

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



JANUARY 2019

Dear Mentor,

It's a joy for my wife, Hendrina, and me to watch the men in our prison group open up more each week as we engage in deep conversations. We can see honesty and trust growing as we explore difficult areas of our lives.

But sometimes it's good to keep conversations light. We like to leave time near the end of each meeting for whatever the men want to discuss. Knowing that Hendrina was going to cook a large meal for an upcoming family get-together, they wanted to know all the details about this meal she was going to prepare.

How was she going to cook the turkey? It was suggested that she should soak it in brine, so we talked about that. Then they needed details about what would be in the stuffing—would she add sausage? Would the potatoes be made with cream or garlic? All the men leaned in and engaged in the conversation.

I asked what the prison would be serving. That question was shut down immediately—they wanted to know more about Hendrina's culinary plans! What spices was she planning to use on the roasted vegetables? As we continued to discuss these details, we shared lots of laughter.

Reflecting on the evening, I realized this was a moment of respite from the harsh realities these men experienced every day. There was no weight to the conversation; it was simply light, bubbly, life-giving chitchat. Everyone had a voice and everyone was heard. Sharing ideas for cooking created a cheerful experience for everyone in the group. At that moment, there were no prisoners or non-prisoners—just lovers of cooking and good food.

This was a mutual moment of rest. Closeness and openness were shared as everyone lowered their defenses, giving way to loud joking and laughter . . . and joy.

Joy behind bars? Rest behind bars? Is that possible? With the power of the Holy Spirit and life-giving community, the answer is yes. Rest can come in different ways, such as sharing a meal with good friends or reading a book in quiet solitude. I find rest when I share open, honest conversations with those I care for and trust.

But how can prisoners discover this kind of rest? Here are some tips for helping your student find the rest Jesus offers:

- Encourage your student to explore and acknowledge any anxieties that they may be experiencing. Share that we can give all our anxieties to Jesus because He cares for and loves us (1 Peter 5:7). Remind them not to be discouraged if they do not sense immediate relief, but to keep believing and trusting in Him.
- Share your hope that your student has or can find a positive, trustworthy, encouraging friend to walk with them on their journey. Write a prayer in your letter that God will send them a good, encouraging friend.
- Encourage your student to set aside time each day to read God's Word and spend time in His presence. Remind them that we may not always understand the meaning of every verse, but we can pray that God will reveal His truth as we read and reflect on the words.

Jesus gave us a beautiful description of rest in Him that we can share with our students:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30).

He is gently calling us to accept His promise of rest. This is the God we serve.

Serving alongside you,



Douglas Cupery
Church Mobilization Director

NEWS & NOTES FOR MENTORS

We over Me Campaign Building Momentum

We launched the We over Me mentor recruitment campaign in late September, asking all Crossroads mentors to invite friends and family to join them in mentoring men and women in prison through Crossroads.

So far, the results have been very encouraging! Hundreds of you reached out to your church, your friends and your family to share the Crossroads story. We are thrilled with your passion for this ministry. Since the campaign launched, **285 new mentors** have signed up and more than 700 people contacted us for information about becoming a mentor! Overall, more than 600 new mentors joined the Crossroads team in 2018.

While we celebrate God's faithfulness, we know He's not done yet! The number of students continues to grow, which means we still need more mentors to come alongside these men and women in prison. Thank you so much for continuing to spread the word about this need.

New Reporting System Taking Effect Soon

In February, we will be launching our new database and online mentor portal (see the other insert in your lesson packet for more information). At that time, there will also be a change to the way you "score" your students' lessons.

You will no longer count the number of incorrect answers and report that number to Crossroads. Instead, you will be asked to evaluate your student's work in three key categories: completion, understanding and application. For more details about the new progress reporting system, you can download an informational sheet at cpministries.org/newprogressreporting. You will also receive a packet in the mail soon, which will provide further instructions on how to log in to the new mentor portal to report student progress online.

Do We Have Your Current Contact Information?

As we begin a new year, we are asking mentors to make sure their contact information on file with Crossroads is up to date. Please take a moment to contact the Crossroads office with your email address and phone number. Having an accurate email address for you is especially important because we will be emailing a link to you to activate your new Crossroads mentor portal account when it launches in February (see the other insert in your lesson packet for more information). Please email mentor@cpministries.org or call 800-668-2450 to verify your email address and phone number.

Important Reminder!

Please remember to either **type or print** your letters to students. Many Crossroads students are unable to read cursive. Also, please use only **blue or black ink** when writing anything that will be mailed to a student. Many prisons do not allow other colors of ink to be used. A facility that bans other colors of ink will return the entire packet to us instead of delivering it to the student.