

the *Heart* of the **MATTER**

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Laura Shaffer: Serving with *Revive Our Hearts*

Spring is here! And with the new season comes a new hope in the promises and plans of God for our lives. I've now been at ROH for eight months, and I certainly feel like I'm settling into my new life. As I continue to fulfill the work God gives me to do here, I extend my deep gratitude to each of you for your friendship and support. My days are filled with managing ROH publications under my director, Mike Neises. My evenings are busy working through an online graphic design school. I've enclosed a project I worked on last month for ROH. It highlights some of the extraordinary testimonies of changed hearts and lives.

The God Pod

"I feel sorry for the inmates who are leaving prison," said Carolyn, a radiant woman with a life sentence in the McPherson Women's Prison in Newport, Arkansas. After spending a day and half in prison, I understood her sentiments! My visit to this prison was deeply stirring and impacted my heart and life in a way few experiences ever have.

Last week, I had the privilege to travel to Arkansas with two other single ladies from Life Action to visit our friend Stacey Smith. Stacey, an ex-felon herself, now ministers to the women at McPherson in a faith-based program called PAL.

The PAL (Principles & Application for Life) program is a 12-week faith-based training program. PAL trains inmates with Biblical principles that prompt personal responsibility, integrity, and accountability.

Stacey Smith had been leading a 16-week study called "Seeking Him" in the prison. (This is a study on personal revival written by Nancy Leigh DeMoss.) Stacey invited *Revive Our Hearts* to join as prayer partners with the ladies in prison going through "Seeking Him." I was praying for three ladies: Christina, Cassandra, and Kimberly.

As we walked into the PAL barracks (pod) where the inmates in the PAL program live, work, and learn, we were introduced to the group. Christina, my prayer buddy, immediately came up to me, then introduced me to Kimberly and Cassandra. Our hearts were knit together instantly!

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Prison Musings

Truths impressed on my heart while observing the PAL program

- Authentic Christianity is about living with the roof off in my relationship with God and the walls down in my relationships with others. Humility and transparency are vital; without them, a soul will shrivel.
- Wisdom is implemented in a life through the pursuit of engrafting Scripture: making Scripture become a living part of my life through memorization, meditation, personalization, and application.
- The church is filled with people who are incarcerated in their own hearts.
- We don't see the same authenticity, power, or freedom in the "free world" because we have a false sense of our sufficiency. We are really just as desperately needy and broken as these inmates, but we cover up the neediness with the trappings of free life.
- All we in the "free world" must do to know the saving and healing power of Christ in our lives is to confess a humble, genuine acknowledgement of our desperate needs and a faith in our all-sufficient Savior.



Becky Shelford,
Laura Shaffer,
Stacey Smith,
and Stacey
Battenburg
in the PAL Pod

A DIVINE APPOINTMENT

As I traveled to Arkansas to visit the ladies in the PAL program, I was a little nervous! This was walking into the unknown! Little did I know that God had a divine appointment to meet with me in prison.

Interacting with the ladies in PAL, I was constantly challenged by the commitment to and love for the Word of God of several of the women. They memorized large portions of Scripture so that the Word of Christ was literally “dwelling in them richly” (Col. 3:16).

Memorization of Scripture has been a spiritual battle in my life for several years—and honestly, a failed battle. While in prison, God did a deep work of renewal in my heart. He refreshed in me a passionate desire to know Him and His Word.

Within a few days of returning home, an entire Psalm was committed to memory, and I’m now done with a second passage. That is a miracle as it is literally the first time in several years that I’ve been able to memorize Scripture. I long for this new desire to plant itself deeply in my heart and bear much fruit for the glory of God!

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My friends and I were deeply moved through the next 3 hours as we joined in the refreshing worship, the powerful teaching, and the sweet fellowship with our sisters in Christ in prison. It was like we stepped into an Acts 2 church—authentic church with the power of God evident to heal and change lives.

As we interacted with the women throughout the rest of the day, we heard the hearts of broken women whose lives have been shattered by sin. Lust, addictions, abuse, prostitution, and murder put them on a path to prison. These women are desperately needy and broken.

But these are exactly the kinds of people that Christ came to save! Indeed, Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because . . . he has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives . . . to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). In the midst of incredible need, God is pouring out His amazing grace to these women!

The next morning, we changed our plans; instead of heading immediately back home, we went back to prison. Kay Arthur (Precept Bible Studies) was visiting the prison, and we didn’t want to miss meeting her! It was a privilege to meet her, hear her testimony, and listen to her teach.

We were sad to leave the prison and the ladies we had grown so close to in the short time we were there. Yet, we were filled with joy at the work God is doing in prison. Prison is a dark place for many people, but for the ladies in the “God Pod,” it is a refuge and way to God.

Visit www.prisonpurpose.com to learn more about what God is doing in the McPherson women’s prison through PAL.



Spring has finally brought its sweet heralds after our long winter. I enjoy this blossoming dogwood as I walk/jog around my apartment complex.



The Seeking Him Bible Study group. Christina, one of my prayer partners is standing in front of me and to the far right.