

# JUST FOR MENTORS

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



OCTOBER 2018

Dear Mentor,

My wife, Hendrina, and I had looked forward to having lunch with our friend Eddie for a long time.

Eddie was in a group that we facilitated in prison a while ago, and we always found him to be kind and humble. We never heard complaints from him about being in prison. He just wanted to grow as a person. He was also part of the group of prisoners that gave input into the new Crossroads course, *Who Are You?*

When he was released from prison, he went straight to a local church, making connections and building healthy relationships to start off on the right foot. His hope was to reintegrate into society quickly and to lead a life that would honor God.

Despite his best efforts, it wasn't long before he violated the conditions of his parole. He was detained, and our lunch had to wait several months.

Initially, I just couldn't understand. After all those years learning what it meant to reflect Jesus, he was back in jail! Why was he not respectful of his parole stipulations? How could he do this to his family?

As I wrestled with this, I began looking at my own life and asking some tough questions:

Do I show respect to everyone, love our family of believers, fear God and honor the government leaders (1 Peter 2:17) all the time? Hmm . . . probably not.

Do I humble myself before the Lord so He can lift me up in honor (James 4:10)? If I am honest, I tend to do things that I think benefit me and make me look good, even though I know that letting God lift me up would be so much better.

Do I make decisions that hurt my family and friends? Of course I do.

I was reminded that Eddie and I are not that different. We are both sinners in need of God's grace. As you reflect on this truth, consider how you might share it in your letters to students this month. Here are a few tips to ponder:

- Share a time in your life when you made a careless decision without considering all of the potential consequences. What were the repercussions? How did it affect those around you?
- Share a time when you put yourself before others. Then share how things might have turned out differently if you had instead put others before yourself.
- Share Philippians 2:3–4: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." What does this verse mean to you? Challenge your student to put the verse into practice.

Serving alongside you,



Douglas Cupery  
Church Mobilization Director

It's time once again for our annual **Christmas Cards for Prisoners** program! Please send your cards to the office by **November 15, 2018**. Check out this page on our website for more details and rules about what kinds of cards are allowed in facilities:

[cpministries.org/christmascards](http://cpministries.org/christmascards)

*Have a question? You can contact the mentor support team at [mentor@cpministries.org](mailto:mentor@cpministries.org) or 800-668-2450.*

# Asking Personal Questions Shows That You Care

By Dara Nykamp, Curriculum Development Director

When reviewing lessons from our new course, *Who Are You?*, some mentors have started to notice a trend. These lessons ask students to introduce themselves and to answer the questions “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” and “Where am I going?” Students who are longtime Christians or deep thinkers often give answers that reflect the deeper meaning of those questions. Students who don’t fit those categories often give more literal answers. We want mentors to know that either set of answers is okay.

How students respond to the questions isn’t the important part. What is important is the fact that they are being asked the questions at all.

People in prison are rarely asked any personal questions. Often, they aren’t even referred to by their names. They are #123456, not *John* or *Sara*. They are constantly hearing the question, “Where are you supposed to be right now?” They rarely hear, “Where do you hope to go in the future?”

We ask these kinds of questions to give students the opportunity to think more deeply about these topics. We also ask these questions to let them know that we are interested in their lives. We want them to know that we care that they are a parent who misses their four kids or that they want to build a house or go back to school or travel the world someday. We want to start a conversation with them.

Most men and women in prison don’t have many people in their lives who show genuine interest in them. Some don’t have anyone. So you can imagine how life-giving it is for them to converse with someone who asks about their interests, their desires and their dreams.

People in prison may be uncomfortable initiating a conversation. Living in prison, they are conditioned not to. Telling others about their loved ones or their dreams for the future is often not safe in their environment. But most prisoners long to talk about those things. They are lonely and crave meaningful conversations.

In Tier 1, it’s difficult to create a conversation unless the lesson itself asks a question first. In Tier 2, you can create a conversation with your student through continued correspondence. But whether you are a Tier 1 or a Tier 2 mentor, you can help students by offering a safe space for them to be themselves and to admit they need Jesus’ help and healing. The blank lines in these lessons, waiting to be filled, can be that safe space. The letters they write to you can be that safe space. When you respond to students’ answers, use affirming and encouraging words. This will build trust and allow your student to be even more open and vulnerable in future lessons.

Starting a conversation with your student shows you are interested in them as a person. It’s what Jesus did when He spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well and when He spoke to Zacchaeus and Nicodemus. Jesus also did this with Peter when asking him to “feed my sheep” (John 21:17). Those conversations indicated that Jesus had a desire to understand the people in His life. Asking students personal questions, regardless of their answers, shows them that we care about them. And if we, the people of God, demonstrate love and care, their hearts will be receptive to the truth that God loves them too.

## WE OVER ME: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

By now, you should have received a packet from Crossroads with details about our mentor recruitment campaign: **We over Me**. We are so excited about this campaign and we can’t wait to see how God uses you and your story to invite more people to join His Kingdom-expanding work through Crossroads!

Are you unsure how to invite your friends and family to join the Crossroads mentor team? Visit [cpministries.org/weoverme](http://cpministries.org/weoverme) for resources. You will find videos you can share with your friends on social media or at church and informational flyers you can print and distribute.

If you need a large number of flyers or other resources to share Crossroads with your network, please don’t hesitate to email the mentor support team at [mentor@cpministries.org](mailto:mentor@cpministries.org).