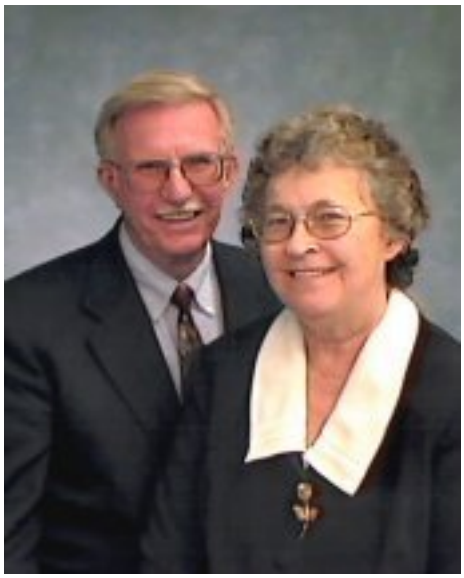

Dr. Harold & Myrna Carpenter

You cannot enter," the prison guard told us. "If you wish, you may leave your papers."

A group of Bible school students and I had planned to distribute gospel literature at a prison just outside Guayaquil, Ecuador. Some 5,000 inmates lived in the compound's three barnlike buildings.

Pieces of cardboard served as the prisoners' beds. Screenless windows offered little relief from the 100-degree heat and the hordes of mosquitoes that swarmed the area.

We left the load of literature at the gate and went on our way. A few weeks later I received a letter from Claybur Delgado, a 26-year-old man who had already spent half his life in the prison.

"Mr. Director of the Bible Institute," he wrote, "I've read one of the pieces of literature you left. God has touched my heart, and I have given my life to Christ. Can you send me some of those lessons mentioned in your literature? I want to study God's Word."

Regularly over the next two and one-half years, I corrected and returned the International Correspondence Institute study courses that Claybur completed. Although I never saw him, I

came to know him as a brother in Christ.

One evening a man stepped through my office door. "You must be the director of the Bible school," he said.

"That's right," I answered.

"I'm Claybur." After years of imprisonment, he had finally been released.

Claybur spent much of his time at the Bible school. One day he came into my office and said, "Brother Carpenter, I've got to go back to prison." Seeing the look of shock on my face, he laughed and added, "It's not what you think. I have to go back because I left my heart there. Those men are just like I was, without Christ, without hope. No one is there to tell them about Jesus. I've got to go back and share the gospel. Will you supply the literature I need?"

We loaded my car with literature and drove to the prison. When we stopped at the gate, Claybur called the guard by name and said, "We need in." The gate swung open and we went to the warden's office.

"Claybur, it's so good to see that you are doing well outside these walls," the warden said. "You're a changed man."

"But, sir, I want to be back inside the prison," Claybur explained. "I'd like to share the gospel with the inmates."

Claybur was allowed to return to the prison 2 days a week. From early morning till late at night he shared the gospel.

A baptismal service was held a few months later for all the prisoners who had been converted. The men painted the walls at the end of their ward to resemble stained glass windows. They chose an inmate serving a sentence for murder to lead them. His assistants were ex-thieves and robbers. Two more ward churches were formed.

Today Claybur Delgado serves as the voice of the Ecuador Assemblies of God's nationwide radio program. The former inmate continues to proclaim the message that sets the captives free.

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Dr. Carpenter and his wife served as missionaries for twenty years. Dr. Carpenter also taught missions for twenty years at Central Bible College. He now serves as Pastor of Fair Grove Assembly of God, Fair Grove MO.

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**In Essentials: Unity; In non-essentials: Liberty; In all things: Charity**—Peter Meiderlin 1626.

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