

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



JANUARY 2018

Dear Mentor,

When we talk about sending people to prison, we almost never talk about this fact: 95 percent of people currently in prison will someday return to their community.

A person's experience with the criminal justice system is a long journey. The Church has an opportunity to intercede at each stage of the journey.

For the majority of prisoners, their journey begins with their arrest, progresses through the court process and the incarceration period and concludes with reentry into their community. The Church, serving through Crossroads, is involved in the incarceration period. Through this involvement, the Church is also helping lay the foundation for the reentry period. We can help people in prison develop the right attitude, tools and relationships so they can reintegrate into society successfully and live an abundant life in service to God.

The letters we write and the Bible studies we share today can impact not only a prisoner's future, but also their family's future and their community's future. As a mentor, you can encourage students who are approaching release to seek out a church community that will walk with them as they navigate the difficult process of reentry. You can remind your students that God can use them in powerful ways in their community. I often dwell on the many stories in the Bible about people who did awful, damaging things, but then, after repentance and refinement, changed the world around them to the glory of God. These stories offer hope to the people we are serving.

Here are a few items to think about as you prepare to write your next letter:

- Consider how this lesson may affect your student's approach to family, work and community. Even though they may have a long sentence and their relationships with family members may be damaged or even nonexistent, we can still encourage them to work toward restored relationships and new life in Christ.
- Encourage your student to look for positive people to help them on their journey. I am reminded of a quote I once heard: "Show me your friends and I'll show you your future." Or, as the Bible puts it, "Walk with the wise and become wise" (Proverbs 13:20). Many people in prison have not had positive influences in their lives, and finding at least one mature, supportive person to walk alongside them can make a huge difference.
- Reflect on the importance of the Church. It is not unusual for people in prison to have a tainted view of the Church, because they may see fellow prisoners who claim to be Christians attending church services but then engaging in poor behavior in their units. Gently remind them that, although the Church is far from perfect, it is the best place to find life-giving community, to draw closer to God and to become more like Him.

Grateful for your heart of service,



Douglas Cupery
Church Mobilization Director

Here are a few guidelines to remember for sending mail to students:

- Use only blue and black ink when writing letters and commenting on lessons. This is a rule in many prison facilities.
- Please use the stationery we provide when writing the letter to your student.
- Please do not send any non-Crossroads materials to your student (other than any additional pieces of paper needed to write your letter).
- Write a personal letter each time. Please don't use form letters.

Crossroads Students Will No Longer Pay for Postage

By Douglas Cupery

I recently took a tour of Rikers Island, an overcrowded prison facility in New York City that holds an average population of nearly 10,000 prisoners. As I met with some of the men and women locked up in this facility, I was stunned by the realization that many of them have absolutely nothing.

They have no money to pay for commissary or phone calls. They have no money to buy stamps to send a letter home. This financial burden makes participation in the Crossroads program impossible.

For years, Crossroads Prison Ministries has been connecting prisoners with mentors on the outside, allowing them to grow in friendship as they study Crossroads Bible lessons together. Unfortunately, over the years, we have heard from countless prisoners who have been forced to drop out of the program because they could no longer afford stamps. We have also heard from men and women who would like to join Crossroads but can't because they simply can't afford it. The stories are heartbreaking.

Because of this, we have been challenging donors throughout the past year to make prepaid postage a reality. And we are happy to announce that, beginning this month, all lessons will include business reply envelopes. That's right—Crossroads donors are covering postage for all students!

This is an answer to prayer and a revolutionary change for the ministry. It is also a significant financial investment. But it's the best kind of investment, because we are investing in the people God has called us to serve. Since we are sharing the good news about God's grace that He freely gives to us all, we believe that we should offer the Crossroads program free of charge.

We anticipate that paying for postage will increase student enrollments significantly. **That will present us with the exciting challenge of drawing more volunteer mentors to Crossroads.**

As you rejoice with us, I ask that you think about the people in your life. Who may have the time in their schedule and the compassion in their heart to encourage people behind bars? Tell those people about Crossroads. Share with them why you love the ministry and invite them to join you as a mentor.

We are so thankful to God for providing the resources necessary to reach even more people behind bars, and we are grateful to you, our faithful mentors, for your commitment to our mission.

Did You Know?

- The United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population but almost 25 percent of the world's total prison population.
- 1 of every 3 black males will be incarcerated in his lifetime.
- 1 of every 28 children has a parent behind bars.
- More than 65 million Americans have a criminal record.
- The United States has more jails than colleges.

Thank you for being part of a movement of churches dedicated to sharing the life-changing message of the Gospel with people in prison.

You can access Just for Mentors training videos at cpministries.org/justformentors

Email us any time at mentor@cpministries.org