

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



SEPTEMBER 2019

Dear Mentor,

I was on an airplane, sitting between two men I didn't know. One of them asked me a question I'm used to hearing in such a situation:

"What do you do for work?"

The question is innocent enough. But my answer always sparks a conversation.

I love this question because as soon as I say the word "prison," my conversation partner always becomes very curious and wants to hear what I am going to say next. It's powerful for them to hear the stories of people in prison and the stories of mentors like you. During the conversation, I often catch a glimpse of the heart of the other person.

The man on my left vehemently exclaimed that criminals should receive long, hard sentences and get what they deserve. He said, "Lock them up and throw away the key!" His convictions were resolute and left no room for discussion. He had made up his mind.

The man on my right, however, responded by acknowledging the ways mass incarceration affects individuals, families and societies as a whole and that criminal justice isn't so black-and-white. It's not as simple as locking them up and throwing away the key. He spoke about prisoners as people who need another chance. I sensed that incarceration had hit close to home for him in some way.

Offering grace does not always come naturally to us. We are quick to judge those we deem less deserving, those who have made bad choices or those who live differently than we do—including those who are in prison. We forget or don't fully understand that we are all broken. We have all sinned. And we are all in need of grace.

Here are a couple of tips to consider as you write letters to your students this week:

- Share your need for God's grace and how that affects your interactions with others. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
- Ask yourself this question: "Is my heart filled with the grace God has extended to me?" Then challenge your students to ask themselves the same question. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

I exited the plane that day asking myself, "What would a glimpse into my own heart show?" My hope is that it would show an awareness of my brokenness and a desire to share the grace I've received with the broken world around me. If not for God's work in my life, that may not be the case.

There, but for the grace of God, go I.

Serving alongside you,



Douglas Cupery
Church Mobilization Director

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

NEWS & NOTES FOR MENTORS

Encouraging your students: Please remember that men and women in prison are hungry for encouragement. Many Crossroads students have never received any positive reinforcement in their lives. You can be a voice of hope and joy! This is why we ask mentors to write encouraging comments on each page of every lesson and Roadmap and to write a full-page, personalized, encouraging letter to every student. These letters are like gold to Crossroads students, who often have little to no contact with the outside world.

Urgent need for volunteers 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/custodial experience or a creative eye for artwork and poetry. If you (or someone you know) live in the Grand Rapids area and are interested, please contact Joni at jjessup@cpministries.org or 616-208-1480.

Praying for your students: We recently heard from a Crossroads mentor whose student's parole hearing was approaching. The mentor gathered people from her church and held a prayer meeting for the student. Prayer is powerful, and we encourage all of you to pray for your students—and to consider praying for them with your church community!

Change to Christmas card program: If you have been a mentor for a while, you are probably familiar with our annual Christmas card program. In the past, mentors have purchased, personalized and mailed Christmas cards to the Crossroads office, which we then forwarded to all our students. In recent years, due to restrictions in numerous facilities, many of these cards have been returned to our office. This year, we plan to create our own Crossroads Christmas cards that fit within the policies of all facilities and send them to our students to ensure that each student receives one. **How can you help? You can make a donation to help cover the cost of printing and mailing the cards.** Go to cpministries.org/donate to give!

New Crossroads ambassador program: As the ministry of Crossroads continues to grow, our small staff in Grand Rapids is working hard to maintain excellent communication with all mentors and prospective mentors. Here's where you come in! We have developed a new volunteer position called a Crossroads ambassador. Ambassadors promote the ministry of Crossroads in their community—wherever they are located—and provide support and training for mentors. We provide all training and materials for this volunteer position, which can be tailored to fit anyone's unique gifts and talents. Are you interested in becoming an ambassador? Or do you believe you're already serving in this way and want more information and resources? Please contact Joni at jjessup@cpministries.org with any questions you may have!

Greater Chicago area Crossroads gathering: In collaboration with the Institute of Prison Ministries, Crossroads will be hosting a gathering for mentors and friends in the greater Chicago area. The event will be held at the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College on October 12, 2019, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. It will include exciting ministry updates, a student art display and conversations about how to become the best mentor you can be. Please invite friends who are interested in becoming a mentor, as new mentor information and training will be available. If you have any questions, please contact Joni at jjessup@cpministries.org or 616-208-1480.