



Opening Blind Eyes

Rev D.W. 'Rip' Van Winkle, Ph.D. ~ Executive Director

What does doing prison ministry mean? It means taking advantage of all opportunities to impact the lives of the entire prison population—the incarcerated and those who work with them.

Because WSR has become more closed to volunteer ministries since January, God's been creative at opening other doors. On October 9th, I had the opportunity to supervise a 3 1/2 hour Sunday afternoon family visitation. It was an opportunity I relished.

But first, I was able to visit with the officers as I went through the security checks (from which I used to be exempt) prior to the beginning of the visitation. I treasured this opportunity, as one of my goals is to establish good relationships with the officers.

Watching inmates interact with their wives and children is ordinary and extraordinary at the same time. The men are allowed to briefly hug and kiss their wives when they arrive and when they depart. They're allowed to hug their children and have them sit on their laps during the entire visit. The children were overjoyed to see their fathers, and the fathers were delighted to play with their children.

The prison provided popcorn and root beer floats. Visitors also used cards to purchase food and drinks from the vending machines that lined the Visiting Room. Everyone was on best behavior. All of this was under the watchful eyes of plenty of officers.

The whole group participated in Karaoke and Pictionary. I sang Credence Clear Water Revival's "Proud Mary" to get things started, since everyone was reluctant to begin singing (which probably surprises none of you). That broke the ice and prisoners and their families were emboldened to sing. The young children sang some of their favorite songs like "Itsy Bitsy Spider." Everyone played Pictionary. The children were especially good at this.

Families played board games and dominos at their own tables. Young children climbed on their fathers and rough housed with them. Older children and grandchildren sat in their chairs and carried on conversations with their loved ones.

Events like this are vitally important since they strengthen family ties. The stronger an inmate's ties with his family, the less likely he is to re-offend. Children also benefit from normal interaction with their fathers. These events provide hope and make the prison a safer place. They are also a sign of God's grace. And it pleased me to minister in this way.

Prisoners were grateful that I supervised the event, and I was glad to see the inmates in a different setting. It would not surprise me to see more of the prisoners at OBE's worship services.

Thank you for your support that makes this ministry possible.

(Detach here and return in the enclosed envelope)

Count Me In !

Opening Blind Eyes

YES! I want to Partner with Opening Blind Eyes to provide Christian Counsel and Education for inmates at WSR.

I pledge \$50 a month for the next 2 years

I cannot pledge \$50 a month but I can give a onetime gift of :

\$25 \$50 \$100 _____

I will be praying for Opening Blind Eyes

Your gift to Opening Blind Eyes is tax deductible as allowed by law. You will receive a receipt for your records