

The Ninety-Eight Cent Christmas Gift that Could Save a Life

by Bonnie Rose

How much can you do with ninety-eight cents? You can buy a can of soda or a fraction of a gallon of gas. Most discount stores start at an even dollar. Can you give a Christmas gift? Can you give a gift that could save a life? I have found a way you can.

I recently spoke with Darcie Gill, a fascinating woman who works with the non-profit organization Voice of the Martyrs (VOM). VOM is an inter-denominational Christian organization founded in 1967 by Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, a Romanian pastor who spent many years imprisoned for his faith.

Darcie told me about a program VOM has to enable individuals to write letters of encouragement to men and women in prison because of their faith. It's called Prisoner Alert, and it is simple and easy to use. The website has a long list of Scriptures and encouraging phrases that have been translated and are ready for use. By following the link on VOM's website, www.persecution.com, you can learn how to write to a number of people imprisoned around the world because of matters of faith.

These are people who, according to Darcie, are not so different from us. They worry about their children. They're concerned about providing for their families. But, the circumstances they face are often much different from ours. If you organize a prayer rally, will you go to prison? If you protest a school policy that you believe is unfair to your children, will you be taken away from them?

Can writing letter *really* make a difference?

I asked her if writing a letter can really make a difference. She quickly answered, "My goodness, yes." She told me about an imprisoned pastor she met several years ago. While in prison, he was mistreated and beaten so badly that he was having kidney problems. But the prison wasn't giving him the medical treatment he needed. VOM told people about his case, and they responded by sending him letters. The letters offered hope and encouragement, letting the pastor know he was not forgotten. In addition, the prison officials responded to the many letters. They did not release him, but they stopped beating him and got him the medical help he needed. Even when officials don't deliver the letters someone reads them. Lives are changed, even saved.

What do you want for this Christmas? Do you know what the prisoners want? Our prayers. Will we give that? And could we do something more?

Take a few moments and send a letter to someone who desperately needs some Christmas joy. And, there's no need to stop after Christmas. Darcie said persecution is "always taking place somewhere." And the cost of mailing the letter? Only ninety-eight cents.

**Author's note: This story was first published December 25, 2011, in the Williamsport Sun-Gazette. Since that time, postal rates have changed.