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VOICES



Seeing lives transformed

PRISON FELLOWSHIP

God has broken the chains

This is a story of how Restorative Justice helped a Sycamore Tree learner to turn her life around:

Before prison, whilst in active addiction, I did have an awareness of my wrong doing and the direct people it affected. I carried a lot of guilt, though I always justified my actions and took more drugs to push away those thoughts and feelings. I never knew how to break free.

Whilst in prison I was encouraged to do the Sycamore Tree course by friends who had already completed it, they said it would be good for me. During the course, to represent the effect that crime has, there was a bowl of water on the floor which was calm and still. Then an orange was thrown into the bowl. How it disturbed the water, what a mess it made! That shocked me, at that moment something inside of me broke - reality - the message had got through.

I was asked to write a letter to say sorry for my wrongdoing and read it out. This was hard but the volunteers and Chaplaincy team were very supportive. This gave me an opportunity to express myself, to say sorry to God (which was important to

me - He knew what was in my heart) and to others on behalf of my victims. I took responsibility and this gave me a release from my guilt. For me it was not about the certificate, it was about the change within me – a valuable experience. The course equipped me with the values for how I live today; I learnt the importance of paying back what I owe and making amends. I am so glad I listened and attended the course. I thank God for the good work He does, for His forgiveness.

I now live in my own flat, drug free and crime free. I am working and studying at college. I have paid and am paying back any debt I owe, I'm making amends. I attend a great church, I have a support network, and I have good friends. God has broken the chains of my past and changed my life and me. He has reconciled me with my family and is restoring all that was lost.



Raising Eyebrows

Julian is a Sycamore Tree Group Facilitator and here he shares how the Lord brought him to volunteer for Sycamore Tree and how this ministry has impacted his life:

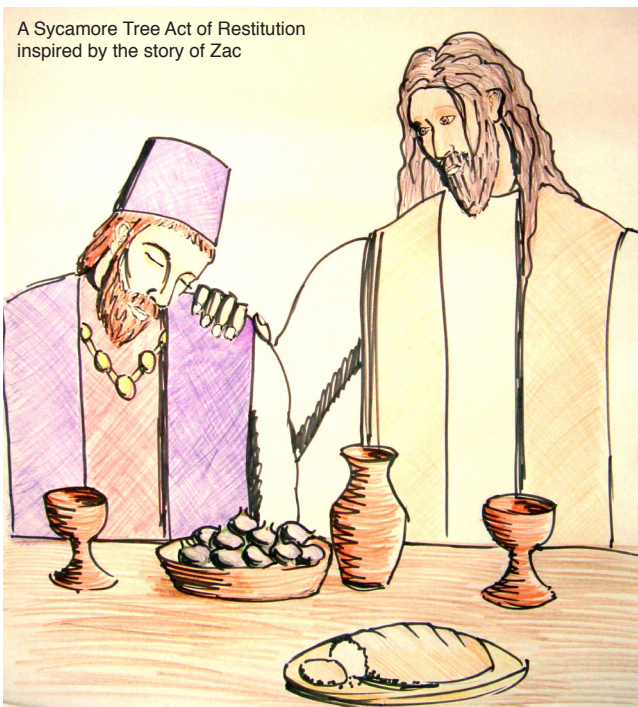
During a meeting with various consultants, a date for when we would next come together was suggested. However, there was one problem: I was unavailable as I would be in prison on that day. When I explained this, pens dropped and eyebrows were raised, clearly the client was concerned about the background of one of his consultants!

For many years I have run my own practice and when the economy is booming and the work load flows you give thanks to the Lord in your busy-ness. But what happens when recession bites and you are not quite as busy? It seems the Lord has other plans for you. This is the situation I found myself in during early 2009 as the economy took a nose dive.

I had a few spare hours each week and I was asked to join some members from my church at Week Six of a Sycamore Tree course. Like many newcomers to Prison Fellowship, I was apprehensive at first. However, I went along and subsequently acted as facilitator on my first course. It is now two years later and I have volunteered at

a number of Sycamore Tree courses at Thorn Cross YO1 and HMP Forest Bank. People often ask what I enjoy about my involvement with Prison Fellowship and my response is now standard - I find it challenging, stimulating, totally outside my comfort zone, a complete contrast to my professional career and, most importantly, it provides the direct opportunity to help those who find themselves in a more vulnerable situation in society.

So what about my involvement with Sycamore Tree now the economy has picked up and the work load is edging upwards? Will it have to stop? Hopefully not! The courses are clearly marked in my diary and my professional contacts provide me with many opportunities to share about my involvement with Prison Fellowship, the story of Zac, and the benefits of Restorative Justice.



Be Equipped Resources - UCB

Prison Fellowship is happy to announce a new partnership with UCB.

Most of us will be familiar with UCB's free publication *The Word For Today* but they have generously made available many more amazing resources.

Prayer For Today is a quarterly prayer magazine. The magazine contains powerful real-life testimonies of how prayer has changed lives, biblical teachings and informative, challenging and inspiring feature articles. In the next two issues there will be articles on Prison Fellowship - order your free copy today by contacting UCB via the details below or visit ucb.co.uk/prayerfortoday to get the digital version.

You can also visit www.ucb.co.uk where there are many other free publications available that would be a great resource for our work in prisons - for printed copies



please see your Regional Coordinator or contact UCB directly.

Stephen Hawkins, Regional Coordinator for the North West, says: "I would highly recommend the UCB's Overcoming series, and *The Book of Hope* is also an excellent resource. Maybe you could introduce them to your local prison Chaplaincy?"

We want to give thanks to God for UCB and we hope for a bright future working together transforming people's lives.

To order your free resources please contact Karen Brittain: **(T) 01782 764988** **(E) kbrittain@ucb.co.uk**

Training

Letter Writing training will be happening in London and the South East. To book your place please contact: **(T) 01621 843232** **(E) info@prisonfellowship.org.uk**

London – 7th April, 7.30pm start (7.00pm for refreshments).
77 Great Peter Street, London, SW1P 2EZ

Kent – 14th May, 2.30pm – 4.30pm
St Andrew's URC, Watling Road, Canterbury, CT1 2UA

Northamptonshire – Blisworth Baptist Church, Northants, NN7 3BU, date & time tbc

Margaret, an existing Letter Writer with 6 years experience, says:

"Over the years I have realised more and more the very real importance of simply 'being there' for someone who seems to have been abandoned by family and friends."

