting from a fear of trust. When working with someone who is honest about their sin, the redemptive, healing work of the Holy Spirit is so evident and progress is very apparent.

Homosexuality is also a huge problem in the prison. Women have been created for intimacy and relationship. Most of the women incarcerated have had perverted sexual experiences. Combining these two experiences means homosexuality is a temptation. The desire to have intimacy encourages some to become "gay for the stay". Others have been

involved in a homosexual lifestyle prior to incarceration as well as many other perversions (i.e., prostitution, sexual abuse, rape, etc.)

To think that any woman has not been at least confronted with homosexuality is very naive, and many are involved. We do not ever address the issue of homosexuality in and of itself. However, if it comes up in the study in general terms. Sometimes when an inmate says she is involved in a lesbian relationship, we lovingly present truth according to the Word of God and let the Holy Spirit do His convicting work.

Witnessing to the Guards

A positive relationship with the Chaplain and any prison personnel is critical. We are completely at their mercy as it is necessary for them to facilitate a program. It is vitally important to remember one indiscretion — one violation of rules — will terminate any opportunity for ministry and may jeopardize other ministries in the prison. Many of the officers are not believers and may not be sympathetic toward Christianity. A humble attitude is imperative at all times.

When we first went into Logan, the officer at the gate was grim and very official. He displayed no sense of humor at all. One day, one of our volunteers brought a plate of freshly baked chocolate cookies for him. When we went in, she just gave them to him with a smile. He glumly received them and we went on our way. The next week, he said hello to us when we walked in and even smiled. It's amazing how food can help in ministry. We have used cookies often in our prison ministry efforts!

When prison personnel are rude, we respond with pleasantness. Remember we are not just there to teach the women about God. We represent Him to every person with whom we have contact. The staff needs Jesus just as much as the prisoners. They will personally experience the difference in the women they have to control because of the redemptive love of the Lord. These women become better, even model prisoners and are far easier to handle. It is hard to deny the power of Christ when this transformation happens so be sure to befriend the guards when the opportunity is available.

In God's Time

Every post-abortion leader could be called to prison at some point. It could be that the Lord wants to build this into your future. Here are some points to consider:

- Remember that there is nothing to fear when God is on your side. He is never the author of fear!
- You will be safer inside a prison than anyone is outside because of the protection and rules.
- The first step is to pray and then pray some more. Ask the Lord for confirmations of His leading.
- Investigate your local correctional system. Ramah International is committed to helping any individual begin a prison program and works with Prison Fellowship to make these efforts more fruitful.

If the Lord wants you in prison, He will open the doors!

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Being Prepared to Minister:

1. Be sure it is God who is calling you to prison. If He has called you, He will equip you to act according to His good purpose. He will give you the desire to minister to these women! Because we are dealing with fragile, broken lives, it is imperative that God is the one calling, and God is the one equipping. Otherwise, we will become discouraged, and even sometimes, disenchanted.

2. Pray, pray, pray and then pray some more! Surrender your will to our Father. Ask Him for direction in your meetings with the women. Prayer is the rock on which we stand in any ministry endeavor. Prayer is acknowledging that I cannot do this in my strength — without God's equipping, this ministry will fail.

3. Secure Intercessory Prayer Coverage — Enlist three other people to intercede for you and the inmates to whom you are ministering. There is power in prayer! Seek out those with the gift of intercession and keep them abreast of what God is doing and the needs of the women and remember confidentiality. But always remember the necessity of confidentiality. If possible, make arrangements to meet with your intercessors regularly. Drop them a line frequently with specific needs and thanks for their ministry to you.

4. Be secure in God's responsibility, the woman's responsibility and yours. We are not in the business of changing the hearts and minds of anyone. That job belongs to the Holy Spirit. When I am depending on God to do His work, and by His power, I allow the love of God to flow through me. Lovingly present the truth and the consequences/options of what they choose to do with this information. Conviction is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit. Acceptance is the responsibility of the person to whom we are conveying truth. Our only responsibility is to lovingly present truth.





Taming Dove

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.” Galatians 5:22 (NIV)

When Dove arrived at our home with her brothers and sisters, newly removed from a very wild mother, she was scared. We had agreed to help a local shelter with this litter of street kittens until they were old enough to be adopted. Dove was the runt and by far the wildest of the bunch. She couldn't help herself as she hissed and scratched whenever we tried to touch her. My husband thought she was beyond hope but I knew with God's help, and a little love, she could be different.

Dove's taming began when I prayed for her and asked the Lord to heal her. My boys overheard my prayer and I explained that if *“His eye is on the sparrow”* then He certainly cared for this tiny kitten. As we patiently and gently loved her, we showed her we were no threat. In a few days she overcame her fears and was transformed into a loving animal.

I'm not surprised to see this same wild spirit in the hearts of the individuals I work with. Many times they scratch and hiss at me when I try to calm their fears with God's message of love and salvation. With love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, the Lord can use us to reach these untamed souls with His grace. The result is a transformed person full of love and hope.

Caring for Dove meant we were willing to be scratched. Those wounds healed quickly and her transformation was worth the pain. We couldn't help but adopt her permanently into our family. She will always serve to remind us that nothing is beyond hope in God's world!

Sydna A. Massé

Ramah's Resource Corner:

Pro-Life Training Seminars

Now Available in Your Community!

Ramah now offers pro-life seminars on various topics with a variety of speakers. Sydna Massé, Lisa Lillemon, Amy Stephens and/or Julie Wilson can visit your city and assist with your local educational needs! Topics include: 'The Power of Regret: PAS and the Abortion-Minded,' 'Post-Abortion Ministry Development,' 'Are You Called to Ministry?,' 'Avoiding Compassion Fatigue,' 'Ministering on the Internet,' 'Developing Internet Web-sites,' 'Enhancing Abstinence Education,' 'Breaking Sexual Soul Ties in Clients and Volunteers,' 'Enhancing Your Volunteer Training,' and many more. You can combine several topics or concentrate on just one area. Costs vary depending on speaker selection and topics covered. Detailed training curriculum is also available. Ramah can also prepare individual training for specific groups (i.e., pastors, doctors, etc.) or topics. Ramah speakers can also share at local schools, churches and/or banquets. By joining with others in your region, you can share the costs and increase the ministry training. For more information, contact Sydna today at (941) 473-2188.

From the Word of God:

“We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as imposters; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.”

(2 Corinthians 5: 3-10 – NIV)