

## My Visit With A True Hero: Walter Hoye



Rarely am I kept up at night by a burning need to get something off my chest. But tonight is such a night for me.

Yesterday evening, I had the chance to visit a friend of mine who is a guest at the Alameda County Jail. It was, as I explained to him, the first time I had ever visited someone in jail. But knowing what he was imprisoned for, I could not in good conscience stay away. I could not sit idly by without letting him know how much his sacrifice meant to me and

so many others.

“What did he do?” you ask?

That is the same question my kids asked when I told them that I would be going to support my good friend in jail.

You can imagine their confusion when I told them that Rev. Walter Hoye was imprisoned for standing in front of Planned Parenthood, holding a sign that read, “Jesus Loves You and Your Baby. Can We Help You?”

“Can they do that?” my son inquired after a moment of stunned silence?

Apparently, they can in Oakland, California; one of several cities that has passed an ordinance creating a 100 foot “Free Speech Free” zone around abortion clinics. Specifically the ordinance makes it unlawful, and punishable by up to one year in jail, to knowingly approach within eight (8) feet of any person seeking to enter an abortion clinic, without their consent, to counsel or distribute literature to them or to urge them not to obtain an abortion. And it appears that Rev. Hoye being in front of Planned Parenthood with his sign made him guilty of violating this ordinance.

But what the enemy meant for evil, God is turned for good. Walter shared with us how he has been able to witness to his fellow inmates and even the guards. The stacks of letters he receives on a daily basis has others inquiring as to who he is and why he is in jail. He has also taken to purchasing food and other items from the prison commissary and giving it to the newer inmates. He does this even as he himself has chosen to fast from food during his incarceration.

His sacrifice has not been without victory. He tells of how he led five men to faith in Christ during his first week in prison. Right outside the prison, other pastors have taken to holding prayer vigils every Sunday evening for Walter. Last week was the first and about 20 were present. This week that number was

doubled. And I believe it will double again next week as more and more people hear Pastor Hoye's story. I myself, have been moved by the numbers of people who have responded to the injustice of Walter's incarceration; not only prolife activists, but those who cannot believe that someone would be imprisoned for exercising their God given right to free speech.

Now, I cannot say that Walter's time jail has been without challenges. Walter is notably tired and in need of rest. He explained to us that because of the crowded conditions and the fact that many of his fellow inmates would stay up all night, there were not many opportunities to sleep. His already slim frame was visibly weakened as the result of his fast. His only nourishment coming from the 4oz containers of apple juice that his fellow inmates save and share with him.

I share this with you, not to illicit your sympathy, rather to inspire your action. It is my hope that Walter's commitment to stand for what he believes in would help others to give up their roles as mere spectators and encourage them to get in the game.

That is not to say that we all have to go to prison. But we can help. Walter has asked everyone to continue writing to him while he is in jail. The letters both encourage him and provide opportunities for him to witness to others. You can write to him at:

Walter B. Hoye II PFN# BGR852 Santa Rita Jail 5325 Broder Blvd. Dublin, CA 94568-3309

Walter also asks that we send notice to the justice system that his imprisonment was wrong. He asks that we send a blue envelope to Judge Stuart Hing. The envelope should be sealed – DO NOT PUT ANYTHING IN THE ENVELOPE! And on the back, write: FREE WALTER HOYE as large as possible.

You can address it to:

Alameda County Superior Court WILEY W. MANUEL COURTHOUSE Attention: Judge Stuart Hing, Dept. 109 661 Washington Street, Oakland 94607-3922

If you would like to help with Walter's defense send your contributions to Life Legal Defense Foundation. Their website is – [www.ildf.org](http://www.ildf.org).

Finally, if you can give of your time, there will be prayer vigils every Sunday starting at 6:30 pm at the prison (Santa Rita Jail 5325 Broder Blvd, Dublin, CA 94568-3309).

As you can see, there are plenty of opportunities to get involved. The only question is, what are we willing to give up to protect innocent life? How about to protect our free speech rights?

I could not help but ask myself, if I could be as committed as Walter? If presented with the choice of my freedom or standing for what is right, which would I choose?

Walter's example has made that choice a little easier for me. How about you?