

Please do not send this newsletter back to Crossroads.

**“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”
– 1 Thessalonians 5:11**

This edition of *Just for Students* is devoted to the topic of encouragement. In the above passage, written by the apostle Paul to the Thessalonian church, Paul told the church they should encourage one another to help each other find strength in difficult times. The Thessalonian church was being persecuted and attacked with all kinds of false teachings and division.

The past two years have been difficult, haven't they? As we watch the country struggle with COVID and divisive politics and then look at our own personal challenges, we could all use a bit of encouragement. It's encouraging to know that God is in control despite our circumstances. It's encouraging to know that God loves us and is with us in times of hardship. It's encouraging to hear a friend say they are there for us when we are struggling.

Paul knew what it was like to need encouragement. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–11. The word translated as “comfort” throughout this passage is the same word translated as “encourage” in 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

In 2 Corinthians 1:8, Paul reflected on a very dark period in his life and ministry. He even wrote that he felt he had received a death sentence and that he despaired of life itself.

But then Paul gave two reasons why this happened. First, he went through this suffering so that he would trust in God, “who raises the dead” (verse 9). Everything else that he could possibly trust in was taken away from him so that he would rely on God alone. The second reason for this trial is in verse 4: “so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” God gave Paul comfort and encouragement during this dark time so that Paul would know how to comfort others who were also suffering.

To encourage is to give courage. Think about the people in your life who encourage you or help you have the courage to meet the challenges you face. What things do they say? What things do they do to encourage you? Leo Buscaglia, a popular motivational speaker in the 1980s and 1990s, said the following:

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

Encourage the people in your life, especially your family and those who live with you at your facility. You might be the person who helps them turn their life around.

Mentor Corner

If you have been a Crossroads student for a while, you know the value of the Crossroads mentorship program. Encouragement from a mentor can provide the motivation you need to continue your walk with God. We frequently hear from students who tell us that receiving an uplifting letter from a mentor when they are discouraged can help them face the challenges that lie ahead.

William V. is eighty-nine years old and has been serving as a Crossroads mentor for the past twenty years. He shows no sign of slowing down until he goes to be with the Lord someday. We recently received the following devotional that William hoped could be shared with some Crossroads students. When we told him we could share it with all our students in the *Just for Students* newsletter, he was honored. He said he would be praying that his small writing might touch someone's life.

Growing in Your Faith

William V., Crossroads Mentor

When we have come to faith in Jesus Christ and have received the promise of eternal life (John 3:15–16), we are then called to grow spiritually. We can't rest thinking we are already perfect. We need to pray for continued grace in our lives and become rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:27).

Reading 2 Peter 1:5–7, we see that we are to add virtue (some translations say "goodness") to our lives. Virtue can be understood as spiritual strength and courage. Standing up for what is right and good takes courage. We need to develop consistency. Jesus, as our model, was always consistent in love and virtue. We can depend on Jesus to be the same yesterday, today and forever.

Peter continued, "Brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble" (2 Peter 1:10).

Encouragement from Crossroads Staff

The holiday season can be incredibly difficult while incarcerated. In my experience, living in that noisy, crowded place brought a dark cloud of loneliness that settled in my heart, especially around Christmas. I remember wrestling with the shame of my past, wondering what could have been, longing for life to be different and missing my family deeply.

I want to encourage you and remind you about the story of the birth of Jesus in Luke 2. If you are not familiar with it, grab your Bible and check it out. What a sight it must have been when the angels appeared to the shepherds with the glory of the Lord shining around them, declaring, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people" (verse 10).

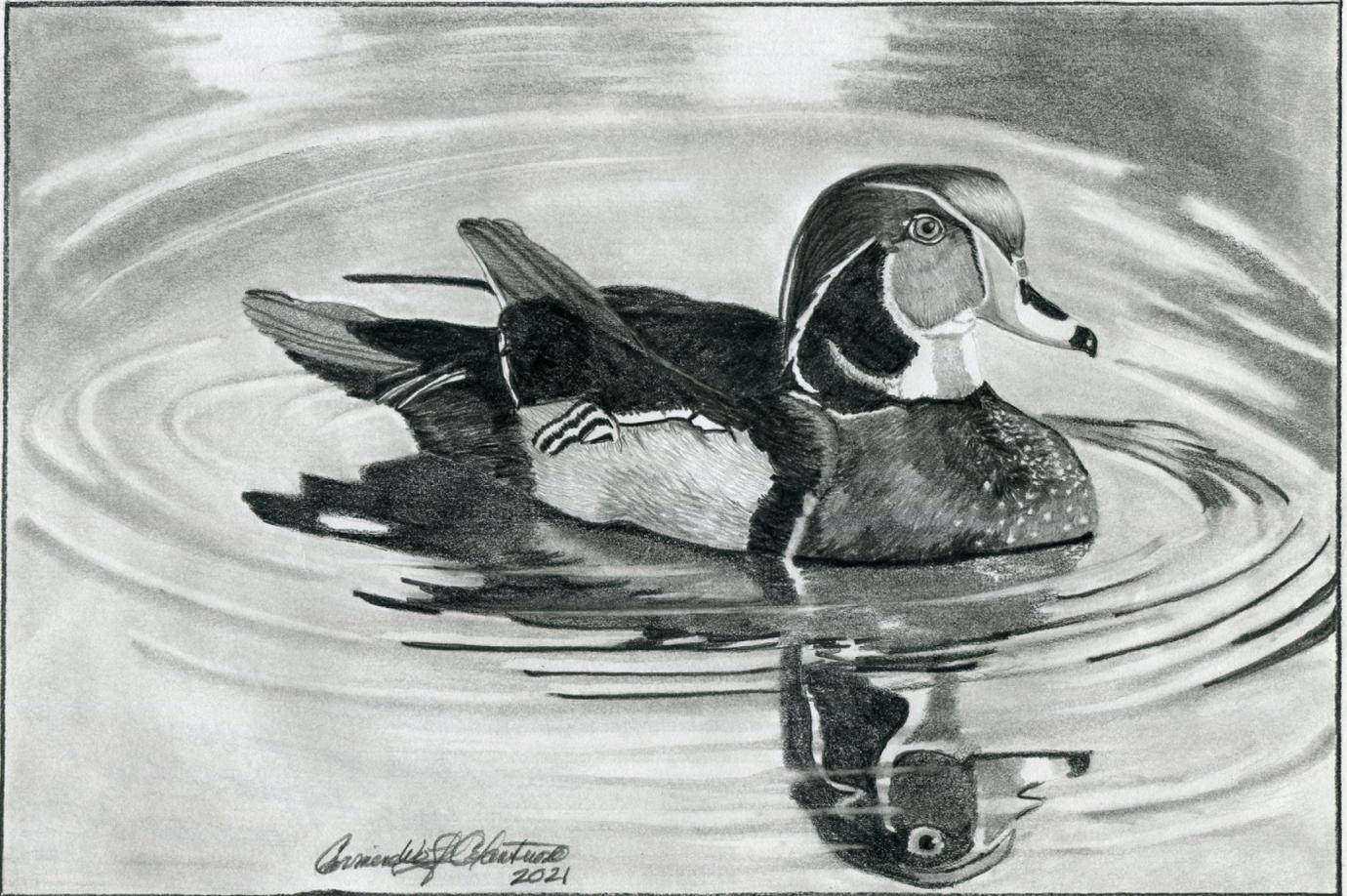
Jesus was born during a time of political unrest, oppression and injustice. Our Savior came to the world during a very dark moment in history, and He continues to be with us in all the struggles we face today. He is with you, even in the darkest moments in prison, offering good news that will bring great joy.

Friend, lean on this promise during this season. Hold on to it tightly and know that no matter what comes your way, Jesus is there with you.

Douglas Cupery
Church Mobilization Director

From the Operations Department

- Although they are not required, we encourage you to complete and send your Roadmaps with your lessons.
- Please don't send *Just for Students* or the crossword puzzles back to Crossroads. They are yours to keep!
- If you move to a new facility or go home and want to continue your lessons, please let us know. If you want to continue from home, you must send us a request from your home address.
- In Tier 1, you will have a different mentor for each lesson, and we are not able to facilitate correspondence with previous mentors.
- The operations department staff and volunteers continue to pray for you!



Artwork by Crossroads student Carmine C., NC

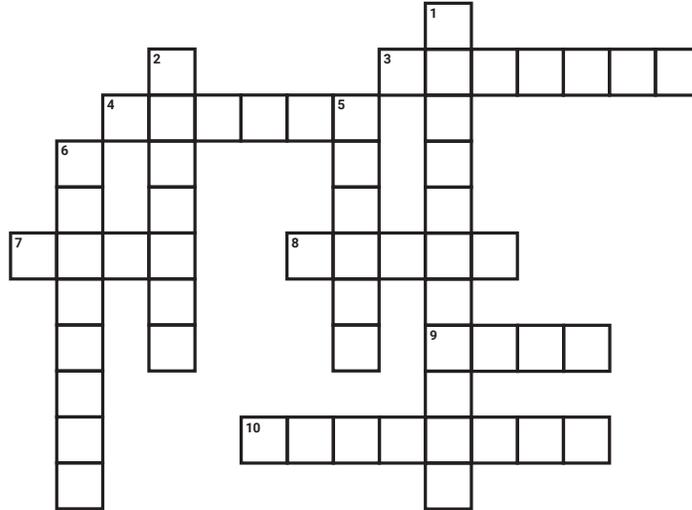
"I thank God for your great ministry. I cannot describe the feeling of jail and the truly hopeless, helpless feeling that pervades this place. Between food, sanitation, harsh conditions and, of course, the twenty-three-and-a-half-hours-a-day confinement to an eight-by-twelve-foot box, it wears on a man. The threat of violence is always right there. Aside from books and, in my case, ART! Through it all, God is there. I can feel the hand of Jesus when I draw, and the sense of peace I get is hard to describe. Every piece I have done for you folks I prayed over. I pray for the continued success of your ministry."

– Carmine C.

Crossword Puzzle: Encouragement

Use the clues below to fill in the words.

- Words can go across or down.
- Letters are shared where two words cross each other.
- Scripture quotations are taken from the NIV Bible.



DOWN

1. "Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but _____ one another . . ." (Hebrews 10:25)
2. "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the _____ of your heart." (Psalm 37:4)
5. Proverbs 30:5 assures us that God is a _____ for those who seek protection in Him.
6. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new _____ has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

ACROSS

3. "Cast all your _____ on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)
4. "Do not let your _____ be troubled." (John 14:27)
7. Isaiah 41:10 tells us we should not _____, because God is with us.
8. Psalm 126:5 says that people who sow (plant) with _____ will reap (harvest) with joy.
9. "Taste and see that the Lord is _____." (Psalm 34:8)
10. "I can do all this through him who gives me _____." (Philippians 4:13)

