

UNSUNG HEROES
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HOPE FOR REDEMPTION

Except to the hurting, most remain nameless and faceless. Few are licensed or formally trained and they expect no pay. They get no compensation at all for their time. Yet, week after week and year after year, they enter jails and prisons, hoping to improve lives and communities. They spend anywhere from one to three hours each visit, praying for, counseling with, and leading inmates in the worship of God. Who are these men and women? They are thousands of volunteer ministers and chaplains who give of their time to the incarcerated.

The reasons are many and varied. They believe every man and woman, regardless of mistakes, is a soul loved and valued by God. They go to remind those who no longer believe this. They go because they know from experience that failure is not final, but can be a stepping stone to a better life. They believe a life placed under the authority of God will be a blessed and productive life, so they carry in the gospel of a transforming God. Despite periods of disappointment and discouragement, they serve because they believe they make a difference.

Many formerly incarcerated testify of life changes embraced because of the work of these volunteers. They have no budget and no income, other than what churches and individuals sometimes donate. With these monies, and personal contributions, study Bibles and materials are purchased and given to inmates who desire them. With personal assets of time, compassion, and a belief in the promises of God, they reach out to those who believe they are forgotten.

Because God commanded His children to visit those in prison, caring men and women go. They are screened before being allowed to minister and searched before being allowed to enter. They bring little in but hope. But hope is a valuable commodity to the people they visit.

Who is involved in this ministry? The incarcerated are our loved ones, our parents, our children, and our spouses. Some are also children of God. Those demonstrating God's love are also our loved ones, our parents, our children, and our spouses. In Putnam County, TN, they are God's Jail Ministry. All over the country, they are heroes without spotlights.