



Little Lambs Inc.

John & Eileen Sala Prison and Teaching Ministry

<http://www.littlelambsinc.org>

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Marriage & Family Class Graduation Class Avon Park Correctional Institution 2021

It has been different coming back into the classroom after the lockdowns of the pandemic. But we did! We had a smaller class, but a very engaged class. Of course we had a lot of delays with different dorms on quarantine from time to time. But we managed to graduate this last week. This session was unusual because every man, with the encouragement of the group, stood to testify after the ceremony. There was a lot of pain in that room. Pain endured by individuals who thought they were alone in the things they suffered as children. I think the relief in hearing others talk about that pain and abuse, helped them to be released to testify. You see, one of the ‘rules’ of dysfunctional, abusive families, is the ‘don’t talk’ rule. “If you tell what is really going on in our home, it will be your fault if the family is busted up or someone is arrested.” Children are without life experience and cannot understand what is happening to them. They endure the abuse to keep the family together. One gentleman testified of being 4 years old and his mother so badly beaten by her husband that blood was coming from every orifice of her body. When children witness their parent being abused, it is as though it is happening to them because they are so bonded to that parent and often that parent means survival. So we have the rules: don’t talk, don’t think, don’t feel, don’t have fun, and don’t trust anybody!

Through the class, they have learned and trust the process of telling the truth. And they took responsibility for the situation they find themselves in. But now they understand that they are not ‘bad people’, just people raised in a bad environment where they learned sinful coping skills.

One thing we focus on is how to make amends to the loved ones they have hurt. Oftentimes in the addict’s distress, all the attention is focused on the themselves and their situation. He has to learn now to focus on those around him and what they were going through, especially the children. Understanding what happened helps the inmate explain in the process of making amends, but does not alleviate the responsibility. Our favorite saying is “the work of growing up is learning responsibility”. I am proud to say that a lot of these men have made huge strides in growing up and connecting with God. We had 2 Little Lambs School of the Bible graduates in the class. Another 5 enrolled in the Bible Study Tuesday. God is so good to give us this time with these inmates. It is as big a blessing to me as it is to them. Please continue to pray for all our Little Lambs, for their growth and maturity in the Lord. God bless you and thank you!

Essay: Since I lost my mother at an early age, and my father was an alcohol abuser, I never enjoyed the love that a young male child should receive from their parents. So I grew up full of hidden anger in my heart toward my family and I tried to cover it by sex and more sex everyday to make me happy. But I always found myself in more anger and my relationship with my kids' mom never last because I always shame them for my faults. When they talk to me about my problems, I denied and say I have no problems at all. Whatever the means, in some way, later, I will always found a way to shame them and release my anger on them. For me, it is always their problems, not mine. This class teaches me how to be free and live a freedom life without compromise if only I can keep my biggest boundary "NO" as I grow up. I never wanted to say 'No' because I wanted to be accepted by everybody in life, so I live a life full of fear that if I say 'No' to anyone, I will be disappointed and not accepted. In conclusion. Thank you so much for the Marriage, Family and Parenting Class. God truly bless you all.

Family Class: Ms. Sala, you are very knowledgeable in the material and it shows that you have many years of experience. You answered all questions precisely and concisely. The material affords someone an inward reflection of their own life and how their decisions effected not only their own life but also that of their family, friends and significant others. Although it took longer than expected due to no fault of your own, but because of Covid lockdown, the class was very informative. There is a lot of material to cover and it is tough on a once-a-week schedule. Nonetheless, the time was well spent.

Even though the material about drugs was intended for the addict and the effect on their body, such as brain, heart, lungs, liver and many other vital organs, I would like to suggest to also take a pointed finger to the drug dealers. There are so many small time dealers in prison and some take your class. Reiterate that they may think they are only selling drugs but, sadly they are a direct link to users overdosing death, and destroying families. They may take the stance that "if not them someone else will." Let them know that is a poor justification for their own monetary gain. It may not change all dealers but stopping one is better than none. Thank you for all you do for the institution and inmates. Warm Regards. *We do focus on the sinful nature of addiction! Will do!*

Marriage & Family Essay: In the beginning of April, 2021, I started this program thinking about just being out of the dorm and just enjoy the air conditioning at the Chapel. I thought, well, this program, it's only for those individuals that are planning to get married and have a family one day.

Well, my first and second class I didn't pay much attention, but from the third on, everything started to fall into place. I started to remember the life I had in my childhood, how my father abused mom and my brother, Rigo, only because he was a little light colored skin than us kids. He just blamed mom for cheating and said that Rigo wasn't his son. Also, every weekend dad just went out the whole weekend and came home late on Sundays or after work on Mondays. Every time dad went out, he blamed mom and it was not a weekend that my dad didn't beat up my mom. She got beat so badly that every time she has to go to the hospital.

While I was growing up and seeing all these things happening to my mother, and none of my older brothers tried to stop my father, I felt worthless because I was the youngest and my father never had hurt me. That made it harder for me to make a decision over both of them. When I was eleven years old, I almost lost my mother. I made a hard decision. I stood in front of my father that I loved vey much and say to him, "Daddy, enough is enough." Then I left home not thinking about what my life had to offer me. I decided to cross the border and work on the fields picking different kinds of vegetables and sometimes I went home to see mom while my dad was at work. I did that for a couple of years, then at the age of twelve I had met a girl and we started dating. At 17, I became a father from the girl I was dating. We got married and had 2 kids. At the age of 21, we got divorced. She found someone else. Then I left Mexico and come to Florida. In Florida, I married and had two kids. It was terrible. I found out later, she was on drugs, bipolar, abusive towards the kids and she wanted to be in control of money and decisions that had to be made. This program opened my eyes and made me realize that if we trusted God and let Him be in control I wouldn't never have had to live the way I had. My kids wouldn't be the way they are now. I had abandoned them and let them grow up with other people. Now is my time to ask for forgiveness and let them know that there is a God that loves them no matter how they are. Also let them know about my life here in prison, how much I've learned and how wrong I was while I was in the free world. Thank you for everything.

Graduates

Roger says: I just want to say Thank You for your wonderful bible studies. They opened my eyes and my heart to what I knew to be true, but I was always afraid to make a commitment to our God. I have seen our Lord in His glory, His sufferings, and His death. I still have no understanding to the depth, the breath of his love, but I know He will never stop at getting those that Father has given Him. He tells the Father, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name. Those that You gave me I have kept and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the scriptures might be fulfilled." John 17:-12



Brothers and Sisters of Little Lambs, Thank you for the Open Bible. This is the nicest Bible I've ever had and I'm sure it will get a lot of use. It marks the bittersweet end of the lessons I have thoroughly enjoyed working through. Being consistent in devotions inside prison has been the easy part. Have a lesson to work through provided structure when I needed it. The lessons also challenged a few of my long-held ideas about relationships. Please convey my appreciation for this ministry to all who were involved! Fl

Dear Salas, It has been a great pleasure and special honor spending time with you throughout the correspondence course and thanks for all your time and concern and correcting what needed to be corrected, keeping me on the right path and for motivating me to reach the finish line of completion although it is now only the beginning that I must push ahead. I did receive the Open bible and am so impressed by it and love that Bible. I gave my other bibles to the guys that didn't have one. I hope you don't mind if I can continue to stay in contact with you since my mother is the only one that I keep in touch with. God bless you, my heart is with you. NC

Dear Salas, I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed doing the Little Lambs School of the Bible. Thank you so much! As of right now, if I'm not working, eating, sleeping or going to Rec, I'm engaged in doing Bible study. I'm leaving prison in 10 months. I plan on taking Jesus with me, not leaving him at the prison gate like most inmates do.

Sometimes the journey happens within. Wherever life has taken me, whatever I found myself doing before, now I want to direct my inner footsteps with purpose, with curiosity and with hope. I want to view my life with new eyes. This inner landscape is dark, but animated with anticipation, like the hour before dawn when the sky as if by some unseen force is slowly infused with light.

At the beginning of this journey, I couldn't see the way before me. Sometimes it is better not to know the way. I can trust the people leading you. I can respect the people coming with me. As I go along, I will begin to see more and more. There will be discovery along this path, and also pain and fear. I may come to see things I wish I were blind to. Maybe I will also discover potential in myself I never knew I had. What will I find along this path? What will I learn about myself, about the person I have become, about the person I want to be? What will I learn about my relationships with God? What will I see through new eyes? KY

Hey Little Lambs,

Boy, it's always just soooo Good to hear from you. You always seem to put a smile on my face and joy in my heart. I can't begin to Thank You for putting up with me for soooo long and make sure I'm going down the right path. The abundance of joy, peace, and love for us is unreal. I'm like a kid in a candy store waiting for the next lesson. All the stress that we are going through during this pandemic is going through the roof. It wears not only on our mental side but on our physical side a well. Thank you for helping me to put it aside. I pray Father that You will continue to keep Little Lambs protected and under Your wings. IL

Little Lambs, Hey, it's me Mikey & needed to talk about the Lord a bit. I'm stuck with the need of more to carry the cross to save me and to reach others. God is love. I'm out of church with the covid. They stopped all church. We started a meeting inside. I'm praying a lot and hope I can hang on to what I have. How about a picture to share of Jesus, maybe a shepherd of the flock or a cross to drive away darkness. It must be working. I need to defend the gospel. I need more the armor of light. I pray to be a child of light and hang on to Jesus. Please send a picture. Mikey

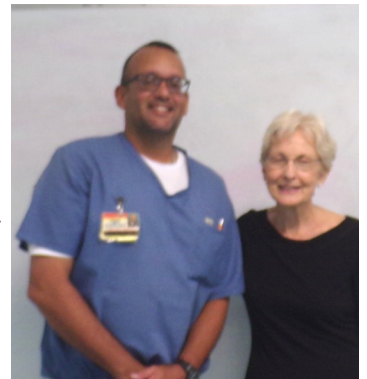
Dear Partners,

I can't believe how fast the first of the month comes! I am so grateful for the cooler weather as fall gets here. We had the pleasure of meeting the Keenagers of First Baptist Church last month. It was a small meeting because of the pandemic, but we really enjoyed it. Chuck Cilano of Celebrate Recovery, Aldo Guxman of 2nd Chance Ministry and Mary Tinberg of Released to Love, joined me to tell about their ministries. We have agreed to supply Chick Tracts for children to the First Baptist Halloween community outreach. We send a lot of these tracts in English and in Spanish into the prisons with our bible studies and the inmates love them.

We have some disheartening news, except we know that God is in control. It seems that in the debacle that shipping from overseas has become, our bibles are caught in the mess. Harper Collins/Thomas Nelson gets a lot of their bibles printed overseas and like everything else, they are in short supply due to shipping problems. We are out of our graduation bibles! We are not expected to be able to get any more until very late in the year. Of course we will have to explain to the graduates but even alternatives are not available! I am sure everyone has noticed the 'supply chain' effect on goods in the stores. Well, it's the same here. If you feel led to give specifically for bibles, I would like to again purchase a supply ahead of our need to avoid it happening again. The inmates would appreciate it!

On the positive side, while our numbers had gone down over the early summer, they are now on the rise again. Just as this was happening, an article by the USPS stated that they will be decreasing staff and extending transit time for first class mail starting this month. It has happened at times, that there are so few people working the post office that we could not pick up our mail till the afternoon. Then an article appeared in the news that the state of Florida prison mail is going to go to a processing facility first, then copied and sent to the inmate as is done in Pennsylvania. This is to intercept contraband, especially drug saturated paper. However, it sorely disrupts our mail system. We have written to the State Secretary of Prisons and asked that as they decide on the system, that they make sure that it does not interfere with the mail outreach of ministries. Oftentimes, we are the only thing an inmate has! They have not instituted the changes yet, so we need to pray that they do the right thing for the Lord and ministry.

I want you to meet our Lead Chapel Clerk, Robert Santiago. Robert has been in the chapel about 5 years now. His wife and in-laws lived in Spring Lake but have since had to move. Robert is very efficient, very responsible and very aware of how the system works and tries to do the best thing for inmates. He loves the Lord, and has a long sentence from his youth but lives in freedom every day. I do believe that he also has musical talent and participates in chapel music. Nevertheless, it is good to know that we have had exemplary chapel clerks, who make their job a ministry to other inmates. Alan Simpson, another clerk, was a student in our class that just graduated. They are a great help to me and I feel very safe with them. Unfortunately, the photographer got a blurry picture!



We are in need of one or two Wednesday volunteers. Mike will be leaving us in the next few months, moving to Pensacola to be near his wife's family. Mike did just about all jobs from printing to running the postage meter to folding and signing. We do believe we have a lady who is interested in taking care of our Spanish school. She will be here later. But we need someone to help in Mike's place. If God puts the burden on your heart, call us at 863-273-6075. Because we work with a lot of elderly, we ask that you be vaccinated. Thank you for your love and support in these hard times.

Your servant,
Eileen Sala

Schedule October 2021

Mon.....Biblical Boundaries Marriage & Family with 2nd Chance Ministry
Tues....Biblical Marriage Family & Parenting @ Avon Park Prison
Tues....Purpose Driven Life @ 2nd Chance Ministry
Thurs....Celebrate Recovery @ 2nd Chance Ministry
Thurs...Released to Love Codependent Mtg. 5:45 pm @ Little Lambs
Counseling by Appointment
863-273-6075