

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



MARCH 5, 2018

Dear Mentor,

Recently, I was talking to someone who was incarcerated years ago and is now doing well. I asked him if he still has dreams about prison. Without hesitation, he answered yes. I too still have dreams about being locked up and all the trauma that comes with it. The dreams have not completely gone away after all these years.

Today, I have the privilege of journeying with men who are stuck in the nightmare that is incarceration. My wife and I recently had a discussion with Will, who was preparing to transfer prisons. Will lamented that this transfer would mean he would be shackled again for the trip. To him, this was deeply dehumanizing and further perpetuated the lie that his identity is tied to his crime and incarceration.

Will's feelings are not uncommon to people in prison. Similar concerns may arise in letters from your students. They may mention the prison culture that often produces aggression. A student might be disheartened because their name was left at the prison gate and now they are just a number.

These are the realities of where they live, but it does not need to define who they are! At Crossroads, we want to point men and women in prison to their identity in Christ. We want to challenge them to explore who they think they are and then imagine how their life could be different by following Jesus. We want to encourage people in prison to know that God can take their regrets and brokenness and redeem them for His glory!

I chose a few verses to share that you may know well. I want to encourage you to explain these to your student this week.

- "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him." – 1 John 3:1
- "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin." – Romans 6:6
- "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" – 2 Corinthians 5:17

Our new Bible study course will encourage students to look inwardly and ask the question, "Who am I?" As they work through the material and study Scripture, they will discover the joy of knowing they are a son or daughter of God, forgiven and deeply loved. See the back page for more information on this upcoming new course!

Honored to serve alongside you,



Douglas Cupery
Church Mobilization Director

Who Are You? Stories

By Dara Nykamp, Curriculum Development Director

In the last issue of *Just for Mentors*, we introduced the new Tier 1 course, *Who Are You?* This three-lesson course will be the first course that newly enrolled students take. Over the past four months, we have been testing this new course with a group of students. Each student in the test group was paired with an individual mentor for the duration of the course. We have received some great responses from students and mentors, and we wanted to share a few of them with you:

Jerrod, a new student who finished the whole course in just over six weeks, said that two things stayed with him after he finished his final lesson. First, the stories about other prisoners' journeys reminded him that he was not alone and that other people were going through experiences similar to his, which was very encouraging to him. Second, the course reminded him that he needed to serve others. He said that his answer to the question "Who am I?" was that God was calling him to "be a servant of all."

Steve (not his real name) wrote in the margins of his first lesson, "I am really nervous about doing this, but I'll do my best." Despite his reservations, he answered every question in the lesson, including the questions that ask students to apply a Bible story to their lives. He also wrote multiple questions throughout the lesson and wrote a note to his mentor on the last page, sharing a little bit of his story. Not only was he able to finish the lesson successfully, but he was also eager to learn more!

Jen is a mentor who was paired with one of the students in the test group. She remarked that, as she was reviewing her student's lessons, she spent more time than usual reading the student's answers. In doing so, she learned a lot about her student. This made it easier for her to write back to the student. Because of her student's questions and the information the student shared about their life, it was the easiest and most rewarding letter she has ever written.

We have seen students eagerly study the Word through these new lessons and find ways to apply what they learned to their lives. We have also seen students who struggle to read, or who are not believers, respond to the lessons in ways that indicate that they are learning more about God and His love for them. We can't wait to share more stories like these when all new Crossroads students begin taking *Who Are You?* in April!

The next issue of *Just for Mentors* will include a more detailed description of what you can expect to see as you review the new lessons. You will also receive an answer key for *Who Are You?* and other mentor tools in the next few weeks!



Dara Nykamp is the curriculum development director at Crossroads, possessing several years of Bible curriculum writing experience. She has master's degrees from Wayne State Law School and Western Theological Seminary. She has worked as an assistant prosecutor, has assisted in teaching Hebrew and is a writer by trade.

You can contact Dara with questions about the new curriculum at dnykamp@cpministries.org.