

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



DECEMBER 2019

Dear Mentor,

Men and women in prison often wrestle with shame, guilt and pain, and those emotions frequently come spilling out in the letters they write to their mentors. If you haven't received a letter like that yet, you likely will someday.

Though your student may not directly say it, their shame and guilt likely come from the harm and pain they have caused their victims—not only victims directly affected by their crime, but also collateral victims, such as children and spouses, who are left to pick up the pieces and move forward after the student has been incarcerated.

In my many years of prison ministry, I have noticed that what men and women in prison really want to know is, "How can I fix what I have broken?"

When this topic comes up with incarcerated men I meet, my goal is to leave them with a challenge. We may not be able to repair the damage we have done. We may not be able to restore the relationships that we have broken. We may not be able to return things to the way they were before our crime. But we can consciously strive to honor those we have hurt as we work toward healing.

We can do this by making choices that reflect God's redemptive plan for what is broken in our world. One choice might be noticing people who are going down the wrong path and helping to redirect them. Another choice might be intentionally speaking words of life and peace instead of words of discouragement, violence or hate. Another might be mentoring someone who isn't as far along in their spiritual journey. Though we may not be able to undo the damage we have done in the past, we can partner with God to make the world a brighter place in the future.

Here are some tips for you this month:

- If you encounter a student wrestling with guilt and shame, point them to the truth found in Scripture that they can find forgiveness, healing and wholeness in Jesus. ***"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"*** (1 John 1:9).
- If you encounter a student who wishes they could fix what they have broken, help them understand that, although they might not be able to undo their past, they can partner with God in fixing the brokenness in our world for the future. Share moments in your life—no matter how small—when the Spirit has prompted you to do something that helped heal something broken around you. ***"Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain"*** (1 Corinthians 15:58b).

Our role as mentors is not to pass judgment on students' past behaviors, but to point them to Jesus, who can fill them with hope, energy and vision for the future.

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

No lessons during Christmas break: Please note that we will **not** mail any lessons from our office during the weeks of December 23–27 or December 30–January 3. We will resume sending lessons on January 6, 2020.

Please avoid form letters: The longer you serve as a Crossroads mentor, the more difficult it can become to keep your letter writing fresh, especially if you are a Tier 1 mentor and don't know much about your students. It might be tempting to write a form letter and use it for every student. **We highly discourage this practice.** Students can tell when they have received a form letter, and it can make them feel devalued. We encourage you to prayerfully and thoughtfully write a new letter for each student. Ask the Holy Spirit each time to guide you to write a meaningful message that will touch the heart of the student you are striving to encourage.

Note about Roadmaps: Please keep in mind that students are no longer required to complete Roadmaps. You don't need to say anything to your students if they don't include a completed Roadmap with their lesson. Roadmaps are now considered optional devotionals that students can share with their mentors if they choose to do so.

Reminder about lesson-related comments: When you report student progress, you have the option of including lesson-related comments. Please use this space to leave comments about the content of the lesson, such as questions or concepts your student found confusing, grammatical errors or inaccurate Scripture references within the lesson material, etc. This space is *not* designed for reporting students' prayer requests, requesting to send Bibles to students, etc., as staff members do not regularly review these responses.

Will you support one Crossroads student? As the end of a year approaches, it's common for many people to participate in year-end giving. If this describes you, would you consider giving a generous gift to support Crossroads? It costs about \$85 to provide our mentorship program to one student for one year. **Will you consider supporting one student for the upcoming year?** Please visit cpministries.org/donate.

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.

Book recommendation: *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson is a powerful true story of a lawyer whose life has been transformed by helping the marginalized navigate our criminal justice system. Through stories, history and facts, he outlines the injustices in the criminal justice system and challenges his readers to look at compassion and mercy in a different light. Bryan Stevenson is a highly esteemed attorney, author and speaker who has won the respect of Crossroads Prison Ministries staff.

