

# JUST FOR MENTORS

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



NOVEMBER 2018

Dear Mentor,

A few weeks ago, prisoners circled around the handball court inside a Michigan prison for an evangelistic event hosted by Prison Fellowship, Crossroads Prison Ministries and the Luis Palau Association. At first, there was very little interaction between the volunteers and prisoners. The prisoners kept a bit of distance, checking out the volunteers, almost leery of us.

There were two distinct camps: the prisoners and the volunteers. This awkward division continued until we, the volunteers, approached the circle of prisoners.

“Hey! I’m glad you’re here!”

“What is your name? No, your first name!”

“Where are you from?”

As we took an interest in their lives, learned their names and heard pieces of their stories, the invisible but very apparent walls began to crumble.

We began to build trust by showing interest. But there was still a sense of tension as we worked to transform the feeling of “us and them” to just “us.” Unfortunately, we didn’t have enough time at the event to fully break down the walls between the two groups.

The experience made me think about the Crossroads program. As Crossroads mentors, we have the incredible opportunity to journey with people in prison for the duration of their sentences. We get to offer them consistent encouragement through Bible studies and letters filled with love and hope. In this way, we are being “present” for these men and women throughout their incarceration.

There is power in being present. It breaks down walls. It eliminates the “us versus them” mindset. It creates mutuality—the idea that we are all equally human and equally loved by God.

Jesus understood this. He didn’t do ministry from a distance. He didn’t pack arenas, teach an inspiring message and then go home. His ministry was deeply relational. He talked with individuals, learned their names, dined with them, listened to their stories and healed them.

As you write to your students this month, consider how you might “be present” for them. Ask them questions about their lives and their families, their dreams and desires, their disappointments and pain. Tell them you are praying for them—or, even better, write out a prayer for them.

As we remain present for our students, we can remember with confidence that Jesus is present in that student’s prison cell too, using your words to bring love and healing to their souls.

Serving alongside you,



Douglas Cupery  
Church Mobilization Director

## CLOSED FOR CHRISTMAS

In celebration of Christmas, the Crossroads office will be closed December 24 through January 1. No lessons will be mailed during that time. We will return to the office on January 2, 2019.

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

# Ever-changing Rules

By Dara Nykamp, Director of Curriculum Development

In a recent sermon, my pastor talked about Jesus' promise to be with His disciples "to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). We often look at that verse as a comfort—and we should! But it can also serve as a reminder that we need His presence to accomplish what He has called us to do.

That's something we are very aware of right now at Crossroads. The ministry is facing numerous challenges as it interacts with correctional institutions. Prisons are constantly introducing new regulations. Due to these changing regulations, as well as upgrades to technology in the prison system, we have realized that we need to make some changes in order to continue to serve prisoners well and to make sure we can reach even more men and women with the Gospel.

Here are just a few examples of regulation changes: the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PDOC) recently decided to refuse anything mailed directly to prisoners. In order for Crossroads lessons to reach students, the lessons are scanned by a third party (hired by PDOC), printed on new paper and then repackaged and mailed to the students. Some states, including New York, have banned any books that haven't been purchased through specific online providers. Indiana has banned any unlined paper from entering their facilities. New regulations and restrictions surface daily as other regulations disappear. These changes are out of our control, but we are doing our best to keep up with them.

It is imperative for Crossroads to figure out ways to cope with the ever-changing world of prison ministry. Implementing our new database for tracking student information is one of the ways we can begin to address it. The database will allow us to instantaneously update every file of students in a certain state when new regulations surface. We know that all of these changes affect you too, and we are thankful for your patience. We will do our best to keep you informed as we hear about new changes.

We know that salvation is at stake for many Crossroads students, so it is vital that we seek out ways to continue to serve them. We also know that it is only with God's help that we can continue to navigate these ever-changing regulations together. Please pray with us that we can all stay fixed on our mission: to care for people in prison and share with them God's message of love, hope and salvation.

## We over Me Campaign Update

As you continue to share stories of your Crossroads experience with those around you, be encouraged that God has faithfully continued to bring more people to the ministry. We are experiencing steady growth! Check out this comparison of new mentors who joined the ministry in 2017 and in 2018:

### **New mentor statistics:**

2017: 200 English, 4 Spanish

2018, year-to-date: 401 English, 25 Spanish

Since the We over Me campaign started, 42 new mentors have begun their ministry and we have given 382 application packets to prospective mentors. Wow! So many of these new mentors are a direct result of mentors like you sharing your heart for men and women in prison. Thank you!

It is amazing to think about the impact these new mentors are making. But we still need even more mentors to join the team! There are more than 5,000 lessons in our office waiting to be sent to a mentor. Our goal is to double the number of Crossroads mentors so we can keep up with our growing number of students.

Would you consider helping us with this God-sized goal? Tell your family and friends about your experience with Crossroads and invite them to join you on the journey!