

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



JANUARY 2024

Dear Mentor,

After listening to an interview on a Christian radio station about transforming life's tests into our testimony and life's mess into our message, I decided to make a long-overdue phone call. I reached out to a friend to catch up, but our conversation quickly turned into something more. My friend shared that he was overwhelmed by feelings of defeat, frustration, and exhaustion due to recent events in his life. My friend was venting, and I attempted to provide support and encouragement. After hanging up, I realized that my friend was being tested through a messy situation, and I might have missed an opportunity to help him find meaning in his struggles.

When I first picked up the Bible, the lives of Esther, David, Paul, Jesus, and others became real to me. Their experiences often included harsh and challenging circumstances. Through Scripture, I gained an understanding of why life is not always fair or easy (Genesis 3). However, I also discovered truths about mercy and grace and the sacrifice that made them available to us (John 19:30). The Bible is clear that there are consequences for sin, whether we are the ones who commit it or the ones affected by its repercussions. The stories in the Bible reveal testimonies of God's goodness through tests and messes, giving us a message of hope and God's presence.

When writing to a student, I make an effort not to minimize their struggles or challenging circumstances. While we should certainly pray for healing and God's intervention, we can also pray that the pain they endure may ultimately become a testimony to God's glory and presence as they grow to share where they find their hope (Revelation 21:4).

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander" (1 Peter 3:15-16).

As mentors, we can gently guide our students as they explore the narrative of the challenges they face. We can try to help them understand the bigger picture that may be developing supernaturally (John 5:17) and encourage them to see how the trials they experience could turn into testimonies of how God is carrying them through difficult times.

As you consider what to write, here are a few ideas:

- Ask your student to pray for understanding about their story. Let them know that you are praying for their comfort as God reveals His work in their life.
- Suggest that your student write down their thoughts, as this practice can help them remember God's faithfulness in the future.
- Encourage your student to share their beautiful testimony with future mentors or friends. It will become easier and more natural each time.

I wish I had told my friend to call me back with an update on how he was working through his troubles, where he discovered God in the details, and what he was learning, because I know it would be an encouragement to both of us. I'll be sure to call him soon to see how his story is unfolding.

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

Please join us for our quarterly virtual mentor gathering! Our speaker will be Sara Marlin, chair of the board of directors for Crossroads Prison Ministries and president & founder of BLOOM Brand Strategies, LLC. Sara will share her thoughts on the power of words and the importance of your written words to those behind bars.

Tuesday, January 16, at 8:00 p.m. (EST)

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

Meeting ID: 841 8295 6475

Passcode: 329410

Important Update: Transitioning to Black-and-White Lessons

Due to increasing mail restrictions in jails and prisons across the United States, delivering our lessons to students has become more challenging. As part of our efforts to work around these restrictions, you will notice a shift toward black-and-white covers on the lessons you review.

Instead of relying on an outside print house, we have begun printing black-and-white lesson booklets in our office. This change will benefit our ministry in several ways:

- It will allow us to serve a greater number of students with more efficiency.
- Black-and-white materials should improve our access to facilities with mail restrictions associated with colored ink.

Our primary reason for this is not to cut costs, but it will save some money. As we continue to use up the lessons we have already printed in color, you may receive a mix of full-color and black-and-white lessons.

Reminder: 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.