

## Letter Number 1

Hello Grace,

My name is Eric Cox. I'm 30 years old as of only weeks ago. I'm also the first convert from Grace Chapel under Jeff Greer. (It happened over dinner at Pizza Tower. It's a good place to get saved. I suggest it.)

And, yes, now I'm writing to you from prison, however bad that looks on Grace. Oh yea, before I forget, that picture you see, that's me and Jose, a black lab puppy that used to be here in our dog program.

Well, I'll begin by telling you that I've been deeply yearning in my heart and praying for an outlet, especially an opportunity to connect with my spiritual siblings outside these walls.

You see, my heart is geared towards ministry. It's my passion. In many cases, the fuel that's kept me going as I've lingered many years here in captivity, so to speak. I know beyond a shadow of any doubt that it's the principle purpose God brought me into this temporary world. (Eph. 2:10)

And boy let me tell you, there's nothing worse in life than either not knowing your purpose at all, or knowing it, but being deprived of the opportunity to live it out.

As I say that, I can just picture a great lion that's trapped in a cage. I can see him placed on the outskirts of a wild safari jungle, the very place this fierce animal was made to roam and explore. Think of it, the King of the Jungle forced to just sit there and stare at what his wild and fierce heart longs for! Yet, he never gets to taste it. Talk about sheer torture.

When it comes to these things, I'm with the Apostles Paul, Peter and Stephen. Like them, give me 39 lashes minus 1 or take my head in Rome (That's Paul). Crucify me upside down if you must (That's Peter). Or even stone me to death for telling you the

absolute truth as I hold nothing but crazy love and forgiveness in my heart for you while you do it (That's Stephen).

Give me any of these things, as brutal and unbecoming as they may be, but please, like a pauper I beg you, please don't take away from me the very purpose for which God created me!

Forgive me if I've over expressed myself, but I tend to get a little carried away sometimes in expressing things that I deeply feel.

Please keep in mind though, as you bear with me, you're actually giving my life a sense of purpose by reading this. In a sense, I feel as if I'm the lion and you're letting me out of the cage. It's true. You're actually helping me press on (Phil. 3, one of my all time favorites) during this difficult time in my life just by lending me your ear.

So anyway, where were we? Oh yea, ministry! My mother tells me I appear to have had a heart for it even as a young lad. In fact, to this day when I assure her that I preached my first sermon ever while here in prison to 60 plus men, she insists this just isn't so. She tells me I was barely 5 and sitting on the potty at home after a Sunday service! (Perhaps imitating the preacher I heard?)

I always ask her, "Well, was I any good?! Was I anointed or what?" To this day she still hasn't answered my question.

Anyhow, now that I've shared with you why I'm writing and somewhat of how it came to be, I'd like to share with you my story.

However, since this already exceeds the length Jeff suggested and the fact that I wish not to turn away the ear you've already been so kind to lend me, I'll leave you with this as my first introduction. (How you like them apples?)

Shortly after this, I intend to post my testimony. Just give me at least a few days to scratch my brain and scrape my spirit. I have to figure out two very important things. What in the world is my testimony!? And, how in God's creation can I sum it up without writing a book!? So as I prayerfully work this out, I hope you enjoy this.

And as I leave you, I ask of you two very important things. One, that you pray for me, especially that God will speak to me and through me as I pick up my shovel and dig through my past and decide what all God would have me share with His People. And two, that you would please know what a pleasure it has been chatting with you and that you promise me we can do this again real soon. Deal? Because I already can't wait to be back in touch with you!

As Arnold said it best, I promise: "I'll be back."

Your Brother in Christ,

Eric Cox

PS The theme song which seems suitable for this letter is by Brandon Heath, entitled "I'm not who I was." I promise it's a good one. So I encourage you to download it. Trust me, you won't be disappointed.