

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



JUNE 2019

Dear Mentor,

At some point, ninety-five percent of the men and women who are incarcerated will be released and will return to their communities. What will it be like when they return? How will they respond? Will they successfully stay out of prison?

For even the most grounded of individuals, the odds are stacked against them. I have heard countless stories of people whose circumstances, in addition to their own brokenness, brought them to prison. Many stories include addictions and broken families. The cycle of poverty, which is part of the lives of many we serve, is unrelenting. Those who struggle to find opportunities or advocates after their release can become desperate and turn to old patterns of thinking and behavior.

Although the hill to climb after leaving the prison gates is steep, many do well in spite of the incredible obstacles and suffering they must overcome.

In my years of working with formerly incarcerated men and women, those who were most successful after returning home were those who had a strong foundation of faith and a deep well of community support to draw from. While they were in prison, they had devoted their time to searching their hearts and viewing life around them through the eyes of Jesus. They were more receptive to coaching as they began their new journey outside prison walls. They were determined to overcome being identified by the worst thing they had ever done.

This is my hope for every Crossroads student, whether they will be released or not: that they understand they can leave their old lifestyle and habits in the past because they are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Equipped with that knowledge, along with prayer, diligence and an open heart, they can make different decisions. Jesus will give them the strength to move beyond their past and live a full life in Him!

A couple of writing tips:

- Share an instance when you needed to fully trust God to help you make a decision. Did you seek guidance from others? Did you look to the Bible for a word from God? If you hadn't sought wise advice before making your decision, what could have happened?

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6

- Share some examples of what it looks like to live as Christ did. Learning and practicing this influences the way we react to uncertainties and adversities that come into our lives.

"But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5-6

Not all students will be released from prison in their lifetime, but most will. In either case, the gift of your presence in their lives and the hope and encouragement you extend to them will help carry them through the next stages of their journeys.

Serving alongside you,



Douglas Cupery
Church Mobilization Director

NEWS & NOTES FOR MENTORS

Mentors who also physically volunteer inside prisons

Several states have a rule that anyone who physically volunteers inside a prison in that state cannot have any contact with prisoners in that state outside of that role. They are not allowed to send mail, correspond electronically, visit or send resources to any prisoner in that state, including the facility in which they volunteer. In these cases, we can accommodate mentors by sending them only lessons from students who live outside of that state. Please contact mentor@cpministries.org if this applies to you.

Resources for writing letters

Are you having trouble coming up with content for your letters to Tier 1 students? Consider sharing prayers and Scripture found in *Our Daily Bread* devotionals. *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers is another great resource for encouragement that you can share with your students. You can read daily devotionals from this book at <https://utmost.org/>.

Are you using the mentor portal to report student progress?

If you are currently reporting your students' progress via phone or email, but you would like to use the mentor portal to report student progress online, please email us at mentor@cpministries.org. We would be happy to help you set up your portal account.

Don't forget this information when reporting student progress!

If you submit progress reports via phone or email, please be sure to include the following information:

- 1. Lesson ID#** (found in the bottom left corner on the back cover of the lesson)
- 2. Student's first and last name**
- 3. Course and lesson number**
- 4. Your student's progress**
 - Assessment of your student's **Completion** of the lesson: **Needed Help, Good** or **Excellent**
 - Assessment of your student's **Understanding** of the lesson: **Needed Help, Good** or **Excellent**
 - Assessment of your student's **Application** of the lesson: **Needed Help, Good** or **Excellent**
- 5. Lesson-related comments (optional)**

You can leave comments related to the content of the specific lesson and the student's ability to understand the material or apply it to their life. For example, you could share questions or concepts the student found difficult to understand or share suggestions the student made about further study related to the lesson. Staff will review these comments when revising course materials. **If you have other questions, comments or concerns about your student, please email the mentor support team at mentor@cpministries.org or call the office!**
- 6. Your first and last name**