

TESTIMONY OF MICHELE M

Hang on tight, especially to your sanity. I think those of us with longer sentences have a greater challenge psychologically. I want to be honest and say I am hanging on for dear life right now. It feels like my sanity is unraveling at times. Prison living isn't pretty. I share these realities of prison not to discourage my fellow inmates or to give opportunity for society to take delight in my punishment, but to bring perspective. I want people to know that consequences are real and we do reap what we've sown. But by God's grace, "good" can come out of our darkest moments, if we choose to change our ways.

Lately, I've been comparing my prison living to being stuck on a roller coaster. This one isn't for the thrills. It rarely has any exciting peaks, but it does take me into the deepest darkest tunnels. Ones so long that I often don't see a speck of light at the end. The speed of the coaster remains constant; it goes on and on and on. I can't get off to gather my composure or to take a deep breath. I can't get off to get a change of scenery. I can't get off to even search for help. I'm strapped in next to strangers for the duration of my sentence, not just a quick 90-second ride of terror, but nonstop for years. With every moment, I hear the monotonous, persistent click of the tracks. All of a sudden, I see a glimmer of light ahead as I ascend only to return to this tunnel on the next lap. I have learned that the key to enduring this ride is to discover how you can personally maintain your sanity. You will read stories, how there are different "tools" that work for different people. Sometimes, it's a long search or trial and error, but how awesome that we can learn these new approaches from each other. I have learned through experience that these darkest moments do always come to an end for a time. I am grateful that time doesn't stop. We always move forward in our journey no matter what our sentence.

An inmate, that I knew here who got released, sent a letter to Mel Novak to send me this Arsenal Prayer on Spiritual Warfare. He sent it with an encouraging letter to pray it daily & a *Pulling Down Strongholds* booklet. I do. There were many scriptures on the back of the Arsenal Prayer that really encouraged me. For me, I cling to God's promises that he sent, stay still, don't make any rash decisions and hold on to the faithfulness of God. I know that He will carry me through once again. Choosing to be thankful no matter what we face gives us the power to press on even while we sit on death row. Praise is a weapon against the mental attacks that are so prevalent.

I urge you to look deep within your heart. What passion(s) did God place inside of you that can enhance your life? Look around at those who are experiencing hope or joy. Ask for help. The pain and heartache from your past may be with you forever, but you can renew and strengthen your sanity by finding a new approach that can improve your today and tomorrows. Go on internet & download Mel's Arsenal Prayer at www.melnovak.com It is powerful. God bless you all.

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