

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



AUGUST 2023

Dear Mentor,

Hendrina and I were facilitating a group discussion at a men's prison when one of the participants shared a revelation he had during a recent phone call with his son. During the conversation, he could hear his grandson in the background, and suddenly, his son started yelling and cursing at his child, demanding that he "sit down and be quiet." At that moment, he realized that he had spoken to his son in the same way when he was a child, just as his own father had spoken to him.

The consequences of attitudes, biases, and behaviors that are passed down through generations are very real and permeate our society. From an early age, we absorb foundational values and character traits from those who raise us. The environment we grow up in shapes our trust, attitudes toward others, and our relationship with God, often influencing us for a lifetime.

I find it inspiring to hear stories from people who purposefully pass down loving habits and attitudes to their children, drawing from the lessons they learned from their own parents or grandparents. However, many of us carry both acknowledged and unrecognized wounds, along with associated behaviors, that have been passed down through generations. When we recognize the negative consequences of these generational patterns, we grapple with the pain we feel inside and the harm we may have caused others. If left unrecognized, it can be like reopening an infected wound with a sharp knife as we begin to uncover what was previously hidden. As a mentor, you may observe your students wrestling with these wounds, which may manifest as anger, low self-esteem, or challenges in relationships.

After our meetings in the prison, Hendrina and I often reflect on the stories we've heard and how individuals were disciplined, what they were taught, and the environment they grew up in. It's all too common to encounter stories involving physical abuse in which people remember lamp cords, switches, or pieces of 2x4 lumber swinging at them. The road to prison often begins at an early age for far too many people.

Despite a decreasing societal stigma toward therapy, those who are incarcerated often have limited or no access to therapy. While we acknowledge that we are not therapists, we have an opportunity to speak love into their lives and to show them that we care and that they matter to us. We can share our own experiences of pain or hurt, discussing what we have learned about ourselves through those experiences (James 1:2-4). We can talk about grace, forgiveness, and our hope in Jesus (Romans 12:12). We can remind them that, through Jesus, cycles of damage passed from one generation to the next can be healed and redeemed (Ephesians 1:7). Lastly, we can emphasize the power of prayer, which has the potential to change the course of history on a very personal level (Philippians 4:6-7).

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

The man in our discussion group expressed that he does not have many opportunities to share with his son what he has discovered to help him comprehend what may have been passed down to him. For now, he has devoted himself to prayer, asking God for His help in breaking the cycle of generational damage. May God answer his prayers according to His will.

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

(Continued on back page)

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 Q&A

Join us virtually to ask your ministry-related questions! If you think of a question beforehand, please email it to GatheringsQA@cpministries.org, and we will try to use it as part of the discussion.

Tuesday, August 15th, at 8:00 p.m. (EST)

URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84182956475?pwd=QWs10GIYZTZlEjVOSkcyOEc5NW9SUT09>

Meeting ID: 841 8295 6475

Passcode: 329410

Have you presented Crossroads to others?

You, our mentors, are our greatest voice in the community. Many of you share Crossroads with your friends and family, inviting them to join our ministry, and we truly appreciate your support. Some of you even go a step further and present Crossroads in a more formal way, such as organizing presentations at your church.

In order to better assist our volunteers who promote the ministry in various contexts, we would like to gain a clearer understanding of the range of these presentations. To achieve this, we will be sending out an email asking if you have presented the ministry within the last year in any of the following ways:

- Presented to a missions committee or board for awareness, financial support, or further involvement
- Presented to a Bible study group of five or more participants (e.g., men's or women's Bible study group; adult Sunday school group)
- Presented at a missions fair event
- Presented to a congregation during a church service

If your presentation does not fit neatly into one of these categories, please select the option that is the closest match.

Please keep an eye out for this email, which will be sent to you this month. We appreciate your willingness to participate and help us gather this important information!