

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



JANUARY 2021

Dear Mentor,

As I adapted to the prison environment and culture during my incarceration, I didn't recognize what a profound effect it was having on me. Constant vigilance, oppressive routines and a lack of freedom to make my own decisions deeply affected me over time. Some would say that I was becoming "institutionalized."

When the time came for my release, my wife, Hendrina, was waiting at the prison gate. On our way home, we stopped at a restaurant. As we sat at the table with our menus, I stared blankly at the vast number of choices. I was completely overwhelmed. Hendrina noticed this and stepped in to order a meal for me.

If I couldn't even order from a menu, how was I going to navigate parole? How was I going to deal with the daunting difficulties that lay ahead?

As time moved forward, I felt as though unrelenting adversity was always present. Fear and anxiety kept creeping into my mind, no matter how hard I tried to fight them off. There is little doubt in my mind why so many people who are released from prison are incarcerated again within three years.

As you think about what to write in your letters this month, consider this:

Although life's circumstances sometimes seem insurmountable, we still need to strive to make healthy decisions and find paths to move forward. A good first step that I've discovered is to take a deep, cleansing breath and notice my breathing. A powerful way to do this is through what is called a "breath prayer." This form of prayer can help us quiet our minds, release any negative thoughts and focus on the source of our strength. I encourage you to try this prayer practice and share it with your students.

How does breath prayer work? Just take a simple phrase rooted in Scripture and speak it out loud or silently with the rhythm of your breathing. Here are a few examples of breath prayers:

Inhale deeply, saying: "I can't do this."

Exhale slowly, saying: "But through You, Lord, I can." (Philippians 4:13)

Inhale deeply, saying: "You are my refuge . . ."

Exhale slowly, saying: ". . . and my strength." (Psalm 46:1)

As you take that first cleansing breath, think about any challenges you are facing and commit them to the God who goes before you. Release your fear and anxiety as you exhale, remembering that God is always with you.

(Continued on back page)

“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” (Deuteronomy 31:8).

Serving alongside you,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Cupery".

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

Don and Cathy Allsman, authors of the book *Climbing Up: Preparing on the Inside for Service on the Outside*, will join us to discuss the challenges faced by people who return home from prison and how to serve our students as they prepare for this.

Tuesday, January 19, at 8:00 p.m. (EST)

Wednesday, January 20, at 3:00 p.m. (EST)

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

Meeting ID: 841 8295 6475

Passcode: 329410

New Tier 1 Courses Coming Soon

Several years ago, we conducted an assessment of our program and discovered that we had a growing student dropout rate. An increasing number of students were abandoning the program before they completed their first course. We also found that many of our potential students read at or below a third-grade reading level, and many have never attended a church or learned how to read a Bible on their own.

So, we realized that we needed to add courses to bridge the gap between the reading ability and biblical knowledge of our students and the content and difficulty of our existing courses, such as *Great Truths of the Bible* and *Survey of the Bible*. We created *Who Are You?* to begin to address those issues. But we knew we needed to create more than just one course to provide a solid foundation for our students before they went on to study the important concepts and theology in our more advanced coursework. Students who have never read the Bible or learned about Jesus need an introduction to both topics before they can meaningfully engage with issues of God’s supremacy or the concept of the Trinity. The two new courses created to address these topics, which will follow *Who Are You?* in Tier 1, are called *Who Is Jesus?* and *What Is the Bible?*

In *Who Is Jesus?*, students will learn about Jesus’ life by studying the book of Luke. In *What Is the Bible?*, students will learn how the Bible was written, what books it contains and how to approach reading Scripture. The new materials will be designed like *Who Are You?*, offering plenty of space to ask questions, a focus on understanding the meaning of biblical stories and prompts for students to apply what they learn to their lives. You will hear more about both courses over the next few months!