

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



OCTOBER 2020

Dear Mentor,

I recently met a friend to have breakfast and talk about a man who may soon be released from prison after seven years. We were discussing whether we should come alongside him on his reentry journey.

Throughout our conversation, my responses focused on all the reasons I would not want to get too involved. I shared that I am busy and hesitant to commit to anything long-term. I reflected on stories of disappointment, messiness and pain that I experienced in the past when I walked alongside others who had been released. My list of reasons grew longer and longer as we talked.

Suddenly, I began to notice what I was actually saying—and, more importantly, what I was **not** saying. I had neglected to talk about my own reentry journey and how others came alongside me and encouraged me every step of the way.

I then found myself looking up the word “encouragement” in the Cambridge Dictionary. It defines encouragement as “words or behavior that give someone confidence to do something.” In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Paul paired encouragement with “build[ing] each other up.”

I reflected on my past again. Didn't people encourage me in difficult times, even though they had busy lives? Didn't they continue to build me up even when I fell? Didn't their encouragement give me the confidence to pursue paths I never thought would have been possible? How could I refuse to do the same?

Here are a couple of things to consider as you write to your students this month:

- Share encouraging words that give your students confidence to take action. Maybe a student has told you that she is considering taking classes to pursue her GED, but she's not sure if she can do it. Respond with encouragement such as, “I believe in you.” “God has given you what it takes.” “Don't give up.” Encouraging words like these can give students the courage they need to step out in faith toward new possibilities. “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24).
- Men and women in prison are constantly being torn down emotionally. Many of them face verbal abuse and are stripped of their identities, reduced to their prison ID numbers. What a great opportunity for you to build up your students! Consider what words you can write to lift up your student in an environment where encouragement is so rare. “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29).

When others—including many of you!—extend encouragement to me, they build me up and spur me on toward God's plans for my life. I want to do the same for others, even when it's hard.

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

Mentor Community Gatherings

This month's virtual mentor community gatherings will cover part two of our letter-writing discussion. Writing letters to your students is a key aspect of your ministry, so we encourage you to join even if you missed the first session.

Tuesday, October 20, at 8:00 p.m. (EST)

Wednesday, October 21, at 3:00 p.m. (EST)

URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84182956475?pwd=QWs1OGlYZTZlejVOSkcyOEc5NW9SUT09>

Meeting ID: 841 8295 6475

Passcode: 329410

International Prayer Gathering

Please join us for the next virtual international prayer gathering. The extension center leaders in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom will lead us in this time of prayer.

Thursday, October 22, at 5:00 pm (EST)

URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82265613686?pwd=SIV5djdCb2tja05mWHBDZXQ4TTgvdz09>

Meeting ID: 822 6561 3686

Passcode: 795704

Political Discussions with Students

In this season of extreme political division and polarization in our nation, you may encounter political opinions in your students' lessons. It may be tempting to discuss politics with your students.

If a Tier 1 student shares a political viewpoint with which you disagree, we encourage you to:

- Refrain from engaging in political discourse.
- Look for something on which you both agree and focus on that.
- Be respectful of your student's perspectives, keeping in mind that everyone comes from a different cultural background and has had different life experiences.
- Remain focused on discussing God's Word and sharing words of hope and encouragement with your student.

If a Tier 2 or 3 student shares a political viewpoint with which you disagree, we encourage you to:

- Ask compassionate, curious questions about why they believe what they believe.
- Humbly share your views and be open to critique from your student.
- Never tell your student that they are not a true Christian if they don't hold a particular political view.
- Resist allowing your discussion to turn into a political debate. Try to stay focused on discussing God's Word and encouraging one another.