

JUST FOR MENTORS

Tips, inspiration and encouragement as you mentor men and women in prison

SEPTEMBER 2017

Dear Crossroads mentor,

As the church mobilization director for Crossroads Prison Ministries, a big part of my job is to lead and support you as you connect with prisoners in Christ-centered relationships.

You are one of thousands of volunteer mentors faithfully serving tens of thousands of prisoners all around the world. You have a set of life circumstances and a unique faith story waiting to be shared as an encouragement to the students with whom you are journeying. My role is to provide you with the resources you need to help you share your story and to equip you to be the best mentor you can possibly be.

That's why we are introducing this short monthly newsletter, *Just for Mentors*. It will include stories of inspiration and encouragement, stories about students and mentors and stories of transformation.

As I travel to different churches across the country, it is evident that one of the big challenges for many of you is keeping your letter writing fresh. It can be difficult to come up with thoughtful, encouraging, Christ-centered letters for someone you don't know. This newsletter will provide some practical tips on how to communicate with prisoners through the mail in meaningful ways.

I have also noticed that many of you find it difficult to relate to the daily struggles of men and women in prison. And that's okay! This newsletter will help you understand what prison life is like so you can write letters that encourage these men and women in their unique and challenging circumstances.

Also, we will soon be releasing monthly training videos for you, which you will be able to access on our website at cpministries.org/resources/mentors.

In closing, please accept my deepest appreciation for this important work you are doing. I am excited to provide coaching and encouragement as together we bring the light of the Gospel to the darkest of places—behind prison walls.

Your brother in Christ,
Doug Cupery

P.S. If you ever have questions, don't hesitate to contact the mentor support team (Jen, Mackenzie and Alaina) at mentor@cpministries.org! If you need to contact me directly, please email me at dcupery@cpministries.org or call me at (616) 228-0627.

5 THINGS PRISONERS NEED TO HEAR

1. You are not alone. Although many prisoners feel very isolated, you can remind them that they have not been forgotten by God or by you.

2. Encouraging words. Prisoners live in an environment where they are constantly being torn down with destructive words. Words that build them up are treasured.

3. I'm praying for you. Men and women in prison are comforted to know that others are thinking and praying about them. Crossroads students often tell us that they can feel your prayers for them.

4. I'm proud of you. Many prisoners haven't accomplished a lot in their lives. Telling them you are proud of them for the good choices they are making pushes them to keep going.

5. God loves you. Many men and women in prison feel like they have failed people in their lives and have failed God. They need to know that God is for them and that His love for them is strong and unconditional.



Meet Doug

Doug Cupery is the church mobilization director at Crossroads Prison Ministries. His job is to engage and equip churches and volunteers to care for prisoners around the world.

Get to know him in this interview:

Tell us about your career background.

My career background sure has taken some twists and turns! I worked for twenty years in the medical field as a paramedic and registered nurse, but a crisis point in my life changed not only my career path but my entire life. I made some bad decisions that resulted in me being sent to prison. During that time of brokenness, I found restoration in a relationship with God and discovered His purpose for my life.

After being released fifteen years ago, I spent several years at 70 x 7 Life Recovery, training mentors to support men and women who were coming home from prison. Most recently, I served as the local missions pastor at Ridge Point Community Church, where I also led the church's prison ministry.

Why do you have a passion for prison ministry?

What has become clear to me over the years is that most prisoners long for a sense of belonging, for hope and to be successful should they come home. I have come to the conclusion that this can only be found in a relationship with Jesus. In Christ, they can find identity, purpose and hope that will restore their lives. I have experienced this in my own life and want to share this joy with others.

What led you to joining Crossroads staff? Why do you have a heart for this ministry?

I know firsthand the impact of Crossroads's ministry. Crossroads Bible lessons and mentors helped me navigate my walk with Jesus during my time in prison and were a source of hope and encouragement in a dark place.

I resonate with Crossroads's heart to reach those who are forgotten. I have a deep passion for justice and understand that healing the brokenness in our world is only possible when hearts are changed through a relationship with Jesus. The Church plays a big role in this. It is a privilege to step into a ministry that is reshaping not only the worldview of thousands of prisoners, but also thousands of mentors as they discover that we are all broken people in need of a Savior.

What do you do as the church mobilization director?

My role is to engage and equip volunteers from churches all over the country to be in Christ-centered relationships with prisoners that are guided by the study of God's Word.

I also share with churches about the plight of the prisoner. As churches discover more about the prisoner's experience, they will be able to more effectively minister to men and women behind bars.

What do you enjoy the most about working at Crossroads?

Hearing the transformation stories from prisoners and volunteers!

In what ways can we be praying for you?

Join me in praying that God would continue to open doors and cause a catalytic movement of His Church to care for prisoners around the world. And that He would use me to be a part of that movement.

What students are saying . . .

"I love this course. It pushes me to think and to examine myself. This study, since day one, has caused me to actively change and grow. **I want all of you to know all your hard work, monetary donations for the lessons and everything else count.** The changes in me touch others who are not even on your radar. Thank you all for everything." – Leander, student in Texas