




MISSION STATEMENT: We exist to serve those affected by incarceration by being ambassadors of *life change* through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



Written by Jill Marie Thomas

 ur family's retail pretzel store opened for business at 8:30 a.m. that pleasant Monday morning, just like it did every other week. The dainty crocuses were blooming in the gardens out front and signs of spring and warmer days were in the air. The store clerk stocked the shelves full of colorful bags of pretzels and checked what mail orders had come in over the weekend. A few door prizes had to be readied for pickup. It seemed to be a regular and pleasant start to a new week on the job.

A few moments later, a man entered the store wearing the stereotypical dark, hooded sweatshirt, and with his one hand hidden in his pocket demanded the clerk to give him all the money in the cash register. Fingers trembling, she complied, and he bolted out the door with the cash. Thankfully nobody got hurt and the monetary loss was negligible.

Since then, I've thought much about the man who robbed us and fled that day. At first I'd felt a large amount of anger. *How dare he do that to my family and our business and resources! We work hard! Why doesn't he go get a job somewhere instead of stealing from us?* Then, when I learned he'd robbed three other local small businesses after ours, disgust added to my anger. Authorities soon apprehended him

and sentenced him to a fairly lengthy prison sentence—decades behind bars.

At first I felt a measure of relief. See, I thought, *if you keep your nose clean and behave yourself, you don't end up in prison.*

As time passed, I held to that same line of thinking, but every time the thought came, it seemed to be accompanied by a little whisper in my spirit saying, "Is that so?" And that whisper continued to get louder as the months passed and whenever we discussed *THE INCIDENT*.

I thought back through my life and over some of the really stupid things I've done. We all joke about the idiotic things in our past at times, and we even ponder how we can still be alive after all the dumb things we've done. Much of the jesting is done in good fun.

But one day that little whisper in my spirit got amplified. This time I heard, "But for the grace of God, every single human deserves a sentence, a punishment, a jail stay. You, Jill, are just as guilty as the one who robbed your store that day. Now start thinking about his story."

So I did. And, in spite of myself, my heart toward him began to soften. I started by researching every newspaper article covering the man and his four robberies. First, I learned that he'd lived not too far from my childhood home. Then I also read that he has a young daughter.

continued on page 2

Jubilee Ministries 26th Annual

Golf Tournament

MAY 11, 2022

starting at 1:00 PM

at Fairview Golf Course

Lunch Provided at Registration



Go to www.jub.org/golf
for sponsorship and
registration information

JUBILEE IS HIRING!

***Store & Ministry
Positions Available***

www.jub.org/employment

The Incident –continued from page 1

At the same time I was delving into his background, I was seeing many verses in the Bible telling me of Jesus' heart for those in prison. Verse after verse softened me and ultimately brought me to my knees in repentance for my previous attitudes:

“ ... I was in prison and you came to see me “ (MATTHEW 25:36).

“ You suffered along with those in prison ...” (HEBREWS 10:34).

“Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, ...” (HEBREWS 13:3), and many more verses.

Soon, I knew I had to find him. God had done a work in my heart, and now I understood what I needed to do. The time had come for me to do whatever I could to offer him forgiveness (on behalf of our family) and facilitate his own redemption in whatever way I could.

It was a complicated, twisting, turning road to find the address of the man who now occupied many of my thoughts. Through much determination and phone conversations with policemen, investigating agents, and local and state jail wardens, I learned the mailing address of the facility where he will spend most of the rest of his life.

I have communicated with him by letter several times to date. The best report I can give at this point is that his last chapters have not yet been written. I pray for him often. Someday I hope he and I will laugh together in Heaven as we chat about THE INCIDENT.

– Jill Marie Thomas is an author, speaker, teacher, Jubilee supporter, and mother of Jubilee staff member, Lindsay Adams. She has written a fiction book, the first in the Redemption Rentals Series: “Home Away Haven,” loosely based on the events of THE INCIDENT. All her other books can be found on Amazon. She loves traveling near and far, drinking coffee with friends, and eating way too many chocolate covered pretzels.



LEWIS: A STORY OF LIFE CHANGE

Part II

The dramatic story of God's powerful transformation of Lewis was featured in Jubilee's December 2021 Newsletter (see Lewis: A Story of Life Change). God is now using Lewis to lead a ministry he founded in Philadelphia upon his release from prison. *"Men of Purpose was birthed as a continuation of the fellowship that men in prison had established in that setting,"* explains Lewis. *"I want something so solid that when men get out they know they have a place where they are warmly received, because there are people there who are like-minded. Men of Purpose is bridging the gap between the Church on the outside and the Church on the inside."*

Currently, the group meets every Saturday morning via Zoom to spend time together in the Word, lift each other up in prayer, and discuss ways that they can move forward in their mission to connect Christians on the "inside" with those "outside" the prison walls. One hurdle is the stigma attached to people coming out of prison. There may be doubts as to how genuine a person's faith is when they have become a Christian while incarcerated. Others wonder if it is simply "jailhouse religion," and question whether or not the person can really be trusted. Lewis provides one solution to this problem. *"I think the way to overcome that stigma is to have churches become involved with brothers and sisters before they even get out. I believe that when this happens, the Church is authentic to the Scriptures and to what Jesus would do."*

Similarly, Jubilee has been developing a curriculum for churches that will teach important concepts related to welcoming those who have been in prison into their church family. This curriculum will allow churches with a heart for prison ministry to learn from some of the hard lessons experienced by Jubilee over the years,



Men of Purpose at a local church function. Lewis is third from left.

so they can better serve those who are coming out of prison. Jubilee's desire is to equip churches to better understand, welcome, and love those who have been affected by incarceration. Lewis highlights that those being released from prison *"need to know that the Church, which is their family, is really there for them."*

As *Men of Purpose* builds bridges between God's people in prison and those on the outside, please pray that God will continue to guide and direct their steps. Their network of formerly incarcerated brothers in Christ is growing in numbers and in faith! Pray also for Lewis as he shares the message that the Church behind bars and the Church in our communities need one another. *"When you have the Church out here invest in the Church on the inside, it can't do anything but good. It's investing in the Kingdom. The strengthening of the brothers on the inside by the brothers and sisters out here definitely has an evangelistic effect on the inside!"*

SPEAKERS AVAILABLE

Jubilee staff members are available for speaking engagements at churches, civic organizations, Sunday school classes & small groups.

**SCHEDULE A DATE
& SPEAKER TODAY!**

Jubilee@jub.org or
717-274-7528 x233

Jubilee Ministries BOARD of DIRECTORS

CEO: **Ryan Newswanger**

Chairperson: **Marlin Zimmerman**

Vice Chairperson: **Leon Zimmerman**

Treasurer: **Jay Hershey**

Secretary: **Kirby Keller**

Board Members: **Gina Breslin, Carl Horning,
Jayson Hurst, Dale Martin, Tanya Sensenig,
Steve Wuori, John Zimmerman**



**Our Stores Feature Quality Pre-Owned
Clothing, Housewares, Books, Furniture & More!**

STORE HOURS: Monday - Saturday 9 AM - 8 PM

ANNVILLE & Re-Build-It Store,

1455 E. Main St. **717-867-4657**

LEBANON, 235 S. 12th St. **717-274-7528**

MANHEIM, 27 E. Ferdinand St. **717-664-0435**

MYERSTOWN, 715 E. Lincoln Ave. **717-866-0218**

PALMYRA, 232 W. Main St. **717-832-0400**

WERNERSVILLE, 6371 Penn Ave. **610-396-2821**

ONLINE STORE **shopthejub.com**



@JubileeMinistriesAndStores



@jubilee_ministries

5 Ways To Give!



by MAIL – Cash or Check
Payable to Jubilee Ministries,
235 S. 12th Street, Lebanon, PA 17042



thru your BANK – Via Online Bill Pay
Automatic donations available



ONLINE – www.jub.org/donate
One-time or recurring, Credit or Debit



DONATE ITEMS
www.jub.org/acceptable-donations



VOLUNTEER – www.jub.org/volunteer
or call the office: 717-274-7528

Jubilee Ministries is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
Contributions are tax deductible according to IRS regulations.
A financial statement is available upon request.



235 S. 12th Street, Lebanon, PA 17042
717.274.7528 | www.jub.org

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
LEBANON, PA
PERMIT NO. 146

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please email us at jubilee@jub.org or call 717-274-7528.

Thrift Store Ministry

The Jubilee thrift experience isn't just about donating items at the dock or making a great find and purchase. Ministry happens IN our stores on a regular basis!

Ministry in the store doesn't always mean with words. Our actions often speak loudly to our customers. This was made clear to me when a regular customer approached me with the question, "You pray, don't you?" I smiled at her and said "yes!" I had never talked to her about my faith in Jesus but she knew. She proceeded to ask me if I would pray for her granddaughter because she was sure she was using drugs and hanging out with the wrong crowd. Her experience in our store gave her the confidence to ask for prayer because she could see that we loved God and would care for her needs. Exemplifying Christ and showing God's love and light to all can be very profound to those who are watching us. It's easy to say we are Christians, but more importantly we need to show it by our love.

*Darlene Nolen,
Lebanon Clothing Store Manager*



**JUBILEE
THRIFT STORES
EXIST TO PROVIDE
FINANCIAL
RESOURCES
FOR OUR
PRISON
MINISTRY.**

Our dock workers in Wernersville live out our core values daily, through their interaction with our donors. Recently, we had a donor who lost his wife a few weeks earlier. He was donating his wife's clothing, saying goodbye to her with every bag he put in the cart. With his permission, we laid hands on him and prayed, reminding him he is never alone. Jubilee is a thrift store and so much more. We preach the Gospel every day, and if necessary we use words.

*Michal Posey,
Wernersville Store Manager*