

I have all the free time in the world; time to reflect on everything that brought me here, everything I have lost, every bad decision I ever made.

My father left when I was four years old. My older brother died when I was six years old. I was taken out of our home when I was seven because our stepfather was abusing my sister and I. I spent my formative years in and out of foster homes, boy's homes and shelters. I grew cold inside. My mother finally got us back when I was eleven and by then it was too late for me. I had run away from placement several times and grew to enjoy the freedom and danger of running wild on the streets. I was locked up in juvenile hall when I was eleven. The charges were under the influence of Inhalants (sniffing paint), malicious mischief (shooting street lights out with a BB gun), and being out of control. The out of control stemmed from my mom's inability to make me go to school. I just ran around truant every day. I remember sitting in court and the judge telling my mom that if she could assure the court that I would go to school, they would release me into her custody. She said she could not control me, so I was committed to Juvenile Hall.

That was the start of a criminal career that stretched out over my entire life. Except for 3 ½ years that I was married I have been in and out ever since. Seven total commitments as a juvenile and several now as an adult. I am 42 years old and currently serving the last 10 years of a 16-year sentence. Somehow during this time I have managed to get a decent education, haven't gone too crazy, and am still alive and kicking. I did contract Hepatitis C while I was addicted to heroin. I have been a very bad guy. I have

been on wanted lists, in gangs, hurt people, robbed, walked the streets homeless, lived out of dumpsters and sleeping in the gutter. I have thousand of stories, which would curdle the blood of many people. I never considered God because I knew there was no way he would accept me, no way, not me. Especially if He was omnipotent like they say, then He would know everything about me and be aware of the evil in my heart. I knew if I were God, I would not accept me.

When I was in prison back in 2004 someone gave me the address of a Mennonite lady that would write to me. We corresponded and when I told her I had no one to support me in any way, she offered to send me packages if I would complete a certain amount of Bible Studies. I decided to do it out of financial necessity. I have since lost contact with her, but she is the one (besides Jesus) responsible for my first spiritual awakening. One of those studies was about Saul and his conversion. Here was a man who persecuted and killed Christians, yet was saved, changed his name and went on to write some of the best books in the Bible under the direction of God Himself. That, on its own, was not enough to make me fall upon my knees, no, it was just eye opening to see that the self-professed Chief of all sinners was eventually saved. The story that brought me to my knees was actually the prodigal son, combined with Jesus' sacrifice. My heart cried out for acceptance by my Father. I wanted to come home and have Him awaiting me with opened arms. I memorized **John 3:16**, it is the lifeline that keeps me from falling into the pit. When I start being depressed, when the devil whispers all my faults and past wickedness in my ear, I repeat **John 3:16**, sometimes I have to keep

repeating it several times or more until the principalities of this world leave me be. Now I fortify myself with Bible studies. Seems I have no time for TV, radio or other unnecessary worldly pursuits if I am engaged in Bible Studies. They anchor me to the promise and ward off thoughts that lead to destruction. I only want to focus on the pathway illuminated by the Holy Spirit. It is important to pray before studies. I ask Him to highlight those things He would have me pay close attention to. Also prayer serves to quiet outside influences, calm any inner turmoil and allow me to focus on the message. I also have to thank my Christian Pen Pals for the important role they play in my continued happiness and joy. So, if you have an opportunity to correspond with good, practicing Christians, please do so. See, I know I am forgiven by God through Christ and I cannot wait to be with my Heavenly Father when He comes again, but there is this time I must spend on Earth. What I am trying to say is along with my Bible and Prayer, it is a wonderful thing to have someone writing me letters with their heartfelt support, their words show they accept me as a new person, born again in Christ. It is so important because it supports the fact that we are all His sons and daughters, born again into His family. Just like a true family, you can count on their support and they will often times have great advice for dealing with everyday situations in a Christian way.

At some point in your walk you will want to share this wonderful news with others. I am only working on my second year of trying to bring sinners to Christ and I see the parable of the rocky soil in action too often. There is that wonderful initial light of salvation, then a falling away which brings

you right back into the behavior that brought you low in the first place. Well take heart because I know from personal experience that He will not allow us to be snatched out of His hand. See, I got out in 2007 and went to church, continued my walk with God and was blessed tremendously. I got a great job, bought a car and experienced success on a level unprecedented to me. Then I stopped attending church. I just didn't have the time. Then my prayers became few and far between, finally dwindling out into nothing. Soon sin found a niche in my heart and I was lost. Then, like a parent to a wayward child, He chastised me. I got arrested for a crime I did not commit and could not figure out what was happening. I found myself facing a very long time in prison and once again upon my knees. During that first prayer I realized what had happened. I was a child who had been grounded, no TV, no games, and no friends over. God, in His great mercy and wisdom brought me back to Him. We are closer than ever. My faith has strengthened exponentially and these Bible Studies are building my strength to go forth into this wicked world once again. I am no longer mad about being innocent of my worldly sentence. I realize so much more is at stake and I have confidence that when I get out this time. He will bless me again, and this time I know that He must remain my top priority, all blessings are to further His glory, never my own. Like Lot's wife, I turned back to look at the world. Luckily I have been given another chance at redemption, she was not so lucky.

I wish I had the perfect words, the perfect insight to write the magic words that will bring others to Christ. I send these words with a prayer to the Holy Spirit to walk among those who read it and call those to

Christ who are ready to leave this world newly saved or feel a tug at their heart when they read these words. The old parables have a power all their own, I am living proof. Paul's story, Jesus story, must be read for one's self to experience the true life saving power they hold. I pray these words will speak to someone out there. No matter what you have done, Jesus has atoned for your sin.

I hope this testimony has been a blessing to you. If you would like to read how others in similar situations have experienced the life transforming power of God please write to me at the address below. We now have over 100 testimonies of those whose lives have been transformed by God's amazing Grace. Please send us your testimony as well.

**Otto & Jennie Ball**  
**Crossroads Ministry**  
**P.O. Box 363**  
**Hyde, PA 16843**

**King James Bible**  
**Study Correspondence Course**  
**5311 Windridge Lane**  
**Lockhart, FL 32810**  
*Upon completing 8 basic lessons;  
 receive a new large print K.J.V Bible  
 with your name on the cover*

**Evangel Prison Ministries**  
**P.O. Box 19229**  
**Louisville, Kentucky 40259**

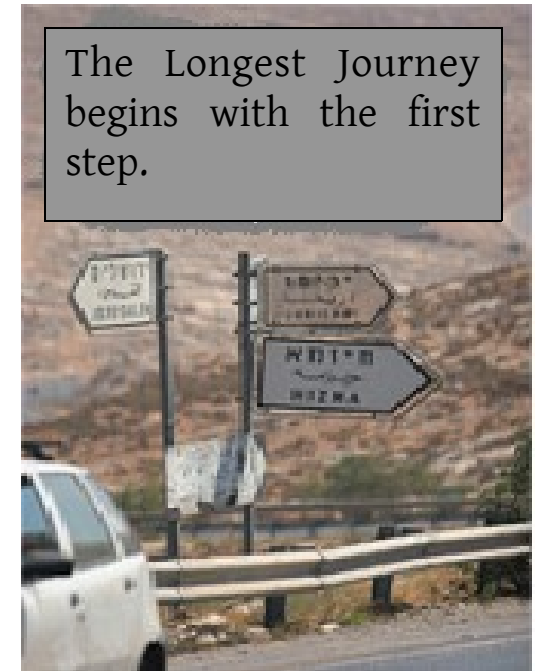
We now have ten free correspondence courses!

- Course 1** - 5 Part Christian Life Study Course - Booklet titles: *Your New Life In Christ: Your Best Friend (The Holy Spirit); You, Your Family & Marriage; Learning to Pray Effectively; and The Church.*
- Course 2** - 90 Days of Change - Discipleship Training
- Course 3** - Betrayal to Forgiveness - Insights from the Life of Joseph
- Course 4** - Get In Line With God's Word
- Course 5** - God Chose David, The People Chose Saul
- Course 6** - Lessons from the Lives of Biblical Characters
- Course 7** - Praying Effectively for The Lost
- Course 8** - Praying in Faith - How to Receive from God
- Course 9** - Seven Steps to Answered Prayer
- Course 10** - Total Victory - Ephesians and the Armor of God

Evangel also has a pen pal Ministry

## Johnny Jones' Testimony

The Longest Journey begins with the first step.



## A Journey of "Faith"