

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



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Dear Mentor,

Part of my journey prior to working at Crossroads Prison Ministries included working for a ministry that helped those returning to their communities after incarceration. I worked in reentry for a long time, and that work continues as formerly incarcerated individuals regularly enter my life. I also continue to make connections with individuals who have pleaded guilty to their crimes and are living in deep uncertainty as they await their sentence.

I've learned that those who work through these difficult times in a healthy way had, at some point, made a commitment to *use* their time of incarceration instead of simply *doing* their time. They committed to learn who they were in Christ and develop an open-minded approach to the difficulties that come with incarceration.

This is why I felt called to go back into prisons after my incarceration. I wanted to journey with prisoners to encourage them to use their time, not just do their time, and to remind them that God has a plan for them right where they are. You are participating in the same endeavor as you encourage and challenge your students by guiding them through their lessons and by writing letters that offer hope. With your guidance, they can find peace and cultivate a receptive spirit to see how God will use them right where they are.

Encourage your students to practice using their time well by:

- **Continuing their Crossroads studies.** This helps them build an understanding of who God is and how He wants them to approach life. Remind them that we, the Church on the outside, want to be part of their lives.
- **Attending church in prison.** Remind your students that God's desire for us is to gather as His people to worship and hear teachings and then disperse to be a reflection of Him to those around us. Attending church in prison can be a tricky subject for many reasons, but don't give up on encouraging your students to serve and grow in a faith community.
- **Learning as much as they can.** Joining various groups exposes people in prison to different ways of thinking, keeps their minds active and provides a type of interaction they may not receive elsewhere.
- **Praying.** Discuss different types of prayer with your students. Remember that it may be difficult for them to concentrate because of the constant distractions and noise in prison.

Finally, encourage your students with Paul's words found in Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

I know from experience that peace is hard to come by in prison. Every day, I was surrounded by people who were hurt, bitter, angry and vengeful. This promise in Philippians 4 was a lifeline for me, and I pray that, as you remind your students of this biblical truth, it will offer them hope and encouragement as well.

Serving alongside you,



Douglas Cupery
Church Mobilization Director

Have a question? You can contact the mentor support team at mentor@cpministries.org or 800-668-2450.

How New Courses Will Impact You and Your Students

By Dara Nykamp, Curriculum Development Director

The staff at Crossroads is working hard to add new courses for Tier 1 and Tier 2 students over the next few years. The newest Tier 1 course, *Who Are You?*, is the first step toward our larger goal of reaching more students and giving people with lower reading levels and a lack of biblical knowledge a chance to participate in our program.

But what does this mean for more advanced students? We are working on a plan for them too. The first step is transitioning to our new computer database. It will allow us to track student performance more efficiently and to create student-specific study paths. This means that, in the future, we will be able to offer more challenging courses sooner to students who are strong readers and Bible scholars.

And what does this mean for you? We realize that guiding students through a new course may seem intimidating at first. But you've got this! The format of the lessons is different, but your role remains the same—simply encourage your students and help them understand God's love for them.

Things to remember:

1. You have already reviewed many essays and Roadmap answers, similar to those you will find in the new courses, in lessons from *Great Truths of the Bible* and other Crossroads courses.
2. Some questions in the new courses will ask students about their past experiences or their personal understanding or opinion of something. These are opportunities to learn more about your students, their life experiences and where they are on their spiritual journeys.
3. We are here to help if you have any questions or need help responding to your students. Please call the main office at 800-668-2450 or send an email to mentor@cpministries.org. (Please email curriculum@cpministries.org with questions about the lessons themselves!).

ANNOUNCEMENT: NEW DATABASE COMING SOON!

Crossroads is growing! We are seeing an incredible increase in the number of students in the Crossroads program. We are also seeing more members of the Church answer the call to journey alongside people in prison as a mentor.

To keep up with this exciting expansion and to posture Crossroads for continued growth over the coming years, the ministry has invested in developing a new database that will help us serve our students more efficiently. This database is critical to our ministry because we use it to process lessons and to track our mentors' and students' activity.

Our current database is quite old—it was developed in 2002—and it will not last much longer. The new

database is currently being created by software developers and will launch in the fall of 2018.

Over the next few months, we will be communicating with you about the database changes that will directly impact you and how you do this ministry. We know there will be many questions, and we are working hard with our software developers to make sure the transition to the new database is smooth for everyone.

Ultimately, we know this step forward will help us impact more students with the hope of the Gospel. We are excited about the changes and ask for your prayers as we shift our program and data to the new software.