



PRAISE REPORT

This story cannot be told without first explaining whenever you see the word "I", it stands for God. I know He used me only as an instrument to pour out His love to another of His beloved children. I will be forever grateful for his trust in me.

Leaving bible study on a sunny, but chilly April morning, I found a "ruby" sitting on the grass near the curb of a busy Denver street. Concerned ladies from church were gathered around a collapsed woman, whose name I later learned was Ruby. I was aware a "homeless woman" had been in the church earlier, using the restroom. As a matter of fact, my small group had prayed for her after one of our members had seen her and was troubled by her heart because she felt she hadn't reached out to help her and now she was gone. As with so many things, we think of all the things we wish we had done, but the moment seemed lost and she was left wishing she had been able to act more spontaneously. We prayed for this woman. We prayed God would lead someone to her that would be able to help her wherever she might be. God answered our prayers in a swiftness, I personally am not accustomed to...he sent me.

Ruby was in my family's life for 11 years, following that day. We grew to love and trust one another and I have missed her greatly since her death 5 years ago just prior to her 65th birthday. Ruby's life was harder than I can begin to understand or even explain. The only person I know whose life was even harder is that of her much loved brother, James.

When I met Ruby she was hitch-hiking her way up to Buena Vista to visit her brother in prison. He had been incarcerated for 18 years at that point. Her only goal in life was to get her "little" brother out of jail. She was totally convinced of his innocence and that he was a scape-goat in a crime, which earned him a life sentence. Ruby and James only had each other, and no financial or relational means to even begin to penetrate the Department of Corrections' giant barricades of red-tape and disinterest.

I wrote numerous naive letters to the Warden, the Parole Boards, Case Managers etc., while James was in three different prisons. Ruby was in very poor health when I met her and it is amazing she lived 11 years from the time we met. We spent most of our time together at doctor's offices and hospitals. We also spent time together with my family, sharing Christmas and holidays with this dear woman. She could not remember ever having celebrated any birthday or holiday. She and her brother were in and out of foster homes most of their childhood.

Prison parole hearings were another place we spent time together. I went to 5 of them with Ruby. James was always denied parole, with no explanation. He had not been written up for any incidents in Prison, after his first couple of years of incarceration.

With her brother still in prison, on a Saturday afternoon in October, I received a call from a police officer, informing me that Ruby had died. Ruby never asked much of me other than to please keep trying to help her brother and should he ever get out, please try to help him. I never asked much of her, but that she recognize it was Jesus Christ who brought her home with me that day we met. It wasn't me. We talked about God often and I know she believed, even though her life caused her to question his love for her.

I had developed a relationship with James through letters and the many kind cards, drawings and works of art he sent our family through the years. I'd only seen him briefly at parole hearings, where he was handcuffed and shackled. His only request of me was a Study Bible that would be easier to read than a King James version; and to watch over his sister. He was so grateful to Bruce and me. I explained we were only doing GOD's will, and that we couldn't do this in our own power. With the help of my husband and prayers from my sisters and brothers in Christ, James was released from prison 5 years ago after serving 32 years. Ruby never got to see James outside of jail.

I wish I could say how wonderful this was, but the truth is he was sent to a half-way house, and told to find a job and pay rent. James had achieved his GED in prison, became a plumber, a maintenance engineer, (they had him take care of prison maintenance) and learned to operate big machinery. He had all kinds of skills. However, no computer skills, when he was sent to prison, there were no computers, internet etc.

I was not knowledgeable about halfway houses and the parole system. As an answer to prayer, GOD provided me with a resource. At CHCC, Dutch Frantz told me about Skip Starr and Refuge City Ministries.. Bruce and I met with him and felt our shoulders drop for the first time. Skip understood the system and had great empathy for James. In fact, Skip led a Bible study, and various activities at the halfway house where James had been assigned. Unfortunately, James was not actually on parole and could not be around any felons and join in the various programs Skip provided.

James was eventually released from the halfway house, and lived with a friend. However a few weeks ago, I was in a panic situation. James' recent housing situation fell apart. He was told he had to find housing within a few days or be sent back to the halfway house, or even back to prison!!!!. He had done nothing wrong, yet his freedom was at risk.

I called Skip in a panic. He put me in touch with a wonderful woman, Marcia, who has a ministry of housing felons and leading them to Christ. She and Skip met with me and turned the world upside down in just a couple of days, making it possible for James, with all his restrictions, to move into one of Marcia's apartments. Unfortunately, for no understandable reason, the Department of Corrections, would not approve the living situation. Time was up for James, and his biggest fear of being put back in the horrible halfway house or prison appeared to be imminent.

Praise God for Skip. The Holy Spirit caused him to speak about James' situation to his friend and tennis partner of 7 years. Skip's partner explained that he had been thinking about renting a room in his townhouse. Skip and his partner met James, and within two days, he moved into the condo. In the final hour, this kind man made it all happen for James. After only two weeks, they became best of buddies. James is treated with such kindness, patience and understanding by his new roommate and I have heard him laugh out loud for the first time. He is able to ride the light rail, and look for work. He is still on an ankle monitor and has to live within the restrictive hours this places on him. James new friend has spoken to me numerous times, in total awe of this kind, quiet, gentle man, who has such a strong faith in God, and never complains about what life has dealt him, only prays for a chance to become a useful contributor to the world around him. I wish I could be more like him.

Without Skip and Refuge City Ministries' contacts, I am sure James would not be living in the most comfortable situation he has ever known. Please pray for Jim, God loves him and so do we.

Thanks Skip and Marcia.

In Christ,

Cy DeBoer