

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



SEPTEMBER 2021

Dear Mentor,

Recently, I was chatting with a trusted friend. Our conversation drifted to articles and surveys that reveal the Church's steady decline in membership and influence within society. I began to feel discouraged, but then my friend told me a story that infused me with hope.

My friend's husband had been a bit self-centered throughout his comfortable adult life. After his retirement, he was invited to join a church group that did weekly activities. The people in the group had recently been released from incarceration.

He did not know what he was getting into at first, but he continued to join them weekly. He then took another step and joined a group that served in a state prison. As time went on, my friend began to see a significant transformation unfold within her husband. His priorities and attitude began to change. As he met with men and women many people are afraid of, he discovered things that he had not set out to find: peace, joy, life. My friend said her husband experienced an awakening in his heart that she had been praying about for years.

Jesus clearly showed us how we are to interact with those who have been pushed to the margins of society. His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well brought many people in the town to faith in Jesus (John 4:4-42). His story of the man who was assaulted and discarded on the side of the road like a bag of trash should leave us with little question about how we are to treat our neighbors who are hurting (Luke 10:25-37).

But possibly the most powerful Scripture about how we are to treat those who are marginalized is found in Jesus' words in Matthew 25: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Jesus made the bold claim that serving those on the margins is not just about them. He was saying in no uncertain terms that when you are proximate to those who are forgotten, there is something in it for you: His very presence. When we encounter people on the margins, we encounter Jesus.

Through this encounter with Jesus and His people, something miraculous happens. Like my friend's husband, we begin to change, and priorities shift as our hearts soften. We begin to see those who are disregarded, those who are poor, those we incarcerate the way God sees them. We begin to identify with those on the margins. Their plight becomes our plight. We begin to advocate for them and pray for them.

"He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea" (Psalm 102:17).

As you write to your students this month, make an effort to understand their pain and discern how you can pray for them. Here are some questions you could ask: *Are there specific circumstances or troubles that are causing you heartache or fear? Do you have relationships that need healing? What do you feel like you are lacking: friendships, a sense of purpose, contentment?* Let their responses drive you into fervent prayer on their behalf.

What would it look like for entire churches to discover what my friend's husband discovered? I believe our prayers would change, our sense of mission would heighten and our witness would be restored. When the Church begins to identify with the hurting and reaches out to be with them and serve them, the world will be watching.

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You can be a part of this. What's stopping you from inviting others to join you in reaching behind prison walls to encounter the love of Jesus?

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

Please join us as we gather virtually to equip and empower one another to serve our students well. This month, staff member Eliezer Yeong, who oversees the Crossroads Prison Art Project, will share inspiring stories and examples of our students' artistic talents.

Tuesday, September 21, at 8:00 p.m. (EST)

Wednesday, September 22, at 3:00 p.m. (EST)

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

Meeting ID: 841 8295 6475

Passcode: 329410

Looking Ahead

As we begin a new fiscal year, our staff is full of excitement. By God's grace, despite the many challenges we faced this past year, Crossroads is in a strong position in terms of finances, staffing, leadership and programming. Still, our ministry didn't survive COVID unscathed. We saw a decline in student enrollments due to pandemic challenges. If you are a Tier 1 mentor, you saw the effects of this during the weeks the office did not send lessons to you.

Although this has been discouraging, we have a strong plan to grow our student numbers. Our goal is to bring 20% more students into the ministry than we did last fiscal year. Through God's faithfulness and our partnership with Him, we are confident that we will reach this goal. As we welcome these new students into the ministry, it will be important not to lose energy or momentum as we grow and strengthen all areas of the ministry.

Some additional activities and goals for this year:

- Continue our chaplain campaign, which has already resulted in a significant number of new students
- Reach new potential students by advertising on tablet devices in facilities
- Positively impact student and mentor attrition
- Develop a stronger mentor training program, including a website for resources
- Recruit 820 new mentors, offering an invitation to become a one-on-one mentor early in their journey
- Resume staff- and ambassador-led speaking engagements (if interested, please contact the office!)
- Strengthen the Spanish language program

As we look ahead to a busy and exciting year, we keep in mind this reality: there are 10 million men and women incarcerated worldwide, and the Church is waiting to be invited to meet them.