

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



MARCH 2019

Dear Mentor,

When I think about the goals of so many men and women in prison and those returning home from prison, the word that comes to mind is *restoration*.

On the surface, restoration means that something is being changed back to the way it was before. People in prison so often express how they long for things to be the way they were before they came to prison. Recently, a prisoner told me he had said to his wife that life would be back to normal again when he returned home.

But did he really want his life to go back to “normal”—the way it was before prison? As he shared his story with me, I heard about the deep brokenness in his past that led him to prison. Would he really want to return to the life that brought him here?

This man’s story is the story of many of the men and women we serve. They long to return home to their families, their neighborhoods, their old way of life on the outside. But for many, returning to their former life means returning to pain, suffering, addictions and broken relationships.

Many people in prison need to understand that God is in the business of restoration—true restoration.

I remember my own journey. When I was sentenced to prison, I didn’t have a full vision of what a restored life would look like. But as people came alongside my family and me, I slowly learned that Jesus could bring true restoration.

I began to understand this even better as I explored the Bible through the Crossroads program: Moses, a restored murderer, led a nation to liberation. Paul, who held the garments of those who killed Stephen, was humbled and restored and went on to write much of the New Testament.

Restoration—the true, full restoration that Jesus provides—is always more than we can imagine. It doesn’t mean being restored to the “good old days” or to easier times. It means being restored to the image of God. Paul wrote in Colossians 3 that believers “have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

We are all in the process of being restored into the image of a loving God who created us to be like Him. We are continually being formed into the type of people who love sacrificially, offer mercy and forgiveness freely and create good things for the benefit of our communities.

As you write to your students this month, I encourage you to:

- Help your student envision a restored life. Ask your student, “What would it look like for your heart, your relationships and your community to be made new?”
- Explain what this verse means to you: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Share how God is restoring your life. In what ways is He shaping you further into His image?

Serving alongside you,



Douglas Cupery
Church Mobilization Director

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 accept mail that includes other colors of ink.

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

Help! I Don't Know What to Write in My Letter

Those of you who are Tier 1 mentors can probably relate to the following situation: You have finished reviewing a student's lesson. You have provided words of encouragement and guidance on the lesson pages. You pull out the stationery to write a letter to the student and . . . you hit a wall.

Your pen is poised and ready, but no words come to mind. What do you write to this person? You don't even know them.

Such cases of writer's block are not uncommon for Crossroads mentors, especially those who may not have much experience writing letters.

Here are a few tips that the Crossroads staff has gathered over many years of training men and women to write hope-filled, encouraging letters to prisoners:

1. What is happening in your life? Men and women in prison like to hear about what life is like on the outside. It gives them a glimpse of freedom. They also genuinely want to know about YOU. Many prisoners long for connection with another human on the outside.
2. What is God doing in your life? Has God been teaching you anything lately? Have you made any discoveries in Scripture or in your prayer life that you can share with your student?
3. Write a prayer for your student. As you read their lesson, you can often discern areas of their life in which they could use prayer. Pray for the student, and then write the prayer in your letter so they can read it. We frequently hear from students who tell us how powerful and meaningful these prayers are to them.
4. Encourage them! You may feel like you already provided plenty of encouragement through comments you have written in their lesson. But men and women living in prison can use all the encouragement they can get! In their environment, most of the words thrown at them tear them down. Share some words that will lift them up and fill them with hope.
5. Ask good questions. Many men and women in prison have never been asked about their hopes and dreams. Ask them about their passions, their goals and what they dream about. Even if you're writing to a Tier 1 student and you'll never know their response, questions like these may help the student look inwardly and ask themselves questions that can set them on a path of following the passions God has put in their heart.

Got any tips of your own? We'd love to hear them and share them in a future issue of *Just for Mentors*. You can email tips and ideas to Aaron, our communications director, at amueller@cpministries.org.

NEW POSTAGE RATES

The United States Postal Service has increased the price of a first-class 1-ounce stamp but has **decreased** the price of postage for each additional ounce. This means that postage for a 2-ounce lesson packet will now cost \$0.70 (instead of \$0.71) and postage for a 3-ounce lesson packet will now cost \$0.85 (instead of \$0.92).

WATCH YOUR MAILBOX!

We are working hard to launch our new database and online mentor portal **in the next month**.

Once the new database launches, there will be a change to the way you "score" lessons. You will no longer count the number of incorrect answers and report that number to Crossroads. Instead, you will be asked to evaluate each student's work in three key categories: completion, understanding and application.

You will receive a packet in the mail in the coming weeks with further details about the new database.