

# JUST FOR MENTORS

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



JULY 2021

Dear Mentor,

After my release from prison, I began attending and serving at a church. I felt it would be a perfect place for me. I assumed everyone at this church would be on the same page as we served each other and the greater community around us. I did not expect to experience conflict or personal agendas. We were all there to worship and serve Jesus.

As time went on and I became more involved with people in the church, I began to experience tension with others and interactions that felt mean-spirited. I found it difficult not to become angry and disillusioned. It would have been easy to walk away and never return.

I discovered that my idealistic expectations were not grounded in reality. But my initial disappointment turned into a valuable learning opportunity. Through the conflict and messiness, my eyes were opened to a beautiful, yet often unspoken, truth: the Church is made up of broken and imperfect people, just like me. Ecclesiastes 7:20 reads, "Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins."

But here's the good news: each one of us, even with our many imperfections, makes the body of Christ more complete in its reflection of Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul explained that, just like a body has many parts, the members of the Church all serve a different purpose in the family of God. Despite our many shortcomings, we all have gifts and character qualities that reflect Jesus to those around us.

It is important for students preparing for release to manage their expectations. Help them understand that no church community is perfect, and finding a church home will require patience, discernment and grace. Encourage them to persevere. Consider sharing some of this wisdom:

- **Pray.** Ask the Holy Spirit to guide and protect you as you begin looking for a faith community. Pray that you will find a church that will welcome you and allow you to serve and use your gifts to build up the body of Christ.
- **Give it time.** Attend several services before making your decision. It may be helpful to share your background, your current circumstances and your hopes for the future with the pastor or another church leader. They may be able to connect you with the right people who can help you navigate this complex season of life.
- **Stay after the service for a few minutes.** Though it may feel uncomfortable, this can allow others to approach you and engage in conversation. But don't feel offended if this does not happen, since many people struggle to start conversations with people they don't know.
- **Check out another church.** It is okay to explore several church communities as long as you do your part in giving them a chance. It can be a long, frustrating journey to find a home church, but trust that God will help you every step of the way.

*(Continued on back page)*

In closing, I have a challenge for you as a mentor. As you encourage and pray for your students this week, reflect on your own faith community and ask yourself: *Would my students feel welcome stepping into my church community?*

If the answer is no, what can you do to make it a safer and more welcoming environment for people on the margins of society?

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](mailto:mentor@cpministries.org) or 800-668-2450.

## NEWS & NOTES

### Mentor Community Gatherings

Please join us as we gather virtually to equip and empower one another to serve our students well. We look forward to seeing you!

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

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

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

Meeting ID: 841 8295 6475

Passcode: 329410

### Our Vision for the New Ministry Year

This month begins a new fiscal year for us. And with it comes fresh hope for a new season at Crossroads as the pandemic loosens its grip and restrictions ease. We are already working on strategies for student and mentor growth after pandemic-related challenges hindered our ability to reach prospective students last year.

This year, our goals include addressing student and mentor attrition, expanding mentor training opportunities, utilizing new avenues to reach prospective students and other exciting projects. We are striving to grow the number of students in our program significantly this year, and we ask you to pray about this with us. As we continue to enroll more students, the need for mentors will continue to grow as well.

We were blown away by the response we received from a recent invitation for mentors to begin one-on-one mentoring in Tier 2. More than 500 mentors responded to the call! We hope to continue increasing the number of Tier 2 mentors in the coming year so more students can experience the benefits of one-on-one mentoring.

Throughout this challenging season, God has been faithful to Crossroads Prison Ministries. In many ways, we are emerging from the pandemic as a healthier ministry. We know that you, too, have weathered a difficult time, yet your passion for this ministry has shown itself to be stronger than ever. We are honored to travel this journey with you, and we look forward to this next season as new opportunities and projects unfold.