

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



SEPTEMBER 2023

Dear Mentor,

I have previously shared my observations about the eye-opening experiences I have had while traveling by plane. On my most recent flight, as I arrived at the airport early in the morning, I noticed a growing line of passengers waiting anxiously to speak to the airline representative. As the passengers murmured, I looked up at the flight board and discovered that my flight had been canceled. To my dismay, the alternative flight we were rebooked on departed at an earlier time and was impossible to catch at that point. The tension in the air was palpable, and as frustrations rose, the representative stepped out from behind the counter and sternly deflected blame onto all of us for not being there earlier.

Being on the receiving end of blame is never a pleasant experience, especially when circumstances are beyond our control. Personally, I tend to feel defensive when faced with such situations. However, I was grateful that a different representative became available and offered me the opportunity to share my concerns. I was prepared to emphasize the underlying issue: the cancellation of the flight.

Reflecting on my own life, I acknowledge that there have been instances when I deserved blame for my actions or behavior. At times, I may not have initially understood the source of the blame and required a deeper explanation or self-reflection to comprehend my role in the problem at hand. Conversely, I have also been guilty of blaming others for circumstances in which they had no control or involvement. It is important to remember that such behavior can stem from potentially problematic underlying reasons. It might be driven by low self-esteem, leading us to shift blame onto others instead of taking responsibility for our part in the matter.

“The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’ Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’ (Genesis 3:12–13).

Blame-shifting is not a new phenomenon. Just as Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent for their disobedience in Genesis, it is not uncommon for students to express blame in their words to us, directing it toward others around them. Discerning the truth in such situations can be challenging. They may blame their lawyer for an unjustly long sentence or find fault with external circumstances. As you prepare to respond, remember that our students are often vulnerable to circumstances and events beyond their control. While it may be true that they contributed to their predicament, it is not our place to judge. Instead, we should anticipate their expressions of frustration and blame, focusing on how we can guide and encourage them effectively.

It is important to remind our students that both people and systems are flawed (Romans 3:23). We cannot control the actions of others, but we have control over how we respond to perceived injustices. Blaming others can quickly spiral out of control, leading to resentment and bitterness (Ephesians 4:31–32). A more beneficial response is to let go of our complaints and trust that God is in control of the circumstances (Romans 8:28).

(Continued on next page)

Considering the role of an airline representative, I can only imagine the daily headaches they face due to the altered flight schedules and the countless frustrating conversations with customers. The expressions on people's faces indicated that her remarks were not well received, but I knew it would not be helpful to voice my thoughts at that moment. By releasing my complaint, I prevented myself from falling into the trap of blaming her for not resolving the situation to my satisfaction.

Serving alongside you,



A handwritten signature in cursive 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 use it as part of the discussion.

Tuesday, September 19, at 3:00 p.m. (EST)

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

Meeting ID: 841 8295 6475

Passcode: 329410

Collective Scripture Reading and Prayer

Each quarter, our students receive a *Just for Students* newsletter that includes a Scripture reading and prayer guide. We invite mentors and Crossroads staff to read and pray along with them. You will find a copy of the September–October guide enclosed.

During September and October, we will read Hebrews through 3 John. These books are sometimes known as the general epistles. They are letters that were written to new Christians in the decades after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. As you read these letters, you will be encouraged to keep going and not give up, even when things are tough. The writers remind us about God's love displayed through Jesus' life and sacrifice. It is God's love that saves us, not our own efforts.

Date	Passage	Reading Topic	Prayer Focus
Sept. 1	Hebrews 1	God has spoken to us through His Son	That the whole world may know about Jesus
Sept. 2	Hebrews 2:1–4	A warning to pay attention	For a heart that wants to obey God
Sept. 3	Hebrews 2:5–18	Jesus made fully human	To grow closer to Jesus
Sept. 4	Hebrews 3:1–6	Jesus is greater than Moses	For leaders to whom God has given authority
Sept. 5	Hebrews 3:7–19	A warning against unbelief	For strong faith in God's promises
Sept. 6	Hebrews 4:1–13	A Sabbath for God's people	For greater trust in God's plan for your life
Sept. 7	Hebrews 4:14–5:10	Jesus, our great high priest	For confidence to approach God's throne of grace
Sept. 8	Hebrews 5:11–6:12	A warning against falling away	For spiritual maturity
Sept. 9	Hebrews 6:13–20	God keeps His promises	That your hope in God will anchor your soul
Sept. 10	Hebrews 7:1–10	Melchizedek the priest	For pastors and church leaders
Sept. 11	Hebrews 7:11–28	Jesus and Melchizedek	Praise God for Jesus' permanent priesthood
Sept. 12	Hebrews 8	The new covenant	Thank God for forgiving your sins
Sept. 13	Hebrews 9:1–10	The earthly tabernacle	For someone who needs healing
Sept. 14	Hebrews 9:11–28	The blood of Jesus	For someone who does not know Jesus
Sept. 15	Hebrews 10:1–7	The Old Testament: a shadow of Jesus	To understand God's love for you
Sept. 16	Hebrews 10:8–18	Christ's sacrifice once for all	Thank God for Jesus' sacrifice
Sept. 17	Hebrews 10:19–25	Don't give up hope!	For steadfast faith during hard times
Sept. 18	Hebrews 10:26–39	Don't turn away from God	For strength to follow God wholeheartedly
Sept. 19	Hebrews 11:1–12	Old Testament heroes of faith	For a heart of obedient faith
Sept. 20	Hebrews 11:13–22	OT heroes: Abraham to Joseph	To be encouraged by the faith of those in Scripture
Sept. 21	Hebrews 11:23–40	OT heroes: Moses to the prophets	For perseverance during trials
Sept. 22	Hebrews 12:1–13	Running the race	For eyes that are fixed on Jesus
Sept. 23	Hebrews 12:14–17	Warning and encouragement	For peace and holiness in the Church
Sept. 24	Hebrews 12:18–29	The two mountains	For joy, not fear, in God's presence
Sept. 25	Hebrews 13:1–19	Final encouragement	That the Church will remember those in prison
Sept. 26	Hebrews 13:20–25	Benediction and final greetings	That God will equip you to do His will
Sept. 27	James 1:1–18	Trials and temptations	To find joy in difficult circumstances
Sept. 28	James 1:19–27	Listening and doing	For strength to do what God's Word says
Sept. 29	James 2:1–13	Avoid favoritism	To love your neighbor as you love yourself
Sept. 30	James 2:14–26	Faith and works	That your faith may be accompanied by action
Oct. 1	James 3:1–12	Taming the tongue	That your tongue will speak words of blessing
Oct. 2	James 3:13–18	Two kinds of wisdom	To be filled with wisdom from heaven
Oct. 3	James 4	Submit to God	To be humble, not proud
Oct. 4	James 5:1–12	Jesus is coming soon!	To be ready for Jesus' return
Oct. 5	James 5:13–20	The prayer of faith	For those who are sick or in trouble
Oct. 6	1 Peter 1:1–12	A living hope	Praise God for giving you new life and hope
Oct. 7	1 Peter 1:13–25	Be holy	To become more holy
Oct. 8	1 Peter 2:1–10	The living Stone	That more people will build their lives on Christ
Oct. 9	1 Peter 2:11–25	Living godly lives	To shine Christ's light through the way you live
Oct. 10	1 Peter 3:1–7	Wives and husbands	For a familial relationship that needs healing
Oct. 11	1 Peter 3:8–22	Suffering for doing good	For the persecuted Church throughout the world
Oct. 12	1 Peter 4	Living for God	For strength to leave your former life behind
Oct. 13	1 Peter 5	Final exhortations	For strength to resist Satan's temptations
Oct. 14	2 Peter 1:1–11	How to be productive in the Lord	To live a godly life and follow God's calling
Oct. 15	2 Peter 1:12–21	Prophecy of Scripture	For wisdom to understand God's Word
Oct. 16	2 Peter 2:1–12	False teachers and their destruction	That the lost will find their way to God

Oct. 17	2 Peter 2:13–22	More about false teachers	For wisdom to discern between truth and falsehood
Oct. 18	2 Peter 3	The day of the Lord	To grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord
Oct. 19	1 John 1:1–2:2	The Word of life	For fellowship with the Lord and those around you
Oct. 20	1 John 2:3–14	Love and hate	To love what God loves and hate what He hates
Oct. 21	1 John 2:15–27	Do not love the world	To be in the world but not of it
Oct. 22	1 John 2:28–3:10	God’s children and sin	For those who are in bondage to sin
Oct. 23	1 John 3:11–24	Why we should love one another	To love others the way God loves us
Oct. 24	1 John 4:1–6	Jesus has come in the flesh	That the world will not distract you from your calling
Oct. 25	1 John 4:7–21	God’s love and ours	To live a life of love
Oct. 26	1 John 5:1–12	Faith in the Son of God	For strength to keep God’s commands
Oct. 27	1 John 5:13–21	Concluding affirmations	For a brother or sister who has sinned
Oct. 28	2 John	John’s joy and warning	For revival in Jesus’ Church
Oct. 29	3 John	John’s encouragement	To be generous and hospitable
Oct. 30	Jude 1–16	The future of the ungodly	For those who don’t know Jesus
Oct. 31	Jude 17–25	A call to persevere	To know God’s power in your life