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# 300 Cupcakes!!!

**Now what can 300 cupcakes possibly have to do with prison ministry? Read on…**
Each month, Chaplain Sterling Averett goes through more than 50 gallons of ice cream, 300 cupcakes (which he prepares himself!), countless sodas, and about 100 candy bars with gospel tracts attached. A junk food marathon, you ask? Hardly. It's all part of Chaplain Averett's monthly inmate birthday party at Dodge State Prison in Chester, Georgia. These birthday parties represent the love of Jesus -- served right up and made special order. Is it any wonder that Chaplain Averett was named "Chaplain of the Year" at HeartBound's annual Prison Chaplains Appreciation Day Luncheon on May 5th? (By the way, actor/director Tracy Goode of the highly-acclaimed movie, "Facing the Giants," inspired and entertained us as guest speaker at the luncheon. It was fabulous!) But here's a comment we and our chaplains often hear…

**"Why would anyone do something nice for a bunch of convicts?"**
"Prisoners don't deserve a birthday party. They're in prison to be punished, not to be coddled by some bleeding-heart do gooders!" And, you know what? That's true. They don't deserve a birthday party – they deserve a miserable existence behind prison walls with no privileges whatsoever.

**And the woman caught in adultery in John 8 deserved to be stoned. And the thief on the cross deserved death with no hope of eternal life. And the apostle Paul deserved death for his role in murdering Christians in the early church. And you and I deserved death and hell for our sins.**

***"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)***

***"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners -- of whom I am the worst." – Apostle Paul (1 Timothy 1:15)***

The Georgia Department of Corrections does its job punishing prisoners. But our job -- our calling -- our privilege – is to speak the truth in love to inmates. And while not every inmate will come to a church service or a HeartBound program, almost no one refuses cake and ice cream on their birthday or a hygiene care bag at Christmas. And with each birthday wish and every care bag, an inmate receives God's word. Funny, how that works.

Before blessing the food, Chaplain Averett tells the men that someone is thinking about them on their birthday and that Jesus loves them – and that if they taste something a little different in the cupcakes, that's the love he put into each one. And each month, inmates will approach him afterward and say, often with tears in their eyes, "You know, I've been locked up for 10 years (or 12, or 15, or 20), and this is the first time anyone has ever remembered my birthday." People forget them. Jesus remembers.

**And now a quote from that noted theologian, GARTH BROOKS…**
Remember Garth's song, "I've got friends in low places?" Well, HeartBound has lots of friends in low places. And we're in good company because so did Jesus. The King of Kings befriended swindlers, prostitutes, and sinners of every sort. When Jesus went looking for followers, he didn't go looking for "good" people; he went looking for "sinners." Thank **YOU** for helping those in low places by helping HeartBound. And here's one more way you can help. This Christmas, we want to put the book God's Rose, the powerful testimony of Darlene Ballard, in the hands of 2,000 inmates – that's approximately $7,000. Please help us reach that goal. And when you do, **we can make you a promise based on the Word of God** – YOUR INVESTMENT IN THE SOULS OF INMATES WILL NOT RETURN VOID! We love you, bless you and hold you up in prayer. - *Andrea Shelton & the HeartBound Board, May 2009*