



# OPENING DOORS<sup>sm</sup>

A Prison Ministry

March 2006

## I Have Placed Before You An Open Door (Rev. 3:8)

A word from Deborah L. Roeger, Executive Director



Celebrating milestones is always great fun. We are delighted that after last month's MCI program, more than 1000 men & women in Ohio prisons have now completed their

own Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> experience. Last year, we conducted a writing competition for past participants. Inmates in participating institutions were invited to share with us, in their own words, how they have used what they learned in the program. We have selected the WINNER and the RUNNER-UP from the entries we received. This month you'll meet Mike Easterling through the experience of his parole hearing (see pg. 2). Congratulations to Mike who was selected as the runner-up in our competition. You'll meet our Winner next month! It is our hope by sharing these winning stories that you will celebrate your own sort of *Opening Doors* just where you are! ♥

## A Longing To Serve Him

A few months ago, Debbie Roeger asked if I would be willing to write about "What brought me to this place?" I first needed to figure out what "this place" was. As I prayed about it, God allowed me to see that "this place" was a place of longing to serve Him. My husband and I were married in 2000. He is a case manager at Ross Correctional (RCI). That didn't mean too much to me. I just knew he worked at a prison, was in charge of programming and seeing to it that the inmates he was in charge of had a place to go upon release. In 2003 God began to tug at our hearts to do something. We were both saved but we were not doing anything for God. My husband asked if I wanted to attend an intercessory prayer meeting at RCI. This was the first time in my life that I had a desire to go inside the prison walls. I never expected to have that desire. I was like everyone else I knew, in that, the people behind bars were being punished for their crimes and I didn't want to have any part in connecting with them. I really

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***"I now saw the faces behind those prison walls and they looked like everyone else."***

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didn't give them any thought. When I attended the first Community Intercessory Prayer meeting held at RCI in May, 2004, I was astonished, amazed, overwhelmed and guilt-ridden. The prayer meeting was like nothing I had ever seen before. God showed up!!! I could feel His presence and it felt great! I was guilt-ridden because I now saw the faces behind those prison walls and they looked like everyone else. I realized that each person in there had a soul and that God loved them

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**Our 2005 Writing Competition  
Runner-Up: Mike Easterling**

The tools that I've obtained from the Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> experience has changed my life and will forever be an intricate part of my character. Since those enlightening three (3) days, the transforming power in me has soared to new heights! I was called before the parole board again and although I was not granted a parole this time, I actually felt as though I had a constructive hearing. The past

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***“For once in my life I was able to sit before a person and accept constructive criticism without allowing my anger or prejudice to get the best of me.”***

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few parole board hearings that I've had, in my mind, were nothing less than bias. In the past my unfocused and negative mind made me believe I was the victim of a corrupt system determined to rob me of every opportunity to return to society and become a productive citizen. Indeed I was suffering from a childish, primitive, and psychopathic form of thought! Before Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup>, the transforming power of “listening to understand & listening before making judgment,” did not exist in me. For once in my life I was able to sit before a person and accept constructive criticism without allowing my anger or prejudice to get the best of me. It has been rare for me to sit before anyone with authority and not automatically view him/her as the enemy. I actually saw that the board member's, Mr. Fitzpatrick, point of view was valid. Don't get me wrong, I was very disappointed that I wasn't granted a parole! By changing myself before attempting to change the situation, I was able to recognize that I was giving the next best thing. The full board panel will decide my fate, so all is not lost! Instead of allowing my thoughts to turn dark and stormy and instead of dwelling on the fact that I've done 16 years of incarceration, I chose to believe that a positive outcome will be delivered from the full board panel! The Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> program has shown me a better way. I will never again be a servant of anger nor will I ever again sabotage my opportunities in life with bitter resentment towards people I barely know!

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just like He loves all of us on the outside. That experience changed my thinking. I knew there was something I needed to do, but I didn't know what. I continued to go to the monthly prayer meetings and praying that God would show me how He wanted to use me. My husband was involved with various Christian programs at RCI and was being blessed by being involved with them. He began to enjoy his work in a whole new way. I knew God was working on us. My husband was able to be involved in an Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> program for staff called Opening Doors In The Workplace<sup>sm</sup> and later trained to be a facilitator. He came home each night trying to share with me his experience but he struggled to explain. He finally said, “*You just have to be there to understand.*” All I knew is that I wanted to be a part of that program. As time passed I was able to change jobs and work from home. This allowed me the opportunity to experience Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> for myself when I participated in the January 2006 program held at Marion Correctional. I absolutely loved the program and I was so blessed by the other people who participated. The inmates really seemed to love and benefit from this program too. I hope to facilitate a program some day soon. I realize that what has brought me to *this place* is a longing to serve God. I was saved 15 years ago so I felt “OK,” and that seemed to be “the end of the story.” Not So!! We were made by God and for God and I have a burning desire inside to serve Him and thank Him for what He did for me. I lost 15 years of not serving God, but I don't want another day to go by that I don't spend time serving Him. I love Him and I want others to know Him. I pray that through this ministry and others we will be able to show God's love to those we come in contact with. *Thank you Debbie for your dedication and love to our Father in heaven.* I want to encourage others to get busy for God. ♥

Community Intercessory Prayer meets one Saturday a month at Ross Correctional. The schedule for this and other prison prayer teams will soon be added to our website at [www.OpeningMoreDoors.org](http://www.OpeningMoreDoors.org).

Editor's note: Peggy will have her first opportunity to facilitate a program with girls who are incarcerated at Scioto Juvenile Correctional on March 21, 22 & 23.



## Opening God's Word

### ***Just One Moment***

*“so that in the ages to come He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”*

Ephesians 2:7

In the Fall of 2005 I was diagnosed with cancer of my right kidney. Doctors told me that I would have to have it removed as soon as possible. Surgery was scheduled around the Christmas Holidays at the Ohio State University Hospital. Needless to say I was scared but confident that I had many brothers and sisters in Christ praying for my healing.

It was after my surgery that I met a man who had been in prison for twenty-five years. He was in the Prison Hospital for a breathing condition that was fatal. He would have these attacks that would nearly kill him. On Christmas morn he had another of these attacks; alarms sounded and lights flashed and I expected a flood of nurses to come running. Only one nurse came. She worked frantically to get him breathing again; it took nearly an hour. After he finally stabilized, she left. It was about two hours later that I noticed her out of the corner of my eye. She was walking past our door carrying a stack of files. I could tell by her movement that she was tired and the files were quite heavy. It looked as if she was going to pass by, but then she stopped and came into the room and stood right in front of my neighbor's bed. She stood there long enough just to see this man breath and in that same moment she took on a form of Christ-likeness that had me in tears and I felt as if I truly was in His presence. When He noticed the man was breathing, she left the room.

When that nurse took that moment out of her busy day just to be sure that the man was

breathing properly, I couldn't help but think of Jesus. Just think of the billions of believers who have relied, and do rely, upon Him daily; and it is for each and every one of us that He takes just that one moment to see if we're alright. And yet He does so much more for us. Today I take that extra little time because we never know when a moment of our time will be a blessing to somebody else. – David Shusky

### **Reflective Question:**

Are you allowing God to interrupt you so that you can be a blessing to someone else?

### **Scripture References:**

Psalm 122 2 Chronicles 36:14-23  
Ephesians 2:4-10 John 6:4-15

**About the Author:** David Shusky was recently released after serving over thirteen years at Marion Correctional Institution for the crime of Manslaughter. An accomplished musician, David did his time by involving himself in spiritually based programming such as Kairos, Horizon Interfaith and Opening Doors.<sup>sm</sup> Dave would like to be a part of a Stand In The Gap™ Spiritual Family, will you join us in prayer about God's provision and timing.

### **Prayers For Prisoners<sup>sm</sup> Is Ready To Expand**

The Dept. of Rehab and Corrections has just announced the approved guidelines for churches that desire to send their prayer requests inside the prisons to inmate intercessors. The guidelines can be located on our website at [www.OpeningMoreDoors.org](http://www.OpeningMoreDoors.org) on our 'Become Involved' page. Chaplains who desire to receive these requests must first be sending prayer requests from their inmates to Opening Doors for distribution to prayer ministries. Churches that desire to participate must first be receiving inmate prayer requests. Opening Doors will serve as the link across the state to receive and distribute prayer requests from inmates and churches. Keep this growing prayer web in your prayers and watch the mighty move of God! Contact us if you want to become involved.

### PRAYER REQUESTS:

- † For wise decisions to be made this month for all of the grant applicants under the Ohio Strengthening Families Initiative & wise stewardship of all awarded funds
- † Opportunity to serve more Christian ex-offenders with SITG™ mentoring
- † Staffing & new volunteers
- † Corporate partnerships to do more prison staff programs
- † Expanding prison prayer teams & Prayers For Prisoners<sup>sm</sup>
- † New Funding Sources

### PRAISE REPORT:

In answer to prayer, Marla Eland has recently offered to coordinate Prayers For Prisoners<sup>sm</sup>

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I will apply my new “learned” skills in all of my everyday situations, always aware that even if negative conflict is just around the corner, the power to find a non-violent solution lies within me. I am master and commander of my ship, my choices, my destiny!! Change isn't easy, it does not happen overnight! Faith in our skills and potential, as well as faith in others will go a long way towards transforming us into the productive and enlightened people God intended us to be! ♥

About the author: Mike attended Opening Doors at Ross Correctional in July, 2005. Since writing his story, Mike's security status was reduced and he was transferred to Madison Correctional. He received a continuance on his parole hearing and will have the opportunity to go before the Parole Board again in October, 2008. We thank Mike for sharing his story with us and congratulate him on being the runner-up in our writing competition.

## A SPECIAL THANKS

We give this space in our Newsletter to Mike Easterling the runner-up in our 2005 Writing Competition so that he can say “*thanks*” to the people he credits with making his Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> experience possible:

*Thanks to:* Mr. Pence, Mrs. Parsons, Mrs. Upchurch, Mrs. Giffin, our chaplains, Encouraging Ellen, a supportive warden, and a loving God who makes all things possible! *From, Mike Easterling*

Editor's Note: You met “Encouraging Ellen” in our September 2005 edition. If you missed her story we invite you to visit our website at [www.OpeningMoreDoors.org](http://www.OpeningMoreDoors.org) for all of our past Newsletters. “Mr. Pence” is Jon Pence, Peggy's husband (see story on page 1).