

## THE PRISONERS CAME BACK

In 1920, Lewis Lawes was made warden of Sing Sing Correctional Facility in New York. Conditions there were frightful in those days, and Lawes was later to become famous for the humanitarian reforms he instituted.

Lawes gave much of the credit, however, to his wife, Kathryn.

Kathryn Lawes treated the prisoners as human beings. She would take her three small children and sit with them – gangsters, murderers, racketeers and the rest – while they played baseball and basketball. She found a blind prisoner in utter despair, so she had him taught Braille and brought in books in Braille for him to read.

She learned sign language to talk with a deaf-mute prisoner. When people asked her if she was afraid, she replied, “We care for the boys, and they care for us.”

In October 1937, Kathryn Lawes died unexpectedly after a fall. The next day, her body lay in a casket in a house a quarter of a mile outside the prison wall. The acting warden found hundreds of prisoners crowded around the main gate. He knew what they wanted.

He told them, “I’m going to trust you, boys. You can go to the house.”

Then he opened the gate.

No count was taken. No guards were posted.

That night, every single man returned to prison.

The acting warden was wise. He knew that those convicts needed some means of expressing their appreciation for what Kathryn Lawes had meant to them. They expressed their high regard for her not only in paying their respects before her casket but even more so by living up to her trust by returning to their cells that evening.

Expressing thanks not only demonstrates our character, it also enhances our character.

But one other thing needs to be said. Saying thank you keeps a channel of love open. When we write a thank-you note, aren’t we in effect saying not only that we are thankful, but also that this relationship is important to us, and we want to keep that relationship alive?

That is why expressing our appreciation to God is so important. Thanksgiving and praise are among the most effective means of keeping open the channels of communication, the wellsprings of relationship between ourselves and God.

*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ESV).*

– Beecher Hunter