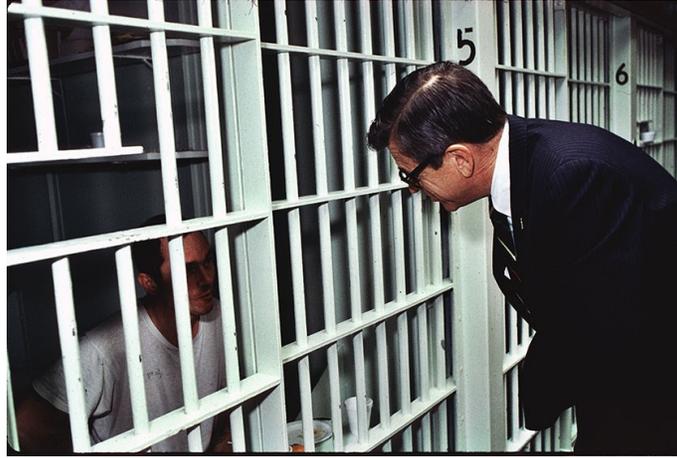


# How Chuck Colson's Legacy of Hope Lives On

April 16, 2018 by Marty Angelo



I remember the day I stood in line at a bookstore in Buffalo, New York, looking for books to explain what had happened to me. I was awaiting a court date for a crime. I had also just become a Christian.

I was a renaissance man in the entertainment business: musician, TV producer, record promoter, disk jockey, restaurant and nightclub owner, and personal manager for rock-and-roll bands. It was the '60s and '70s, and like a lot of people in our baby-boomer hippy generation, I hated President Richard Nixon and anyone associated with him. One of the rock bands I managed almost wound up on Nixon's Enemies List after my band refused to perform at a birthday party for the president's daughter.

When the Watergate scandal blew up, I was glued to my TV screen. I loved seeing each member of Nixon's staff dragged before the committee to answer for their wrongdoings. While I was pointing my finger at these men for their actions, I had no idea that I would be held accountable for my own poor choices one day.

## **A SHATTERED LIFE**

Behind the success, I was a rebellious, radical, out-of-control substance abuser. I had been desperately trying to fill the sense of emptiness and meaninglessness in my heart, which no number of worldly achievements could fix. In 1980, I was arrested for two counts of possession of cocaine. I would serve two and a half years in federal prison.

It was there that I finally let God get a hold of me. My life was shattering. I fell to my knees and cried out to God for help. Reading the Bible, I realized that "all have sinned," and my only hope would be found in a perfect Savior. That was my new beginning in prison!

It was also in prison that I met Chuck Colson, former special legal counsel to Nixon. I learned

that Chuck made it a point to visit a prison every Easter Sunday, and he was no stranger to the inside. He'd spent seven months in a federal prison camp for a Watergate-related crime.

## **EASTER SUNDAY**

I had known about Chuck and read of his conversion to Christianity in his book, *Born Again*. Of course, I was curious to hear him speak. Did Jesus Christ really change Colson? I wondered. Is this guy for real?



Needless to say, I never expected to like the guy... Nixon's own former "hatchet man." But then I heard Chuck give a sermon on Easter Sunday 1982, while I was still incarcerated. All the prisoners were spellbound as Chuck spoke from his own experience:

"I know the Resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, and then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned, and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible."



As soon as he finished, everyone in the place stood up and cheered. Many came forward for prayer. I flew up to the podium to meet Chuck, and he looked me right in the eyes and said something I will never forget: "Marty, I know God has a very special plan for you."

## A LEGACY OF HOPE

Only Jesus Christ could have changed Chuck Colson's heart as He did my own. Chuck's inspiration in my life would go much further than our first meeting back in 1982. I went on to graduate from five of Prison Fellowship's in-prison seminars, attended another two-week seminar by Prison Fellowship® in Washington, D.C., and led the Prison Fellowship inmate prayer and Bible study group where I once served time. And I got to work for Prison Fellowship full-time from 1986 to 1990, helping to set up reentry groups all over the United States. I attribute these opportunities to Jesus Christ, and I thank Him for touching me through Chuck Colson's example.

I'm so thankful that Chuck didn't just finish his prison sentence to go back to his old life. He could have very easily done that, and I don't think anyone would have blamed him. But Jesus Christ had changed him so much through his prison experience that he felt compelled to start Prison Fellowship.

Chuck set a great example for his fellow Christian "ex-cons." He opened the door for all of us to catch our own vision for helping others, through our woundedness. His focus was spreading Christ's hope, and he never took his eye off the ball. That spoke volumes to me even in the years after I left Prison Fellowship.

Chuck Colson never hid the Christ that lived in him. Thank you, brother, for being such a giver. Thank you for raising the bar as a follower of Christ.

## ABOUT MARTY ANGELO



Marty Angelo, a successful producer in the entertainment industry, was arrested on drug charges in 1980 and went to prison... an event he now describes as his new beginning. It was in prison that Marty surrendered his life to Jesus Christ and met former prisoner Chuck Colson, who visited the prison on Easter Sunday. Marty later spent a few years on staff at Prison Fellowship, formed a friendship with Chuck, and has since served at several other ministries and authored many books.