

Kingdom Living Today

Demonstrating the WAY of God's Kingdom to the Hopeless and Helpless

44. Being Our Lord's Point of Contact (Part 2)

**"REMEMBER THOSE IN PRISON AS IF YOU WERE THEIR FELLOW PRISONERS,
AND THOSE WHO ARE MISTREATED AS IF YOU YOURSELVES WERE SUFFERING."**

Jack, Bob and Treyvon had been getting acquainted for several minutes as they enjoyed lunch at a local restaurant. Treyvon, a husky young man with a smile as warm as Jack's, was eager to meet this man Bob admired so much. Jack was just as enthused, and looking pointedly at Treyvon he said, "Tell me about yourself. And tell me about you and Jesus."

Treyvon took a moment to gather his thoughts, then matter-of-factly began to recount his life journey. "I was raised by a single mom. My dad was in and out of my life until around age 10, and then he just left. I joined a gang, and like the kids I'm ministering to now, I did time in a detention center."

Jack appreciated the way Treyvon spoke of his past without any tinge of bitterness or shame. The older man probed, "So how did you get from there to where you are now?"

"Where I lived in the inner city, there was an older woman named Yolanda who lived down the block." Treyvon smiled warmly as he thought about her. "Whenever she was outside in her yard and saw me walking by, she'd stop me and talk. Man, she was always coming down on me about the bad choices I was making. But I really knew she cared." His face split with a grin as he added, "She'd tell me over and over again, 'Treyvon, someday you're gonna to come to a point when you'll need to ask Jesus to help you!'"

"So what happened?" Jack asked, his interest piqued.

"One night my friend Ramon and I were walking home and a police cruiser with two white cops pulled up next to us. The one in the passenger seat jumped out of the car with his pistol drawn and put it to my chest. I could see he was young and edgy. And I had my hands in my pockets and that made him even more nervous."

Bob was focused on Treyvon's story too. "How were you feeling at that moment?"

"I was shaking like a leaf. As I looked into his eyes I could see he was wondering how much a threat I was and whether he needed to pull the trigger." He paused and shook his head. "It was right at that moment Yolanda's words came to me, and deep inside myself I called out to Jesus for help."

"I take it the officer didn't shoot," Jack commented softly.

Chuckling a bit, Treyvon continued, "No, he didn't. He just lowered his gun. And then his whole face changed as he told me he was sorry. Seems they were looking for two guys who held up a liquor store and shot the owner. Both cops got back in the cruiser and drove off." He paused at the memory. "I turned to Ramon. He was so scared he looked like a white guy! I could hear him whispering, 'Jesus... Jesus... My Lord Jesus!'"

"I sense this event happened because someone had really been praying up a

storm for you and Ramon,” Bob interjected.

“You know, somehow we both sensed that very thing,” the young man continued. “In fact, even though it was late, we went to Yolanda’s home. She and her husband Garond invited us in. He was confined to a wheelchair; that’s why I hadn’t spent time with him before.”

“I can tell by the warmth in your voice and the expression on your face that this was a really meaningful time for you,” Jack observed candidly as he put his hand on Treyvon’s shoulder.

The young man was surprised; no white man had ever touched him with such genuine kindness before. He went on, “Yolanda called our parents and told them where we were, and then she sat us down. She and Garond talked with us for hours. That was the first time in my life an older couple ever took a real interest in me. And it was the first time an older man talked to me like I was a man and not some kid.”

“What do you mean, Treyvon?” Bob broke in, curious as well as in awe of what Lord Jesus can do to bring someone to Himself.

“Neither Garond nor Yolanda preached at us or talked down to us like so many Christians we knew had done over the years. They asked us questions about our lives and shared God’s view about how we lived.”^(1Timothy 1:13-16) His eyes glistened as he recalled with a grateful heart what happened next. “Both Ramon and I began to feel the hurt our sins had caused God. It must have been close to dawn when he and I knelt down together crying.”^(Isaiah 55:6,7) Treyvon inhaled deeply, wrapped up in the emotion of that moment.

Jack waited as the man pulled out his handkerchief to wipe his eyes. “I can see that your life was changed forever from that moment.”

“So many Christians talk about being born again like it’s no big deal,” Treyvon snorted. “But that morning Ramon and I really were reborn!” Enthusiasm sounded from his heart. “Garond and Yolanda gave us breakfast and then sent us home. They asked to meet my Mom and Ramon’s parents. I didn’t understand it then, but I do now after what Bob’s been telling me about your way of ministering. They knew we needed the support of our family if we were to go on with Jesus.”

Jack loved hearing authentic, God-honoring testimonies. “And that’s one of the things that’s hit you about a different way of ministering to the kids in the detention center, isn’t it? A family-to-family relationship makes all the difference!”

“I’ll say,” the young man responded jubilantly. “The Lord was already way ahead of Ramon and me. We found out that Garond and Yolanda had moved into our neighborhood several years earlier and began interceding for all of us.”^(Isaiah 55:10,11) Ramon and I were the firstfruits of their prayers! And for months afterward they not only met with Ramon and me; they also became close friends with my Mom and his parents.”

Knowing smiles filled the faces of the two older men as Treyvon enthused, “We all became family like I’ve never seen family!”^(Psalms 118:15) Because of Garond and Yolanda’s love and faith, it didn’t seem like it took very long until we were all family of Jesus together.” His face grew serious as he added, “The one thing they insisted on is that we stay repentant so that God would continue to answer our prayers. And we knew that how we lived showed whether our trust in Jesus as our Lord was real or just words.”^(Proverbs 2:7,8,20,21)

"I see that you understand how important it is to live in a way that pleases our Father and stay repentant the way He wants," (1Thessalonians 4:1) Jack affirmed. "He loves to answer the prayers of those who trust and obey Him!" (Proverbs 15:29)

Bob cut in, "In the weeks Treyvon and I have been discussing the detention center, I've recommended he go to the Restoration Ministries website and read some of the materials."

Jack turned toward the young man with great interest as Treyvon responded earnestly, "Bob had me work through *Demolishing Strongholds* and watch the *Jesus In Your Home* videos. Everything I read or watched rang true in my heart! And I could sense that my time with Garond and Yolanda had prepared me for these truths."

"Have you spent any time in the organized church system?" Jack asked.

"For the past year and a half that I've been part of the detention center ministry I've been attending the same church as one of the others guys who volunteers at the center," he answered. "But the congregation itself isn't involved. And to be honest," he sighed heavily, "something inside me has never been at peace or fulfilled there."

Jack could understand. "You're probably recognizing that organized religious systems and the Kingdom of God aren't the same."

The young man nodded avidly, then brought up what was burdening his heart. "Bob told me the insights you shared with the shepherds and their wives when you got together last week. You hit the nail on the head when you said none of us who ministers at the detention center ever had any of the kids into our homes after their release. And," he noted sadly, "middle class men do run the ministry. My heart breaks when I realize that 80% of the kids will return to detention."

"I'm sorry to hear about the frustration that method of ministry has caused you," Jack replied sincerely. For decades he'd carried the same hurt over ministry fruitlessness that he saw in the younger man's face. "But I'm also happy to see you riled enough to do want to do something about it!"

"Jack, it's not just *how* we minister that hurts," Treyvon added, "but how unwilling the men involved are to question their methods. That really burns me!"

Bob spoke up, "At our shepherd's meeting, someone mentioned an old saying, 'A fool is the lumberman who doesn't stop to sharpen his axe.'"

Treyvon leaned forward on the edge of his seat. "That sure describes what's going on with these guys!" He paused, then observed, "I really like what I'm seeing at that website, Jack. If you and your home fellowship families are serving our Lord Jesus the way I'm seeing there, I really want to learn more. Maybe God would have me come alongside you guys like a disciple."

Jack's spirit could sense the Spirit of Jesus in this eager soul. "Bob and I are just beginning to see how we can help you, Treyvon."

"Jack, you've been walking in Jesus a lot longer than I have," Treyvon humbly voiced. "Please tell me more about how today's idea of 'church' has strayed so far from serving the King of the Kingdom."

Jack summed it up this way: "Much of the American religious system relies on *knowledge about God*, often emphasizing the parts of the Bible that appeal to the leaders' special interests and ignoring the rest. They attract people through pro-

grams and activities that appeal to people's interests—kind of like the world's way." Treyvon nodded he understood and Jack went on, "But the Kingdom depends on spiritual power as the Holy Spirit works in and through authentic Jesus followers. Kingdom folks have absolute confidence in the Spirit of Jesus within us to guide us."

Bob jumped in with another point. "Congregations often minister to others based on a narrow focus on what the religious leaders think people need. But a Kingdom understanding pursues the need of a person to intimately know the only One Who can meet their heart and soul, and pours out to meet other areas of need as well."

"All our home fellowship families have embraced the biblical truth that anyone who encountered Jesus or His disciples encountered the *power of God*," Jack stated confidently. "As the apostle Paul made clear, *The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.*"(1 Corinthians 4:20) Since we've been graced with the power to do our Father's will, everyone in our fellowship families has the same goal: *Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*"(Matthew 5:16)

Treyvon's face brightened. "I know what you mean by spiritual power! In the months we got together with Garond and Yolanda, I saw our Father answer prayers all the time. Each time we met we built each other up with testimonies of healings, deliverances, and divine encounters with people." His handsome face grew sad. "But since I've been in this congregation and been part of this ministry, it's all gone. Something's dead around me."(2 Timothy 3:5)

"I hear what you're saying," Jack empathized. "It's like you initially followed Jesus in His Kingdom, then you got trapped in a religious system. Now you want your first love for Jesus to shine in the opportunity to serve His Kingdom purposes."

"That's exactly what I mean," Treyvon exulted. "I want the Kingdom again!"

The fatherly hearts of Jack and Bob were reflected in their smiles; they weren't going to let Treyvon down. Turning to the two men Treyvon offered, "I was reading one of the Teaching E-mails on the Restoration Ministries website where they talk about this guy at a retreat center simulating throwing a hand grenade into a group." (42. Develop Loyalty—Giving Up Your Life For Someone)

"You're talking about when none of the clergy, 10% of the men, and 50% of the women and teenagers jumped on the hand grenade, right?" Bob asked.

"Yeah, that's it," the young man answered. "Both Garond and Yolanda showed Ramon and me how important it is to be dead to ourselves.(Luke 9:23) They'd left their children and grandchildren back in the suburbs because God had called them as a couple to move into the inner city. I want to be around people again who live this way!"

"As I've talked with Treyvon," Bob smiled at Jack, "he reminds me of how the Psalmist describes a righteous man's life: *When I called, You answered me; You made me bold and stouthearted.*"(Psalms 138:3)

Treyvon reddened at the praise, but he was thankful to his Lord for the boldness that repentance had produced in him. Jack looked at his watch and realized the men had to get back to work. "Treyvon, we're going to have a picnic with our home fellowship family to discuss participating with you at the detention center. Why don't you come over Sunday and see if this is a faith family you want to belong to?"

Grasping each other's hands, the men joyfully committed their way to the Lord.