

# **If You Were Hopelessly Stuck in the Mud, What – or More Importantly, Who – Would Pull You Out?**

I mean really stuck. Like up to your axles stuck. No movement from your car whatsoever.

A judgmental passerby wouldn't do you much good. You wouldn't need someone to tell you how you could have avoided getting stuck in the first place, how you should have driven better, how deep the mud was. From a dry, comfy perch above your ditch, they could talk on and on about the perils of driving in the mud.

But when all is said and done, you're still stuck.

No, you need a lot more than that. You need someone to get out of his nice warm car, crawl down into your mess of a ditch and pull you out. Someone willing to get down and dirty in the muck and mire. Someone who had nothing to do with this mess you created, but who is willing to save you from it anyway. Someone willing to sacrifice of themselves to save you.

Someone like Jesus.

## **HeartBound Gets Down in the Mud**

This illustration from a wise bible teacher, Manford Gutzke, gives hands and feet to what Jesus did for all of us – he willingly came down into our muck, joined us in our predicament and pulled us out.

This past year HeartBound had the honor of imitating Christ as we got to help pull souls mired in sin out of the ditch. **It was YOU who either went with us or sent us to do it.** You gave us the opportunity to change the lives of inmates and equip Georgia prison chaplains to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of the fenced-in flock.

## **For Example, Let's Take Thomas, Stuck in the Mud**

Thomas is 18 and in prison. Both of his parents are in prison, too, so there wasn't a lot of direction in his short life about how to avoid the mud. He had to navigate as best as he could. And you know all too well that it's hard to avoid the pitfalls, even under good circumstances. Imagine your chances of ending up stuck when "good circumstances" are in short supply.

After a HeartBound Christmas program at his prison, Thomas approached a volunteer to thank her for the program, the gift bag and the book he was given. She asked him about himself, and he began to share his life. Soon he would be out of prison, going home to live with his grandmother. He wasn't sure which prisons his parents were in. After a while, the volunteer asked, "Thomas, have you asked Jesus to come into your heart?" With trembling lip, he replied, "No, but I've been thinking about it."

She prayed with Thomas, and although we don't know what he ultimately decided, we believe we'll see Thomas in Heaven one day. **Today we ask you to please pray for Thomas and the many others like him.** They come from circumstances that we find hard to even imagine. But it's all muck, mud and mire. They're just waiting on someone to rescue them.

### **Full-Time Chaplains, Thanks to HeartBound**

This year we are funding two part-time chaplaincy positions at Walker and Dodge state prisons so that the staff and inmates of those facilities will have full-time chaplaincy coverage. (The state is paying for half and thanks to some generous donors we're funding the other half). We wanted you to hear from one of those chaplains, Chaplain John Eldridge, who was made full-time on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Here's a report from his first day. We hope you can sense his enthusiasm!

1. I became the chairman of the EAP at Walker -- the Employee Assistance Program. I will interview and help employees who need financial assistance, etc. This will allow me to serve the people in blue!
2. I start Monday morning, 8:00 AM giving a devotion at the metal plant at Walker. 100+ inmates work there. I will give this devotion every Monday morning.
3. I will be doing devotions at the fire hall of WSP [Walker State Prison] on Monday afternoons. 10 - 12 inmates and the Chief.
4. I get to go to the B-Unit from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM daily in the afternoon and give the 200+ inmates my services.
5. I have been given the duty by the Deputy Warden and the Warden to be in charge of all crisis situations and compassionate visits at Walker -- deaths in the family of the inmates, etc.
6. Believe it or not, I get to actually have a real schedule. Instead of running here and there and everywhere, I get to schedule each day. This will benefit me (my nerves!) and Ms. Kasper (Deputy Warden). I get to have REGULAR office hours!

Since our inception, HeartBound has been advocating for the reinstatement of full-time chaplains in Georgia prisons, and now we have the opportunity to make that a reality ourselves! Praise God!

### **A Quick Look at 2007**

Let's take a quick survey of all HeartBound was able to do in 2007 thanks to your giving.

- Held 120 life-impacting programs featuring professional athletes, musicians, Christian speakers, and financial counselors in adult and juvenile facilities throughout Georgia;
- Donated over \$55,000 in books, bibles, hygiene items, greeting cards, CDs, and other ministry supplies to equip chaplains to minister to the spiritual and physical needs of their inmates;
- Successfully launched "The Integrity Project" at Bill Ireland Youth Development Center;
- Funded the "Good Sense Financial Workshop" in Georgia prisons and transitional centers; and more.

### **What's in Store for 2008....**

Thanks to you, HeartBound has had the honor of going in the trenches to help rescue "the least of these" for almost five years! And with God's help, we'll continue "reaching hearts bound by prison walls" so that we can say, along with Paul, "*That I might by all means save some*" (1 Corinthians. 9:22).

Thank **you** for your partnership in the Gospel and thanks be to God!

*Andrea Shelton and Jan Spencer and the entire HeartBound Board*