

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



NOVEMBER 2023

Editor's Note: As Doug prepared for his surgery in August, he selected one of his favorite Just for Mentors letters from the archives to share with you this month. The following letter was originally shared in February 2018. Thank you for your continued prayers for Doug's recovery.

Dear Mentor,

"Please pray for my family." Those of you who have been corresponding with students for any length of time have likely seen these words written inside a lesson. Sometimes, the student may not expound any further.

Looking back at my own incarceration, I remember writing those words often. It's possible that some of you prayed for my family years ago.

Often, we do not know the state of a student's relationship with their family prior to the student's incarceration. Maybe the family had a strong, healthy bond, or maybe this incarceration caused more damage to already broken, chaotic relationships. We are left to imagine the circumstances of their family life. But we do know this:

- Caregivers (the other parent, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) of children with parents in prison bear numerous burdens, including shame, lack of resources, stress, and depression.
- Visits to prison can be intimidating and demeaning for family members, which sometimes keeps them away. Phone calls can be very expensive.
- The majority of incarcerated fathers and mothers receive no visits from their children.
- People returning home from prison who have family support reintegrate into society more successfully than those who do not.

It may be difficult to understand the magnitude of the family strife our students may be experiencing. But the request remains: "Please pray for my family."

This request may mean any number of things. The student may be requesting prayer for reconciliation and healing in their family. They may be requesting prayer for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of their family members. They may be requesting prayer for their journey toward becoming a better spouse or parent.

Even if we don't know exactly how to pray for our students, we can be assured that God knows what they need. Paul wrote, "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27).

The next time you see this request from a student, pray with confidence that God is present with your students in their pain and has the power to bring redemption to any situation.

Serving alongside you,



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 Gathering

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

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

Meeting ID: 841 8295 6475

Passcode: 329410

Important Update: Changes in Mail Procedure for Texas Students

We want to inform you about upcoming changes to our mail procedure for students located in Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) facilities. Due to new regulations imposed by the TDCJ regarding incoming mail, we are required to modify our current process to ensure the continued delivery of our lessons to students in Texas state prisons.

This winter, we will implement a revised mail process for our Texas students. Here's what you need to know:

- If you receive a lesson from a student in a Texas state prison, **the lesson will include a pre-addressed envelope addressed to Crossroads Prison Ministries** with "Attn: Operations Department" or a similar label in the lower left-hand corner of the envelope. **This envelope will replace the pre-addressed envelope with the student's address that typically accompanies student lessons.** Follow the same procedure of reviewing the lesson and writing a letter of encouragement. Place the lesson and letter into the new envelope, add sufficient postage, and mail it to the Crossroads office. Please remember to submit your progress reports as usual.
- When we receive the reviewed lessons and letters from mentors, our staff and volunteers will perform quality control checks to ensure adherence to the TDCJ's guidelines before forwarding the materials to the students from our office.

This change to our mail process is a proactive step to comply with the TDCJ's regulations and to ensure we can continue delivering lessons to our 4,000+ students in Texas state prisons. We appreciate your flexibility and dedication as we implement this change.

Reminders about Sending Cards

Thanksgiving and Christmas are quickly approaching. During this holiday season, we want to encourage those of you who are Tier 2/3 mentors to consider sending your student an extra hope-filled card or letter. **Please check your mentor portal account to see if cards are allowed at your student's facility.** If they are allowed, please use a plain white envelope to mail the card.

If you have Tier 1 students, we request that you do not send them a Thanksgiving or Christmas card. It can be confusing for Tier 1 students to receive a card from a mentor. From experience, we've seen that these students will often write back to the mentor, and unlike in Tier 2/3, we cannot forward those back to the mentor who sent the card.

Please be assured that your Tier 1 students will receive a card or letter for Christmas. Crossroads sends every student in the program a Christmas card or letter (based on facility regulations) featuring a message from our staff and art from one of our students.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, please contact us at mentor@cpministries.org.