



October 2023

...from prison to praise... Psalm 142:7

Rescued * Redeemed * Restored



Dear CPM Family,

From the very beginning, the mission of Connections Prison Ministry – our Mission Statement – has been centered on Psalm 142:7a; “Set me free from my prison, that I may praise you!” and on our passion which is detailed in the words **Rescue, Redeem, Restore**. We have prayed and sought your partnership in prayer and giving, to help support this mission the Lord has given us in reaching those who have struggled with incarceration, probation, and parole.

In recent weeks through difficult, prayerful, and child-like faith moments, the Lord has once again ignited the flame and humbled us, rekindling this mission.

Reminding us...

- The priority to give-a-way Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- The importance of building relationships and earning the right to be heard in one’s life.
- Being available for individuals and their families.
- Developing community.
- Offering opportunities for fellowship and mentoring.
- Providing tangible resources to start life after incarceration for daily living.
- Trusting and being obedient to the Lord.

Since CPM’s inception, the desire has been to lead and grow this ministry full-time. We were able to do that the past eighteen months but were dependent upon another organization to provide a salary. This created confusion with the efforts given the split responsibilities between 2 entities, as well as ownership by the other organization to manage our time pursuant to their requirements and demands more and more. Inevitably, it became less and less about our passion and spiritual emphasis on our own ministry and mission.

Now, we feel led to take a “leap-of-faith” and focus our attention on CPM solely full-time, fully focused on the mission of CPM to bring forth the **rescue** in Jesus through His grace and agape love, through the **redemption** paid for on the Cross, and the **restoration** Jesus promises through His faithfulness. It took a recent painful experience to get us “**Back to the Basics**”, which is how Chaplain Bill refers to it, but we know the Lord is constantly working all things out for the good of His children and for the glory of His Kingdom. We are humbled to be chosen to be a part of this journey, as well as His patient and careful consideration of His purpose for us and for CPM.

CPM is going (and growing) strong and we will continue to seek the Lord as we focus our attention, energy and resources to our mission. We have several exciting things in development for the near future and we look forward to sharing this news with you as the ministry progresses.

Many Blessings,

The CPM Board

Thomas' Story...

'But God still loved us with such great love. He is so rich in compassion and mercy. Even when we were dead and doomed in our many sins, He united us into the very life of Christ and saved us by His wonderful grace!'

Ephesians 2:4-5,

It was just like any other night, culminating in an abrupt awakening, the shattering glass breaking the night and its silence into pieces. Thomas was startled awake, landing on his feet before his brain could function. It felt like piercing a thick fog, one almost impenetrable, fear palpable in his bedroom, and sleep thick in his head and stuck to his eyes. The thought pulsated, however: Time was essential; the clock was ticking; trouble was imminent. He smelled danger like one might smell smoke in a house having caught fire. He hit the ground running, tripping over unconscious feet. He glanced at the clock beside his bed; it was 12:45 am.

He heard the intruder crashing through his downstairs, and later, he would remember warning himself to move quietly. Maybe the burglar thought no one was home? Perhaps he could take him by surprise. Maybe the individual was in such a drunken state, he didn't comprehend how manic he was being...and sounding. But one thought kept triggering; Thomas realized now that he was fully awake: perhaps the dude didn't give one whit how loud and invasive he was being because he was focused on a mission. A thick sludge of

dread filled him as he reached the staircase.

The next seconds passed in a blur and gunfire, and it wouldn't be until hours later, that Thomas was able to reflect on the miraculous goodness of God to save his life yet another time. He was shot at multiple times—in the head twice, his left hand took one of the bullets intended for his death, and also in his shoulder—and when he fell down the stairs after being stuck, his ear was split while the unknown attacker stomped on his head. The final bullet misfired. Blood was everywhere. But he was alive! In fact, he was so alive, Thomas would place himself in a cold shower to clear his mind prior to calling 911 to report the break-in. It wasn't until much later that Thomas could regurgitate the words his assailant had spit at him—how if he'd had another clip, he'd finish him off—but deep inside, he knew he'd been targeted, the word 'Vigilante' resounding in his mind. BUT GOD! God had other plans!



"God's Got Me

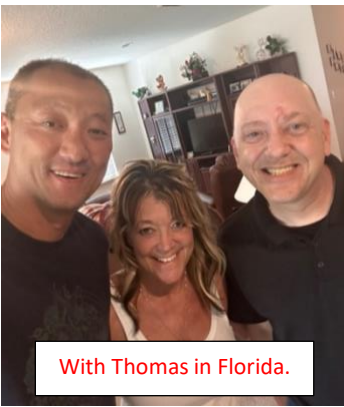
by Thomas Mitchell

I was in a bad spot in life. I went to prison for nine-and-a-half years, and upon release, I was given three-years parole with forty-eight-years of probation. Seemed pretty bleak. But for the first time in my life, God was totally in control.

My first night out, I went to Denny's for something to eat, and I picked up an application for a job while I was there. I was able to get an interview for the next day, and I was hired on the spot. God also supplied an apartment for me within ten-days, and with the financial help from my parents, I was able to move in immediately. It truly

was because of the Lord's direction in my life. I bought a car within six weeks. God! God! God! I was released from parole in approximately twenty months. Sixteen months later, I went to court, and forty-eight years of probation was terminated. God is BIG! I have read my Bible daily since before leaving prison and continue to do so to this day; five chapters a day and one with my dad.

I always knew the importance of God's armor, but I know so, more today than ever before. I was picked out of the public sex offender registry by a man who then plotted to kill me, which he attempted to do three days after my four-year prison release anniversary. On the night of August 9th, 2023, a little after midnight, he shot out my downstairs window. As I was coming down the stairs to see what the commotion was, he charged me using racial slurs, and then pulled out his gun and began shooting. I put up my left hand to shield myself, which then took that bullet. He shot again and got my right ear, and I immediately lost my eyesight, causing me to fall down the stairs. He began to stomp me in my head, shooting me in the shoulder, and lastly, shot me point blank in the forehead. He had ripped my ear, shattered my humerus bone in my left arm, blew apart my hand, left me pumped full of fragmented lead slugs and holes in my upper body, but I was alive! Before he left, he placed the barrel of the gun against my temple and pulled the trigger one last time. It just clicked. No more bullets! Cursing, he yelled as he ran away, "You'd be dead if I had one more clip."



Without the helmet of Salvation on my head and the shield of Faith before me, I would not be writing this today. I am a miracle, and I am going to share my testimony everywhere I go. God's got me! And He's got you too!"

Thomas would come through various surgeries to repair the damage done by the bullets, but nothing would affect him quite as painfully as the intense knowledge that those bullets had been intended for the purpose of his death. He wasn't prepared for the news stories which would follow in the newspaper of a small town. After several prison stays and years of 'rehabilitation', only meeting and falling in love with the redemptive, restorative love and forgiveness of Jesus, would bring about the authentic and eternal change in Thomas' life. He became a different man, a new creation, having been washed by Jesus' cleansing grace. But the world would never acknowledge such internal change, nor the years he'd served to reconcile his past and poor choices. Thomas knew he could never return to his life or his job nor his friends or the place he had begun to consider as home. In a matter of mere moments and a spattering of rapid gunfire, his life would be changed immediately forever. It was time to move on.

How does Thomas move on? How is Thomas going to come through this tragic ordeal alone, with his family thousands of miles away? **But God!** God would see to it that Thomas was transported to Colorado Springs, where he could be cared for by people who love him. Peter 'did time' with Thomas. They have praised God for His goodness in a prison chapel together. Thomas' dad was welcomed and cared for by many of our volunteers when he came from Florida to visit Thomas while in prison. When Thomas was released from prison, Peter was able to intersect him on the outside, and not only get him a cell phone, a belt to hold up his prison pants, some new clothes and his first meal after prison but was also able to help him on his way to a healthy place of starting over. They have remained in contact to encourage one another and to share what God is doing on the outside in lives previously trampled by the enemy. Thomas' family supports CPM prayerfully and financially, and they volunteer time to help spread the work of Connections so other sons and daughters

coming out of prison can be helped by the resources you help CPM provide. We are who Thomas' parents called in the early morning hours after receiving the call which every parent dreads receiving. It has been a blessing

and a testimony to us to watch God accomplish so much on behalf of Thomas and his family; to witness how the Lord has used CPM to minister and to help what seemed like such a tragedy when the call first came in.

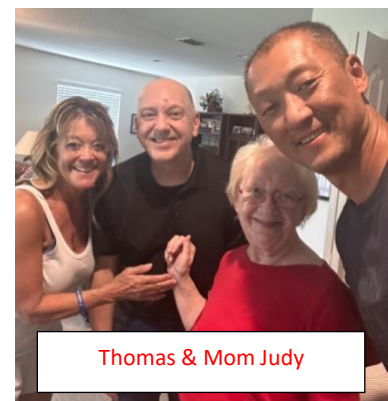
Dear Readers,

Peter and Michelle asked me to share a testimony of God's miracles my family has witnessed this summer. I need to first give you a brief introduction of the previous two years.

My wife Judy and I both came down with Covid in September 2021. We were both very sick. My doctor from the VA hospital would not treat me unless I went to the Emergency Room because she needed to know from the ER, how sick I was and how to treat me. I refused to go as I knew I would not be coming home; this was God's wisdom. My wife was given two prescriptions from her doctor; one was an antibiotic and the other was a steroid for lungs. Judy took the antibiotic but gave the steroid medication to me as I have COPD. In addition, if I had gone to the ER, I knew my wife would have died as she was much sicker than I. Again, God's wisdom. By the grace of God, we survived. God showed me a powerful revelation: I had to draw nearer and nearer to God, through Jesus and the Holy Spirit living in me. I must also treat everything else in this world as secondary, and not be afraid of what is going on in this world—to be aware of it, but not let it be in control of us because God is completely in charge. Since I have been living in this manner, I have had so much more peace, trusting His faithfulness, not the empty promises of this world.

I did not know then how the Lord would use this in our lives soon. On August 9th, 2023, our son Tom was shot four times during a home invasion. He was shot in his left hand while he was trying to ward off the bullet meant for his head. He was also shot in his left shoulder, his right ear, and about an inch above his left eye, in the forehead. By all rights, he should be dead. Tom recalls trying to fight him off by kicking him in the chest multiple times while he still had strength, but the man did not even flinch. He appeared to be possessed. Tom was down on the floor, and the shooter was going to finish him off. He placed the gun against our son's head again and pulled the trigger, and the gun just clicked. Praise God, no bullet in the chamber! He kicked him twice in the head and left. We know God was there with our son, protecting him. Tom recounts that he dragged himself to the shower and took a cold shower to keep him alert and then called 911 himself!

The paramedics got him to the hospital, and that is when the hospital chaplain called me. They needed to Medivac him to Colorado Springs from the small town he lived in. Over the ensuing days, they performed several surgeries and stitched him up as best they could and helped him regain his strength. His life would forever be changed. Tom is a Christian, and we have been witnessing miracles upon miracles since all this happened. Peter and Michelle and Connections Prison Ministry are located in—yes!—Colorado Springs. They stepped in immediately to help so we didn't have to come to Colorado from Florida, a trip that we might not have had the endurance to make. When Tom was released, they



got him a hotel, and when he was strong enough to travel, Peter arranged an airline ticket so he could move home. His boss gave him some additional pay and his church collected a special offering for him. Tom's friends and his pastor helped empty his apartment, so he didn't have to go back there. These friends drove his car and belongings to Peter and Michelle in Colorado Springs who recently drove it here to us in Florida. Our mortgage company changed to another company, so we were given the blessing of not having to make a payment until November, giving us some additional funds to help with these unforeseen expenses. God has directed us to proper clinics to remove stitches and staples and physical therapy and the needs Tom now has that he never has had to deal with previously. We also have found out the damage to his left hand isn't as bad and final as we first thought! God has been using good people in our lives to help us get through this tragedy.

To see Tom now, one would never believe he was shot four times, including twice in his head. We can't ever forget our God through Jesus Christ is far wiser and more powerful than the enemy, and any fallen angels or demons. Jesus is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, and the only power Satan has of any kind is what we give him! So, don't give him any!!

God bless you all! Jesus is Lord!

Your brother in Christ,

Bill Mitchell

After almost a week, Thomas was released from the hospital, and within a couple days, was reunited with his family. Thomas has *moved on*. But the greatest change of address wasn't from one town to another, one state to another. It comes from moving into a place of gratitude and humility, surrendering to a position of acknowledgement that God has a tremendous plan for your life because you're still here (when just one bullet should have done the job, let alone an

entire clip), and choosing to reside where the words your Heavenly Father speaks over you are far more profound than the words of the world and the enemy. Thomas knows he is a miracle, and he has work and purpose remaining. He hopes when you read his story, you will be encouraged to know that what the enemy intended for harm and destruction, the Lord will use for your good and His glory (Genesis 50:20). And Thomas certainly is glorifying the Lord for protecting and saving his life... again!

'No weapon formed against you shall prosper.'

Isaiah 54:17b (NKJV)

Did you know? A very important and vital piece of CPM is ministry; not only to those making the transition from incarceration to the outside world, but also drawing alongside of their families. CPM meets with family members for times of counsel, prayer, encouragement, relationship and tangible support including Christmas gifts and clothing for children of those who are incarcerated. The primary goal is to assist families reconnect with their loved ones offering forgiveness but ultimately to walk together in the grace and love of Jesus. Please pray for this aspect of our ministry.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?! Several years ago, in a couple issues of our *Connections* newsletter, we previously shared with you the testimonies of a two gentlemen, Fred Hill and Travis Haynes. You have likely prayed for them, and your support has financially met some of their needs. In fact, on two different occasions over the past six months, CPM provided a myriad of teaching resources and Bible and worship supplies to Travis while incarcerated at Trinidad Correctional Facility for his REBOOT program.

So, this past month, both Fred and Travis were released to Community Corrections, which is the halfway-house transition program. Fred came from Four Mile Correctional Facility in Canon City, and Travis was released from TCF. They both are residing at the same halfway house in Denver and are doing so well. Both have achieved full-time employment and are settling into life on the outside. Your generosity is helping provide clothing, food, basic essentials, a cell phone, and other items necessary for them to get established out here.

“What really shocked me is how I’m having to navigate this season of my life that requires me to learn ‘GOING slow and THINKING fast’; it’s like learning to walk again! And I am constantly reminded to trust God with my destination.

Please continue to pray for my transition.” Travis Haynes

“The whole time I was in prison, the Lord impressed upon my heart, Psalm 66:8-12. (“Praise our God, all peoples, let the sound of His praise be heard; He has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping. For you, God, tested us; You refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. You let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but You brought us to a place of abundance.”) In the moment, I didn’t know the magnitude of that passage until now. God is faithful, and if you serve Him behind bars, just wait until you can serve Him on the other side!” Fredrick Hill



Travis, Fred, Carol, Michelle & Peter

Please continue your prayers for Travis and Fred as they continue their journeys to live as godly men serving our Lord and Savior!

Supporting Connections Prison Ministry

Financial donations can be made via the following money transfer apps using the CPM contact number (720.579.5122) Zelle, PayPal, GooglePay, & CashApp. You can also send a check made out to Connections Prison Ministry.

Thank you for your continued financial support of this ministry!

Connections Prison Ministry 501c3

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All gifts are tax-deductible