

New Name Ministries
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Insider's View

By Beecher Cameron

The second anniversary of my release on parole comes around soon, and it is appropriate to look back on the last two years. Driving home today I heard the song "Better Days;" Perhaps it is not one of Springsteen's best known, but the idea behind it is powerful and essential. There is a reason the title is not "Perfect Days" or "Joyful Days," and it is a matter of perspective. A sudden, wildly beneficial change in life does happen on occasion, but it is generally the stuff of fiction. Our lives change one day at a time, and expecting more can only cause disappointment and disillusionment. Each day must be met with courage, spiritual strength, humor, and most importantly, an absence of bitterness.

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From the Father's Heart

By Pastor Jon Cordeiro

When Your Upgrade Looks Like a Downgrade

There is a misconception among the immature, untrained, and wounded Believers that if God is really good, all the time, then he would not allow setbacks and evil in our lives. Surely a good God would protect us and our loved ones from all the wiles of the enemy. The problem isn't His goodness, it's our obedience. He has given us His Word (Logos and Rhema) and Holy Spirit for guidance to do exactly that; He is for us, not against us. And, when we miss it, He will use the fall out for our good if we humble ourselves and open our hearts to receiving this truth.

Many take the hardships of life as punishment for their bad choices – thinking that God *wants* to punish them, He doesn't. Surely there are consequences for our poor choices or mistakes, but it's not God's desire to punish, but to correct. He won't bend the rules that He put in place to purify us so that we'll stop whining. He will reward us for our faithfulness to His Word and heeding of His instructions. Try it and see. If it's not true, you're welcome to double your trouble back. As I share often, our troubles are not external, they're internal: it's a heart issue.

We wrestle with our flesh when we ought to be running to our Father in Heaven seeking His wisdom for our needs. Often, we don't hear because we're stuck in denial of our need to repent for our part of the problem and our judgment against those who have offended us. We worry about getting what we want when we need to be working on hearing from Him through the Holy Spirit. Man's answers (wisdom) bring man's solutions. I'm not interested in good results; good is the enemy of best. Jesus died to give us the best, His best. If we have trouble with His best for us, we're deceived.

Nobody likes correction, but the Word tells us that God disciplines us out of love, not anger. We will only duck and dodge as long as we fear correction. I challenge you to ask God to correct you, your thinking, and your heart while welcoming the process. If you can't say Amen, you're welcome to say ouch!

This has been one of the toughest years of ministry for New Name Ministries, and yet, we trust God is doing a good work in the midst of the trials and tribulations. Upgrades can look a lot like downgrades when you look at circumstances through men's eyes. Ask the Lord for His eyes to see and ears to hear. I guarantee what He has in store is more than you've hoped or imagined.

Insider's View

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The memory of the material and monetary cost of my crime fades each day. The memory of those persons harmed, disappointed, or made fearful will not, and it is well that it remain. They deserve a place in my memory even if it is painful. That presence is a reminder of the harm I have done and could do; it is not a devaluation of my life. Neither is it a reason not to move forward. Life is still lived one day at a time; an ambitious plan for the future means nothing without the ability to navigate Wednesday if today is Tuesday.

Tomorrow I will walk through factory doors and within 10 minutes the work plan in my head for my team and me will be made irrelevant. The day's aggravations and challenges will have begun, but with some flexibility, humor, and the cooperation of each other, we get through. This is nothing unusual; it is done in workplaces and homes across the nation by everyday people whose efforts allow the world to function. There is heroism in this; it's not the kind that makes news, but it does build relationships, community and nations. The realization that we need each other is the glue that holds civilization together.

Though I do not always appear so, I am grateful for the chance to be out of prison, the chance to contribute, the chance to succeed or to fail. I am grateful for all of it. These are better days.

Taming the Workforce

By Scott Johnston

We make plans for reentering the workforce while we are locked up because many of us hear the phrase "fail to plan, plan to fail". We also hear that finding a job after leaving prison is going to be difficult. I would like to share with you some things you might do to prepare yourself so you can be a more desirable candidate when



you step into that interview room.

Prepare a one-page resume. I suggest one page because prospective employers want to be able to scan it within 30 seconds to see if they find what they are seeking. List 10-15 soft skills at the top of the page in bullet-point format. Soft skills include things like: safety minded, multi-tasker, punctual and team player. Make a list of the last three places that you have worked to include in your career history. Dates and lengths of time are not necessary. List what your job requirements were when

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you were employed. Be prepared to answer additional questions during the interview process about what you did while you were employed. No one knows you better than yourself. Sell yourself. Be confident in your knowledge, skills and abilities. Offer the interviewer the best you. If you have not been employed in the past while you were free, but you worked while you were incarcerated, put these jobs on your resume. List your employer as "The State of Texas" or whatever state you live in now. Put your education on the resume as well. If you did not graduate from high school, get your GED while you are incarcerated. Most employers will not consider hiring you if you do not have a GED or high school diploma.

I took courses offered at the pre-release facility where I lived. They offered Blueprint Awareness, National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Electrical, NCCER Painting and Décor, Custodial Maintenance, Commercial Drivers License Prep and Typing. Put in a request to the education department at the facility where you are and see what they have to offer. Learn a new trade. Do not allow bad "jail house" reviews of the classes or peer pressure keep you from signing up. Also, do not sell yourself short. Better yourself. Take a class. Learn something new. Have fun! Thanks for reading.



Legacy

By David Duremus



On the first of September I left the ministry house on Travis Avenue, having spent a year there in program and five months as a graduate resident. There I experienced real life, real relationships, real growth. I argued, bucked, fretted, cried, and finally submitted to God's will and learned what it is to be a *servant-leader*. It's where I began my new life after prison, and on leaving I wondered, "What will the next step look like, and how to begin?" I found the answer in the humble honey bee.

Though this article talks about bees, it is really about men, or rather *every* man, and how he fits into the whole of society. The cult of individualism is deeply ingrained in American psyche, a romantic remnant of the frontier. But it isn't the natural state of Man, and the individual suffers for lack of community: self-reliance is good and healthy, self-absorption is neither. We can learn much about life from the honey bee.

Three things about the honey bee (specifically the *worker caste*) I find worth imitating: first, she is a model of industry and cooperation. Just one pound of honey requires the labor of thousands of bees working in concert, gathering during the relatively short bloom season enough pollen and nectar to sustain the hive through winter. In so doing they form a crucial link in the food chain, pollinating the

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plants they visit so that they bear fruit abundantly.

They are, of course, unaware of how their actions benefit other creatures, but if they by instinct can do such good in the world, how much more can I, who have the power of will improve the lives of others?

I can choose compassion over indifference, forgiveness rather than resentment, and cooperation over competition.

Second, bees are selfless. Their every action is on behalf of the hive, without any sense of personal gain. And yet, by serving the hive they improve their own chances of survival. The colony is so inter-relational that injury to any segment affects the production of food, nursing the brood, and regulating the temperature and humidity of the hive. In short, as fares the hive, so fares each member.

John Donne found this also true of humanity, writing famously, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main...any man's death diminishes me because I am involved with mankind." We have the opportunity to be part of something greater than ourselves if we are willing to sometimes step back from our own self-interest, and take a smaller portion so others may also have a piece of the pie. The Bible calls on Christians to adopt this philosophy because it is pleasing to God, but there is practical advantage for the secular, too: we have to sleep in the bed we make, to live in the society we create.



Finally, honey bees are polymorphic, assuming different roles within the colony as they mature, even developing specialized body parts to fit them for activities which benefit the generations to come. Bees spend their final days tirelessly gathering nectar they will never taste – it will become honey to feed future brood.

Men, too, should be prepared to assume different functions in their communities they age, or rather, as they mature. For the changes which adapt us to new roles – new responsibilities and opportunities—are much more of the mind and heart than of the body. I am at a place of transition now, physically, yes, because of changes in housing and routine, but more importantly I am transitioning in my role in the ministry and the community. I hope – no, I am *determined* – that what I learned at Travis House will continue to characterize my behavior and that I can do good in the community.

The word that comes to mind is "legacy", defined by Webster as "something left behind by someone who has passed." Every one of us has one, an imprint left by our passing through the world, and for many that legacy is characterized by injury and destruction. But I have the power to change my behavior, and change that legacy. I am a work in progress, and working my program is the key to my freedom.

So let me here resolve to rededicate myself daily, to emulate the humble honey bee. Let me work diligently to improve the lives around me; let me lend my strength to something bigger and grander than myself; and with glad heart let me receive the changes wrought by nature and experience, knowing they are perfect preparation for the new role which awaits.