

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



APRIL 2024

Dear Mentor,

I was recently asked to meet with a man preparing to face the parole board but struggling to find a safe place to live after incarceration. When we met in a hallway inside the prison, he shared that his support system consisted solely of his mother, as his child's mother did not want him in her life. Having been arrested twenty-two times since he was fifteen years old, he had reached the point where he did not want to fail again. He was trying to become a better man by actively participating in a parenting class facilitated by our church and attending classes offered by the Department of Corrections. But something was missing. As we spoke, I could see a young boy beneath the surface, a child searching and longing for something he has not yet found.

Reflecting on our conversation, I recalled a quote from one of Charles Spurgeon's sermons that says, "It is ours not to speculate, but to perform acts of mercy and love, according to the tenor of the gospel. Let us then be less inquisitive and more practical, less for cracking doctrinal nuts, and more for bringing forth the bread of life to the starving multitudes."

"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty'" (John 6:35).

When healing a blind man, Jesus said, "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:4-5). With our days left in this world, we must allow our light to shine before others (Matthew 5:16).

Woven throughout the Gospel are themes of love and mercy. As we show love and mercy to our students, how do we help them put love and mercy into practice where they are? It doesn't need to be complicated:

Could mercy look like sharing a candy bar with someone who doesn't deserve it or holding back angry words when inappropriately slighted? Could it look like inviting someone who struggles with their mental health into a conversation, for a walk, or to a church service? Could love show through an encouraging letter or phone call home, sharing gratitude for today? Could it look like sharing with someone that you prayed for them today?

I told the man I was meeting with that I would do some homework on mission-based housing in the area he was from; however, it was clear he did not know the love and mercy of Jesus. I closed the conversation by sharing that I choose daily to follow Jesus in everything I do, expressing my hope that he would consider what this could look like in his own life. I encouraged him to find others in the prison who walk with Jesus and learn from them.

I also asked if I could sign him up for our ministry, knowing he would receive mercy and love from his interactions with each Crossroads mentor, pointing him toward Jesus. Each time you pen a caring letter and send it to a student with their lesson, know you are "bringing forth the bread of life to the starving multitudes."

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

Quarterly Virtual Mentor Gathering

Please join us for our quarterly virtual mentor gathering! Our speaker, Dr. Karen Swanson, will present her research on the impactful spiritual journeys of thirty-three formerly incarcerated men and women. The individuals she interviewed have been in the free world for over a year and shared with her what has helped them sustain their faith in Christ.

Karen Swanson has been the director of the Correctional Ministries Institute of the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center since 2005. She oversees the Charles W. Colson Scholarship Program, which provides leadership and training for those involved in correctional ministries to advance the Gospel.

Join us for this informative session at which Karen will offer valuable insights that we hope will inspire and support you in your role as a mentor.

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

Zoom URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84182956475?pwd=QWs1OGIYZTZlejVOSkcyOEc5NW9SUT09>
Meeting ID: 841 8295 6475
Passcode: 329410

Lesson Reformatting

We continue to navigate the ongoing challenges posed by changes in mail policies at correctional institutions nationwide. Currently, we are unable to deliver Crossroads lessons to 127 institutions. We anticipate an increase in the number of institutions that electronically scan mail to be read on a tablet or distributed as a photocopied version. Unfortunately, our current booklet format is not conducive to scanning or photocopying, which can negatively impact the student experience.

To address this, we are in the process of reformatting our lessons to ensure compatibility with scanning or photocopying. This is a large project that we believe will help us better serve our students. By late summer, mentors will begin receiving reformatted lessons from students. While the content remains unchanged, the lessons will now be printed on 8.5-by-11-inch sheets of paper instead of the traditional booklet format. The prototypes have received positive feedback, and this change will offer us the opportunity to reach more students with the hope of the Gospel. We will keep you updated as the project moves forward.

Refer Prospective Students to Crossroads

Do you know someone in prison who could benefit from studying with Crossroads? We would be happy to send them an enrollment card. You can refer someone to Crossroads by filling out the enrollment referral form at cpministries.org/resources/enroll-a-student. Feel free to share this opportunity widely!

Transition to New Email Platform

We are currently transitioning to a new email platform that we hope will serve our community better. If you usually receive the email version of the *Just for Mentors* (April 1) and/or our monthly *Inside* email newsletter (April 19) and do not receive them this month, please contact Paige Deur at pdeur@cpministries.org so we can confirm we have the correct email address on file for you.