

DOING TIME

Your time is what you make it



For Prisoners **By Prisoners**

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We could not have done it without you!



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Artwork by Rene A.

Introduction

If this is your first time in prison, you might feel lonely, confused, overwhelmed and scared. This booklet, written for prisoners and by prisoners, is designed to help you through your first few days, weeks and months.

Each section has tips, advice and artwork from currently or formerly incarcerated people. We hope that this booklet will help you take a small step toward finding solid ground in this new place.



Artwork by Brian G.




Dear Friend,

When I first stepped into prison to serve my time, I quickly learned I would need to figure out how to navigate this new, unfamiliar world.

In those early days, I came to realize that I must not go home the same man I was when I got there. I knew that I needed to learn how to “do jail” the best I could. This attitude helped me develop self-discipline, positivity, tolerance and a routine that carried me through my years of incarceration. As you look through this booklet, I hope it will prepare you for some of the things you will encounter. The advice in it can be a good place to start as you build awareness and interact with your new surroundings.

I also want to encourage you. My hope is that you will learn that the crimes that brought you to prison do not define you as a person. Hold on to this truth as you move forward, and may peace be with you always.

Doug Cupery
Director of Church Mobilization, Crossroads
Former prisoner



UNWRITTEN RULES

Every environment has its own set of unwritten rules. These are rules that are not written down somewhere you can read them. They establish the culture of an environment. Everyone is expected to follow these unwritten rules.

“It’s all new. You’re going to be on information overload. Everything will seem overwhelming. Brand new written and unwritten rules every time you turn around. Way more information than you can take in. Ask for help! But watch out for scams.”

– Bob P.



“Slow down. Prison life runs at a much slower speed than the free world. Here, it is best to watch and listen before talking and interacting.”

– David C.

“As you use the bathroom, flush the toilet. We live in close quarters.”

– Vito H.



“Learn your officers—ALL officers. They’re all different. They all have different expectations of you. Follow all rules and do not get into prison drama.”

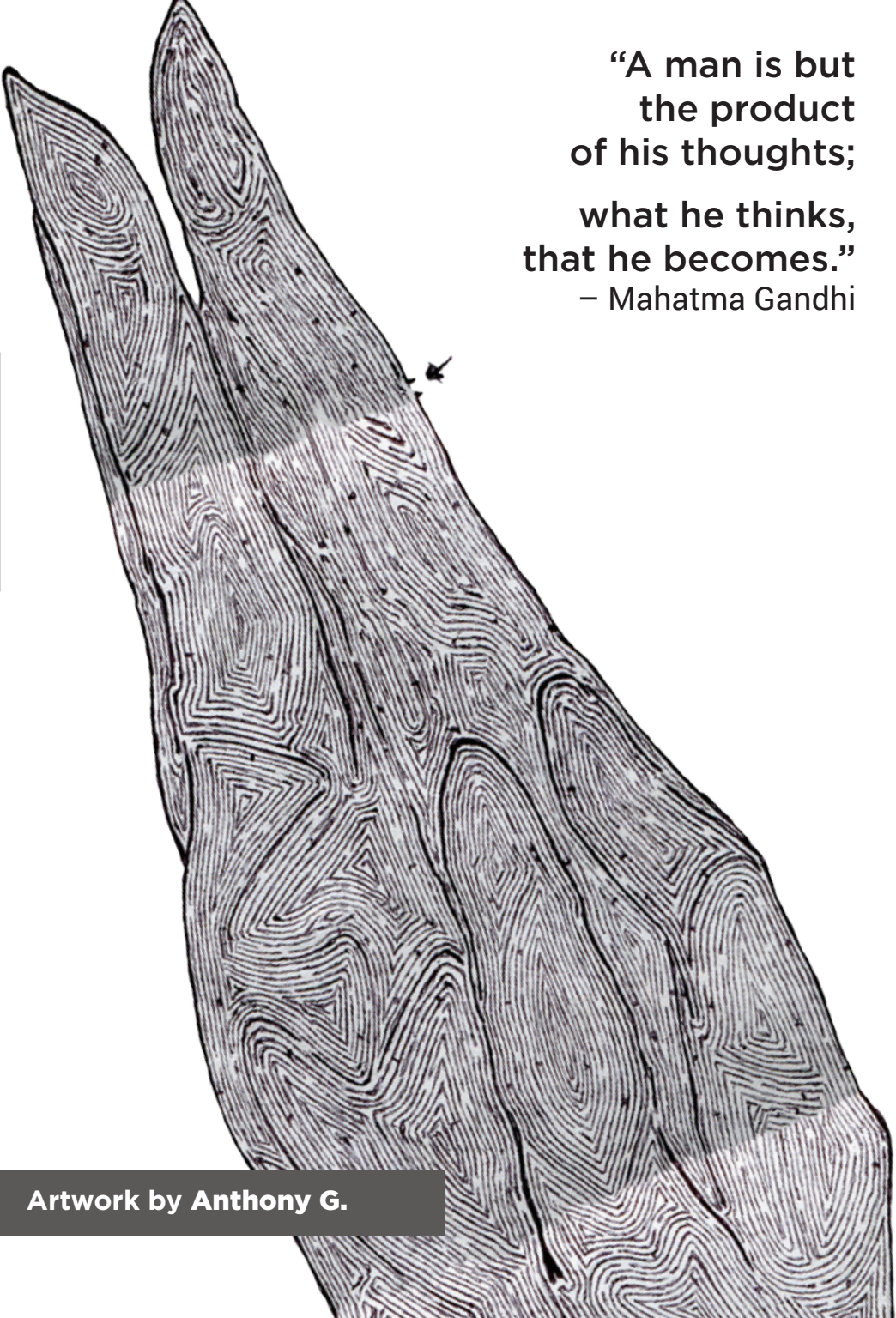
– LaShawn H.

“Don’t accept gifts from anybody. Remember, nothing is free in prison.”

– Kyle R.



**“A man is but
the product
of his thoughts;
what he thinks,
that he becomes.”
– Mahatma Gandhi**



Artwork by Anthony G.

MORE MONEY MORE PROBLEMS

There are things in prison or jail that can lead directly to trouble, even when they seem innocent at first. The biggest thing is debt: owing money or personal favors to other people. Avoid it.



“Avoid the ‘store guy.’ They will charge you double what you would usually pay, and you don’t get much money to start with. And then there is interest. It will double or triple before you know it. And if you don’t pay? You’ll get beat up, or worse. You can wait for coffee, chips or whatever you think you can’t live without.”

– Bob P.

“Don’t borrow, lend or steal. If you don’t have it, go without until you can afford to get it yourself.”

– Vito H.



“Don’t pay for protection and don’t advertise you have money.”

– Carl H.

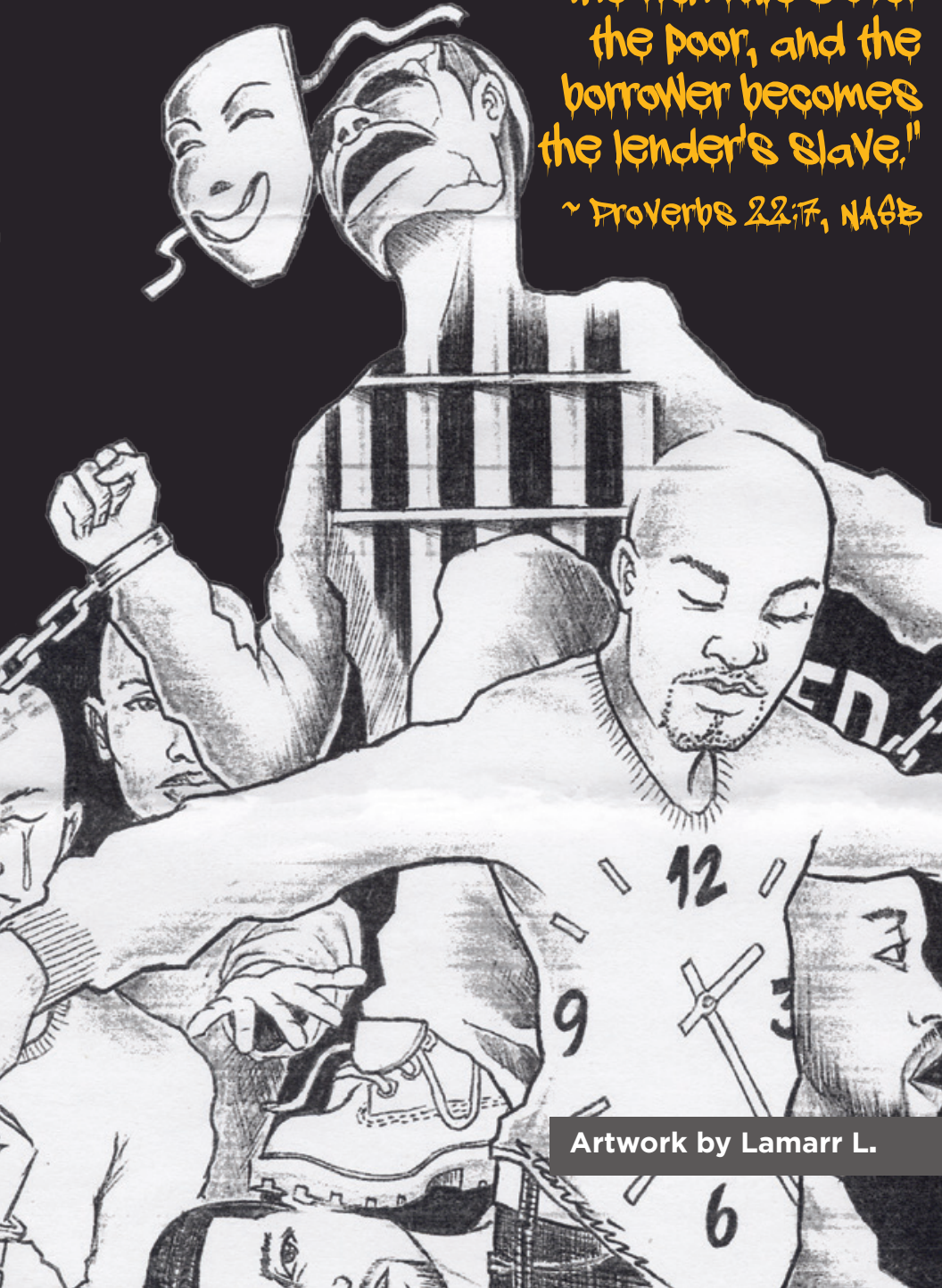
“Don’t buy more commissary than you need for the week or the next store day, because you can bring unwanted attention to yourself when people see you with big bags of food.”

– Vito H.



"The rich rules over
the poor, and the
borrower becomes
the lender's slave."

~ Proverbs 22:7, NASB



Artwork by Lamarr L.

ROUTINES

Developing daily routines can be very healthy for you. This includes routines for working, exercising and maintaining personal hygiene. Routines can help add structure to your days.

“Get a job or go to school. If you stay busy, it helps mentally and it helps you keep out of trouble.”

– Vito H.



“Exercise all you can. A good heart is at home in a good body run by a good mind. A good place to start.”

– Joseph C.

“Do your best to keep clean and stay clean. Keep your living area neat and nice at all times.”

– Christopher C.

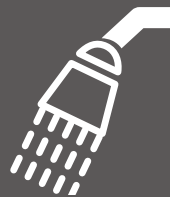


“Find a routine while incarcerated: church, school programs, a trade, a job and a regime that includes exercising and staying in top physical shape.”

– Juan C.

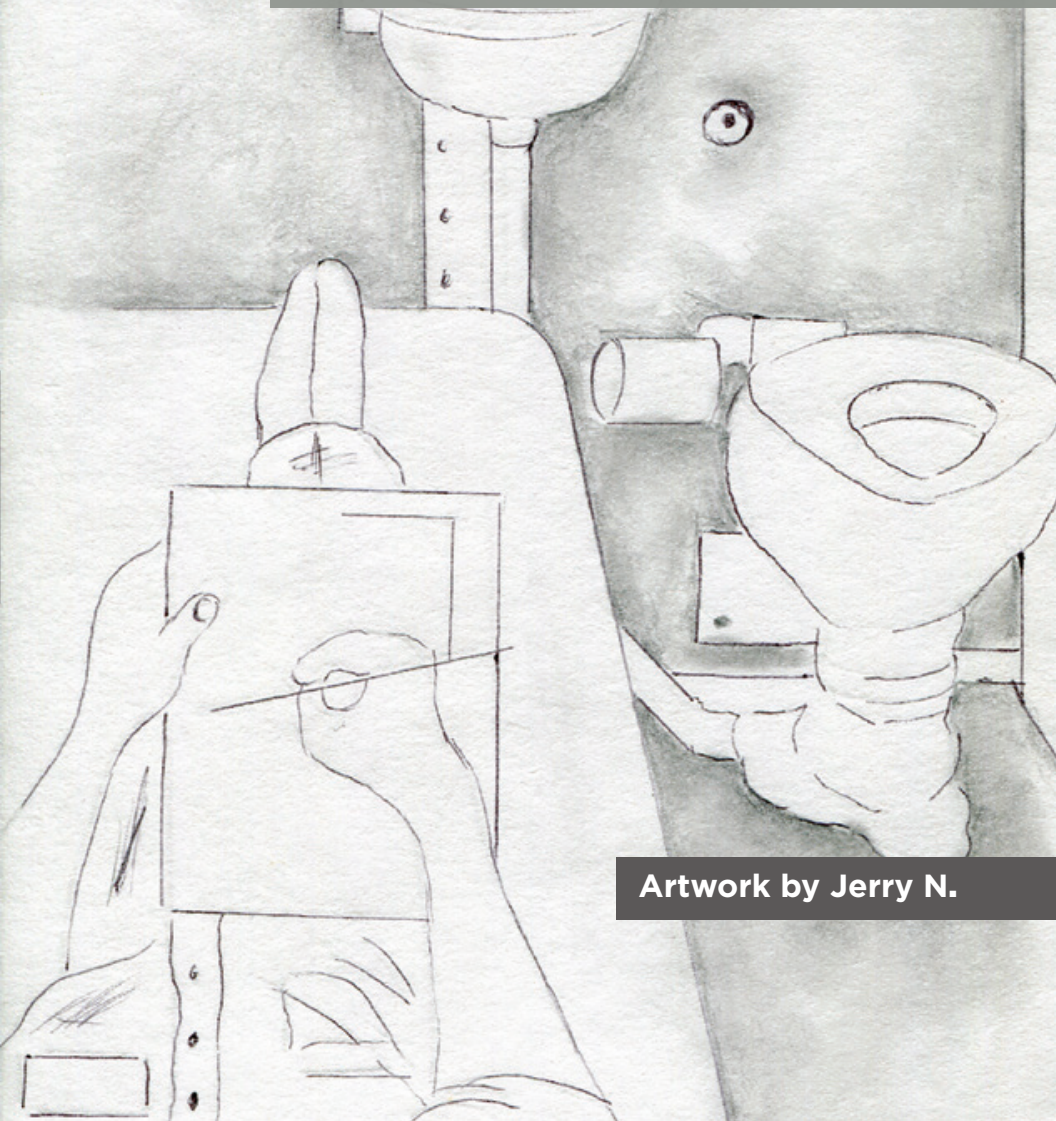
“Always bathe. Nothing screams respect for oneself like constant personal hygiene.”

– Chris K.



“It is the duty of every human being to look carefully within, and see himself as he is, and spare no pains to improve himself in body, mind and soul.”

– Mahatma Gandhi



Artwork by Jerry N.

STAY BUSY

Ask yourself: “Do I want to stay the same person I was when I got here?” Getting involved with programs and keeping busy is a great way to create positive changes in your life. Learn everything you can—even if you don’t agree with it. You never know what you might use later.



“While you’re in prison, do your time—don’t let your time do you. Stay busy. Take programs and go to school. Stay strong, focused and self-motivated. Do whatever you have to do to make sure you leave prison better than when you came in. Don’t come back and be a statistic. Rise above.”

– Joshua H.

“Enroll yourself into whatever educational courses or self-help classes that are available to you. Don’t just attend them to receive certificates. Remember, whatever you put into the classes is what you’ll get back from them.”

– Phong D.



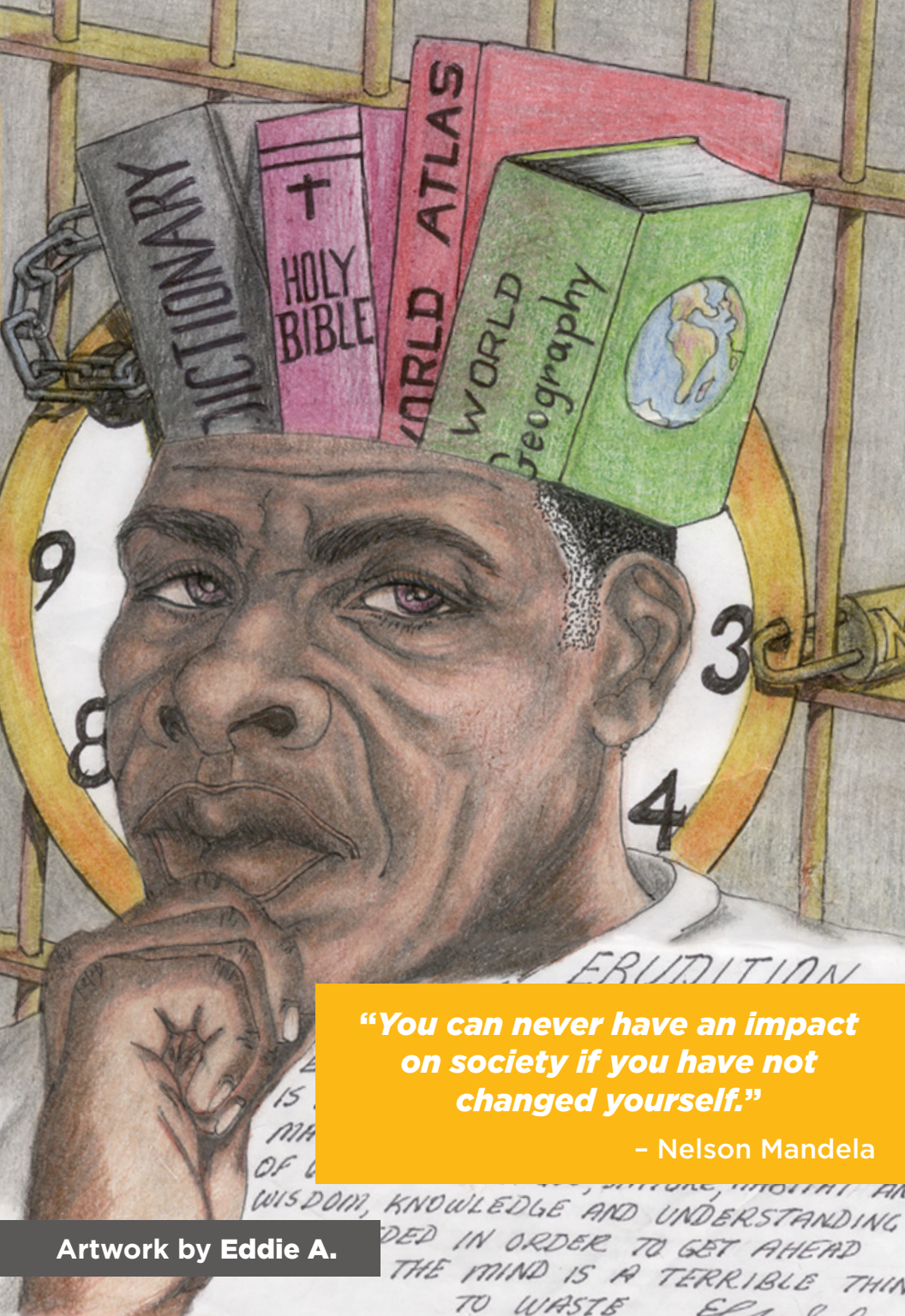
“Keep busy with any programs the facility has to offer to better yourself. It’s called a correctional facility, so correct yourself.”

– Steven C.

“Find the stuff that prepares you to leave and helps you do your time—classes, services or a job. Make sure you get out of your cell, check out the yard, join a ballgame or go to chapel. Find people with interests like you who want to stay out of trouble.”

– Bob P.





“You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself.”

- Nelson Mandela

Artwork by Eddie A.

ERUDITION
15
M
OF
WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING
DED IN ORDER TO GET AHEAD
THE MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING
TO WASTE

RESPECT

The quickest way to get into trouble is by failing to respect those around you. Treat fellow prisoners, as well as the prison or jail staff, with respect. This will make things easier for everyone.

“Be respectful to others, control your temper and watch what you say. Be respectful even to those you disagree with. Do your best to defuse a conflict before it gets out of hand.”

– Victor M.



“Don’t walk through crowds of people talking. It shows disrespect.”

– Anonymous

“Learn to walk without looking in other cells or cubes. Mind your business always. Stay out of people’s conversations.”

– Andy D.



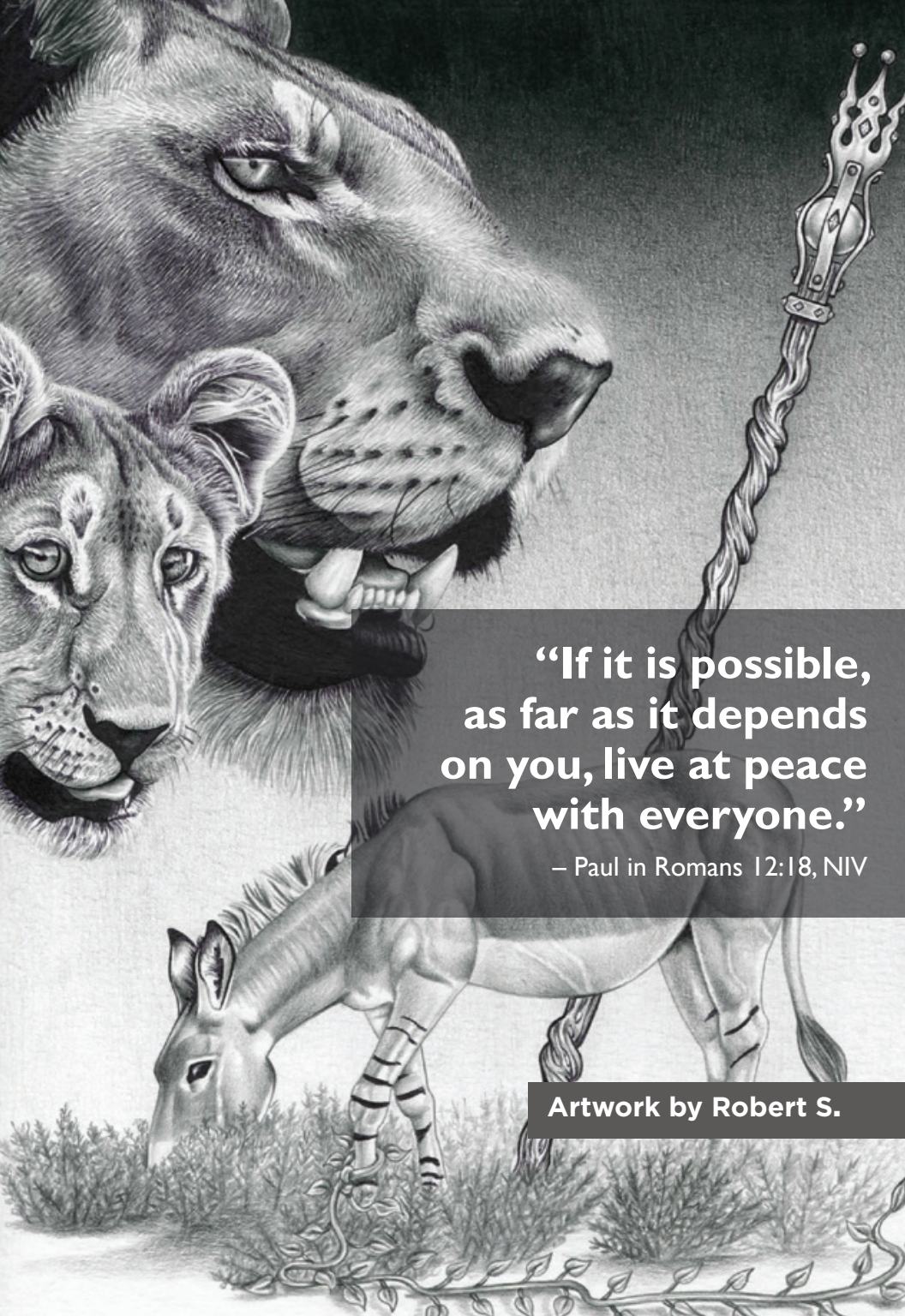
“People new to jail/prison must always abide by the rules of the authorities by obeying staff orders and respecting security officers, correction counselors, deputies, police on duty and medical staff.”

– Jasper B.

“Don’t use anybody else’s stuff; ask them first!”

– Jenilyn D. and Lorraine K.





**“If it is possible,
as far as it depends
on you, live at peace
with everyone.”**

– Paul in Romans 12:18, NIV

Artwork by Robert S.

GETTING ALONG

It is important to treat those around you the way you want to be treated. You will probably be seeing the same people for quite a while, so you will need to learn the best ways to get along with them.



“It’s a small world—if you tell on someone or hurt someone, you will most likely see that person again, especially if you have a lot of time.”

– Wilfred E.

“Don’t walk around the pod or yard like you’re hard and tough. You’re scared and so am I.”

– Chris K.



Your

Path

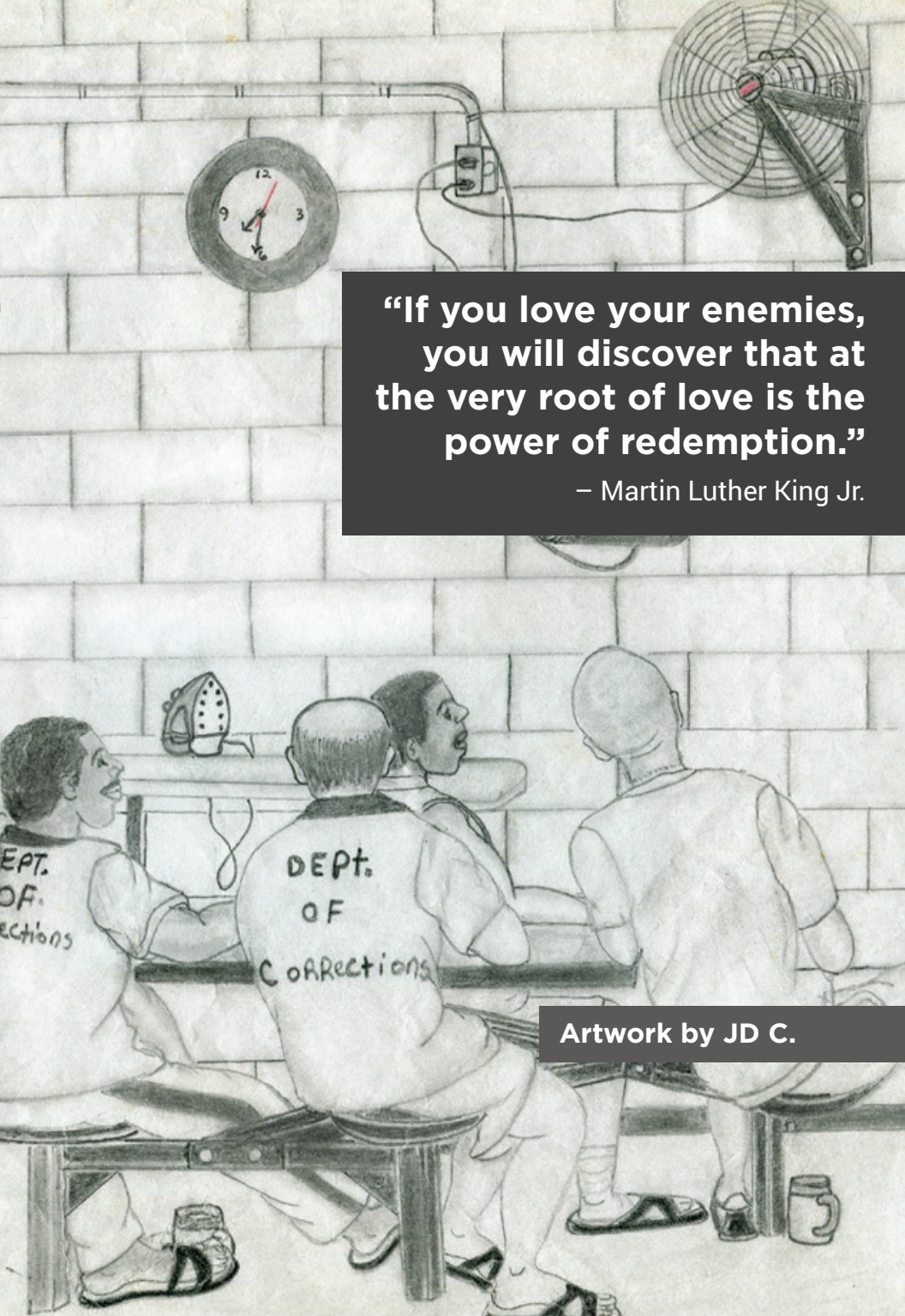
“Don’t allow others to determine or dictate what you become. Stop being codependent on what others think of you. Respect others’ feelings, beliefs and boundaries as their own.”

– Phong D.

“Once you have been in prison 2–4 weeks and have your bearings, do not forget what it was like that first couple days. After I had been in our unit 2 months, a guy came in—first time in prison, didn’t know what to expect. I introduced myself and struck up a conversation. It eased his worries and I made a friend. If we all did this, we would make it easier for every first-timer in prison.”

– Robert I.





**“If you love your enemies,
you will discover that at
the very root of love is the
power of redemption.”**

– Martin Luther King Jr.

Artwork by JD C.

FAMILY

Remember that time continues to move forward for your family, even though it may seem to slow down for you. You can still be an active participant in your family from where you are; it will just look a little different. The number one way to support your family is to work on yourself. Improve your thinking and your view of the world.

“Always write to loved ones whether you want to or not. It’s good to stay connected to family, loved ones and friends.”

– Christopher C.



“Letters take a while. Be patient. People on the outside are busier than you are.”

– Wilfred E.

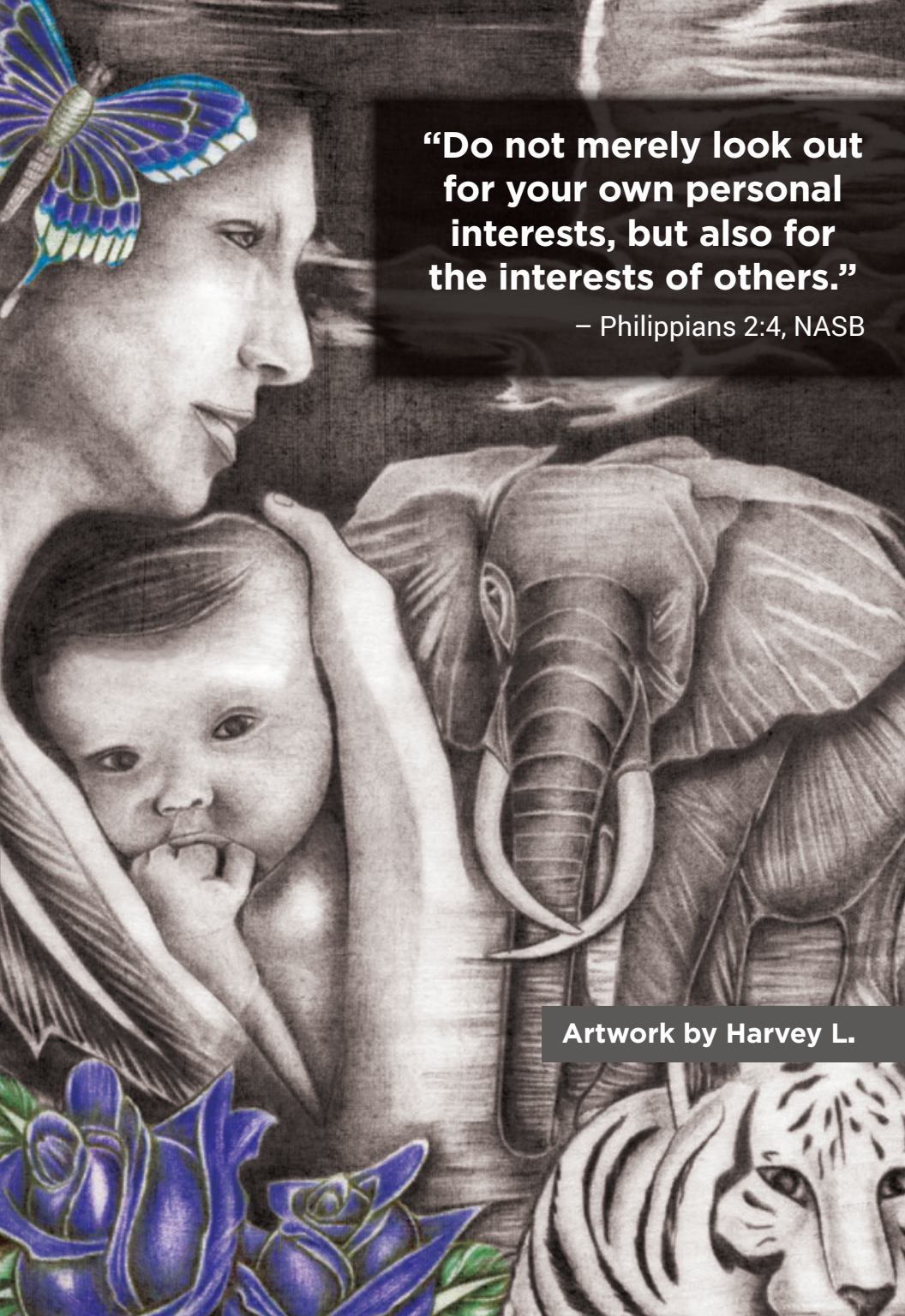
“Do not burn bridges with your family. Be appreciative of everything they do in support of you and tell them always.”

– Johnny P.



“Stay connected and reestablish family ties, because it is very important to maintain some normalcy with the outside world and not get so institutionalized that you lose touch with reality. Family is very important to rehabilitation.”

– Terrell L.



“Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

– Philippians 2:4, NASB

Artwork by Harvey L.

PAST & FUTURE

Remember that your crime does not define who you are as a person. Acknowledge what happened in the past, but don't let that hold you back from improving your future.



“Focus on mending broken relationships and building bridges in order to establish better life skills for your release. Work on being the best you today and a better you tomorrow.”

– Jasper C.

“Take responsibility for your actions and be willing to admit when you are wrong. Take time to reflect on the causative factors of your life, the contributing factors that led you to your crime and the everlasting ripple effects of how your actions affected people's lives. Pray for insight, empathy and remorse.”

– Phong D.



“Look yourself in the mirror and accept what you have done. Write a letter to folks you wronged and apologize.”

– Tyreno G.

“A person can control your body and food, but your thoughts, mind and soul they cannot take away from you.”

– Nasean B.



“If you feel like giving up, please talk to psychological services or your chaplain. Some days are rough, but they pass. Death is final. You cannot change your mind.”

– Ramiah W.

**“The greatest glory of living
lies not in never falling, but in
rising every time you fall.”**

– Nelson Mandela



Artwork by Lamarr L.

“Being in prison does not mean your life is over; it means get your life together.”

– Dobie H.

Taking the Next Step

Which suggestions in this booklet do you want to start doing today? Pick a few and write them on the “to do list” below to set yourself some goals. Add descriptions of what you need to do to complete them.

To Do List

Example: *I want to take a class*

What I need to do to make it happen: *Find a class list, sign up for a class, get permission to leave cell, go to class*

#1 _____

What I need to do to make it happen:

#2 _____

What I need to do to make it happen:

#3 _____

What I need to do to make it happen:

IT'S NOT THE END IT CAN BE A BEGINNING

It may be hard to believe, but this is not the end of the world. In fact, it can be a beginning. There are far more people who care where you are going than who care where you've been. You just need to find them.

If you would like some support and encouragement on your journey, we can connect you with mentors on the outside. The Crossroads Prison Ministries mentorship program connects you with mentors who study the Bible with you, write letters to you, answer your questions and share stories from their own lives. The mentors care about you and accept you. They will challenge you to grow.

Through the mentorship program, Crossroads offers twelve different correspondence Bible study courses. Each course contains up to fourteen lessons. The courses are designed to help you learn more about God and more about yourself.

If you are interested in joining the program, please fill out the application inside this booklet and mail it to us today!

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

- 1 Crossroads sends a Bible study lesson to you.
- 2 You complete the lesson and mail it back to the Crossroads office.
- 3 Crossroads sends the next lesson to you and forwards your completed lesson to a volunteer mentor.
- 4 As you are working on your next lesson, the mentor reviews your completed lesson and mails it back to you along with an encouraging letter.



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