

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



MAY 2019

Dear Mentor,

When I share the vision and mission of Crossroads with people who are thinking about becoming mentors, I invariably receive questions about a certain aspect of our ministry: writing letters.

Often, people express a bit of anxiety or uncertainty surrounding this important part of what we do. It's not difficult to understand why. Emails, texts and social media have turned writing a letter by hand into a lost art, a lost treasure. Social media platforms, like Twitter, have conditioned us to send and process information in sound bytes and short bursts.

Not long ago, a group of college students visited Crossroads to write letters to students, and many of them struggled to do so. Crafting a letter is an entirely different process than quickly typing out a text or a tweet. But it's not only young people who find this challenging. I often hear from older mentors who have a hard time knowing what to write to someone they have never met.

Writing a letter forces us to pause, breathe, lay out the paper and pen and thoughtfully put words on paper. We must be thoughtful and prayerful as we write with a pen, knowing we don't have a backspace button to delete words or sentences. The result of this time of writing is truly something beautiful. As the ink flows, we leave a piece of ourselves on the paper.

This letter practically comes to life when it is read by the recipient, especially if that recipient is in prison—someone who likely has very little contact with the outside world. These words etched on paper are read, absorbed, saved, shared with others and then read again.

As I reflect on this idea of a "living letter," I recall what Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

You, dear friend, are a letter that testifies of the love and grace of God. How you live and what you say can be a reflection of Jesus to the world. We all have a story of how God has rescued us, loved us, healed us. And sharing that story is sharing the Gospel. That's why I so often encourage Crossroads mentors to share their story in the letters they write to students.

Tips to think about when writing to your students this month:

- Be assured that if what you write comes from a prayerful, open heart, they are the right words to share. Remember, the Holy Spirit is there to guide us as we write letters and to guide our students as they read them.
- Encourage your student to share their struggles and joys with you (if they are a Tier 2 or 3 student) or with their next mentor (if they are a Tier 1 student).
- Encourage your student to continue on their journey of faith through Crossroads and not to give up. Share what being a mentor has meant to you and how you have grown as you study God's Word with your students.

Through our letters, we can offer strength when our students feel weak, encouragement when they feel discouraged and hope when there is little hope around them.

Your letters are alive.

Serving alongside you,



Douglas Cupery
Church Mobilization Director

NEWS & NOTES FOR MENTORS

A Letter from a Crossroads Student to You

Dear Crossroads Mentor,

In each lesson, I have received a letter from the mentor who graded it. For a guy who does not get much personal mail, this is a nice gesture. It is good to be reminded that there are those who still care about us.

A while back, I was moved by the Holy Spirit to write to you who review our lessons. I don't know what kind of schedule you have, but it is quite the investment to minister to us in prison. But who ministers to you? Well, hopefully, this letter does just that.

The Holy Spirit wanted me to remind you that what you are doing is making a difference. You touch lives of people that nobody else wants. You are living the way Jesus did. He sought out the criminal—the unwanted—so that they might be saved.

Whenever you wonder if what you are doing matters or makes a difference, I hope you will look at this letter so that it reminds you of the great things you are doing for Jesus. May God continue to bless you.

– Micheal J., Crossroads student in New Jersey

New Crossroads Mentor Portal

In March, we launched the new Crossroads mentor portal, an online resource where you can report student progress, update your contact information and schedule time off. If you haven't created a mentor portal account and would like to, please contact the mentor support team at mentor@cpministries.org. For training on how to navigate the portal, visit cpministries.org/welcome-to-mentor-portal.

Mission Support Volunteers Needed in Home Office

We have an **urgent need** for mission support volunteers to fill key roles in our home office. We are looking for team members with any of the following: data entry skills, customer service experience, facility maintenance and custodial experience or a creative eye for artwork and poetry. If you or someone you know lives in the Grand Rapids area and is interested, please contact Joni at jjessup@cpministries.org or **616-208-1480**.

Special Mentors Needed

Do you have teaching, ESL or special education experience? Would you be willing to help Crossroads students who are struggling to complete their lessons because of their reading disability, reading level or level of education? If so, please email dnykamp@cpministries.org, and we will add you to a list of mentors who are excited to review lessons from these students.