

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



DECEMBER 2023

Dear Mentor,

My friend Ken, a retired businessman, now volunteers weekly to build relationships with men and women who have recently been released from incarceration. One morning, during a conversation over coffee, he confessed to me that he had used shortcuts to grow his business. One of these tactics involved conducting business off the books to avoid paying taxes. His business struggled to grow. However, over time, he underwent a change of heart and made a commitment to conduct his business affairs in an honest and transparent manner. He paid the appropriate taxes. He chuckled as he spoke because from that time forward, his business thrived.

"Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor" (Romans 13:7).

It can be tempting to take shortcuts to reach our goals quickly and inexpensively; however, it may not be in our best interest.

Recently, while watching gymnastics on television, my wife, Hendrina, remarked that the athletes' years of dedicated practice, learning from mistakes, and enduring inevitable injuries were key factors that led to their success in this sport. Reflecting on their high skill levels, I am confident not one athlete would say they took a shortcut to reach the performance level required for their events.

Similarly, there were no shortcuts for Jesus, who, being without sin, became sin for us so that we could be righteous in God's eyes (2 Corinthians 5:21). 2 Peter 3:9 reminds us, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." Just as Jesus took no shortcuts, we must not take any shortcuts in our spiritual lives.

As you prepare to write to your students this month, consider sharing your spiritual growth journey. This growth process requires time, concentrated effort, and prayer as we seek to connect with God daily. Our salvation is a beautiful gift from God, and Luke 15:10 tells us that "there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." While our salvation marks the beginning of a new life filled with many opportunities, there are no shortcuts to deepening our understanding of who God is and our purpose as His children. This requires reading Scripture, asking questions, and gathering with other believers. This process is crucial because we will inevitably face challenges to our faith and cross paths with ignorant people who distort the truth (2 Peter 3:16–17).

Although it is tempting to take shortcuts to save time and effort, it's important to remember that just because we *can* doesn't mean we *should*. By dedicating time to study and reflect on God's Word, we become spiritually stronger and learn how to live our daily lives. With the Holy Spirit's help (Galatians 5:25), we can nurture a desire to live with a Kingdom mindset (Philippians 4:4–9). This mindset leads to decisions that align with God's Kingdom and can influence others as they observe our walk.

My friend Ken was always aware that he was evading his responsibility to pay taxes, which, among other shortcuts, contributed to the initial hardships in his business. It took a Kingdom-minded decision to change the course of his life, turning a story of struggle and failure into one of blessings.

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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 use it as part of the discussion.

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

URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84182956475?pwd=QWs1OGIYZTZlejVOSkcyOEc5NW9SUT09>

Meeting ID: 841 8295 6475

Passcode: 329410

Important Update: Changes in Mail Procedure for Texas Students

We want to remind 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

Christmas is 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 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.

Share Your Story!

We are preparing to celebrate Crossroads' 40th anniversary! As we begin 2024, we want to remember how God has been faithful to us in the past and present and to declare our trust in His faithfulness for the future. We are collecting stories from our mentors, including:

- Families in which multiple members and/or generations have served as mentors.
- Families that include both mentors and students of Crossroads.
- Memories from children and spouses of mentors who have passed away.

If you are willing to participate, please send a brief response about what Crossroads has meant to you over the years, along with a photo of yourself/pertinent family members (if possible), to stories@cpministries.org. You may also share your story by calling Anne Hamming at (616) 256-8229.

Scripture Reading and Prayer Guide: The Gospel of Luke

This month, students are receiving their winter *Just for Students* newsletter, which includes a Scripture reading and prayer guide that covers the book of Luke. Please consider following the guide alongside your students and discussing the topics as you write letters.

As you read, pay attention to how much Jesus prayed. You will see that the book of Luke focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' birth, baptism, and ministry. Luke also provides more details about the women who were with Jesus than the other three Gospels do.

Date	Passage	Reading Topic	Prayer Focus
Dec. 1	Luke 1:1–25	God's promise to Zechariah	For a heart that trusts God's promises
Dec. 2	Luke 1:26–38	The birth of Jesus foretold	That your family will know and follow Jesus
Dec. 3	Luke 1:39–56	Mary visits Elizabeth	For your facility
Dec. 4	Luke 1:57–80	The birth of John the Baptist	For God's Spirit to live in you
Dec. 5	Luke 2:1–21	The birth of Jesus	For spiritual growth
Dec. 6	Luke 2:22–52	Jesus at the temple	For wisdom to understand God's Word
Dec. 7	Luke 3:1–20	Repent and be baptized	Ask God to reveal His will for your life
Dec. 8	Luke 3:21–38	The baptism of Jesus	Thank God for sending His Son
Dec. 9	Luke 4:1–13	Jesus is tested in the wilderness	For strength to overcome temptations

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Dec. 10	Luke 4:14–30	Jesus is rejected	For those who reject Jesus
Dec. 11	Luke 4:31–44	Jesus heals many	For physical healing for your loved ones
Dec. 12	Luke 5:1–32	Jesus calls His disciples	To accept discipline from Jesus
Dec. 13	Luke 5:33–6:11	The Sabbath	For times of rest and refreshment from God
Dec. 14	Luke 6:12–26	Blessings and woes	Thank God for giving us good gifts
Dec. 15	Luke 6:27–36	Love for enemies	For a heart that forgives your enemies
Dec. 16	Luke 6:37–49	Judging others	That you will not have a judging spirit
Dec. 17	Luke 7:1–17	The faith of the centurion	For increased faith
Dec. 18	Luke 7:18–35	Jesus sends John a message	For ears to hear God when He speaks to you
Dec. 19	Luke 7:36–50	Anointing by a sinful woman	For a chance to share the forgiveness of Christ
Dec. 20	Luke 8:1–21	Parable of the sower	For your heart to be filled with good soil
Dec. 21	Luke 8:22–56	Jesus calms the storm	For mental and spiritual calmness
Dec. 22	Luke 9:1–17	The ministry of the disciples	Ask God how you can serve Him today
Dec. 23	Luke 9:18–45	Jesus is the Messiah	For your mentor(s)
Dec. 24	Luke 9:46–62	The cost of discipleship	For willingness to follow God wholeheartedly
Dec. 25	Luke 10:1–24	Sending out the seventy-two	For spiritual leaders at your facility
Dec. 26	Luke 10:25–42	The good Samaritan	For the chance to show kindness to a stranger today
Dec. 27	Luke 11:1–28	Jesus teaches about prayer	For the Holy Spirit to help you in your prayer life
Dec. 28	Luke 11:29–54	The lamp of the body	To shine God's light through your life
Dec. 29	Luke 12:1–21	Warnings and encouragements	For courage to acknowledge Jesus publicly
Dec. 30	Luke 12:22–48	Do not worry	For things that you are worrying about
Dec. 31	Luke 12:49–59	Not peace but division	For peace in your living unit
Jan. 1	Luke 13:1–35	Repentance	Recommit your life to God
Jan. 2	Luke 14:1–35	The great banquet	Thank God for salvation
Jan. 3	Luke 15:1–32	Three parables	To understand Jesus' parables
Jan. 4	Luke 16:1–31	The shrewd manager	For wisdom in managing responsibilities
Jan. 5	Luke 17:1–19	Sin and faith	For humility
Jan. 6	Luke 17:20–37	The coming of the Kingdom	That God's Spirit will move in your facility
Jan. 7	Luke 18:1–30	More parables	For a hunger to learn God's Word
Jan. 8	Luke 18:31–43	Jesus predicts His death	Thank God for Jesus' obedience to the cross
Jan. 9	Luke 19:1–27	Jesus and Zacchaeus	Ask God where you need to make amends
Jan. 10	Luke 19:28–48	Jesus' entry into Jerusalem	Spend time worshiping God as your King
Jan. 11	Luke 20:1–47	The authority of Jesus questioned	For those in authority at your facility
Jan. 12	Luke 21:1–38	Signs of the end times	For strength to carry on in your faith
Jan. 13	Luke 22:1–46	The Last Supper	For strength to overcome challenges
Jan. 14	Luke 22:47–71	Jesus' arrest and trial	For a tongue that speaks the truth
Jan. 15	Luke 23:1–43	The crucifixion	For God's grace
Jan. 16	Luke 23:44–56	Jesus' death and burial	To truly understand God's love for you
Jan. 17	Luke 24:1–53	The resurrection and ascension	Thank God for all He is doing in your life