

# JUST FOR MENTORS

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



SEPTEMBER 2024

Dear Mentor,

“Five minutes!” Those two words were hollered by a correctional officer inside the prison unit multiple times every day. Men would scurry about, quickly use the restroom, end their telephone calls, or remove their food from the microwave in the dayroom. Those words meant it was count time, and we needed to be on our bunks so the officers could account for everyone. Late one afternoon, I saw paperwork being passed from bunk to bunk.

When the paperwork reached me, I saw that it was filled with the names of men who had signed up their children to receive Christmas gifts through Prison Fellowship’s Angel Tree program. I added my name along with the names and ages of my children, thinking about how I would not be home with them for Christmas. Grief and guilt ran rampant in my heart as hope continued to fade.

As a mentor, you have likely read reflections from students about their children. It is difficult for an incarcerated person to cope with the harm that their absence causes their children. Additionally, many students have experienced family dysfunction before incarceration, which intensifies their emotional struggles.

Encourage your students to embrace hope for the future with a reminder that their hope in Jesus can never be taken from them (1 Peter 1:3–4). This hope comes with the promise of God working in the details of our lives and the lives of our families and children (Psalm 139). Knowing this, we can embrace Paul’s encouragement: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

I pray to see reconciliation and restoration in the brokenness of incarceration and family circumstances. Our students have a vital part to play in this process—prayer, reflection, confession, and understanding how to live by Scripture are crucial to moving forward (Romans 12:12). This preparation helps us persevere within God’s perfect timing. As we find the healing we desire, we become stronger and better equipped to face the challenges in our hearts and minds.

As Christmas approached, there was a knock on our front door. My wife, Hendrina, opened it to find people from a church delivering presents to our children. The tags read, “To \_\_\_\_\_, From Dad.” Twenty-five years later, tears still well up when I think about this. Strangers had remembered my family and me, filling a small piece of the gap I had left wide open. It reminded me that, though I longed for circumstances to be different, God was working in the details of our lives, giving me a glimpse of hope that I could not see (Romans 8:24).

Serving alongside you,



Douglas Cupery  
Director of Church Engagement

P.S. As the Christmas season nears, please consider the Angel Tree invitation on the next page.

**Have a question?** You can contact the mentor support team at [mentor@cpministries.org](mailto:mentor@cpministries.org) or 800-668-2450.

# NEWS & NOTES

## Deliver a Gift, the Gospel, and Love

This Christmas, 1.5 million children will have a parent in prison. Through **Prison Fellowship Angel Tree® Christmas**, your church can help strengthen bonds between incarcerated parents and their children, delivering hope and supporting families. Angel Tree lets your church deliver a Christmas gift and personal message to local children on behalf of their incarcerated parent during a season when being apart can be especially challenging. Angel Tree churches are always matched with the closest available children to serve. The Christmas gift from Mom or Dad has a tremendous impact on the child. The connection with a compassionate, local church community that delivers the gift lets the family know they are not on this journey alone. These local church connections offer tangible support and express Christ's love to families impacted by incarceration—often sparking ongoing ministry and relationship with people your church might not otherwise reach.

It starts with a gift. Talk to your church leadership about coming alongside local families impacted by incarceration this Christmas! Learn more and register today at [prisonfellowship.org/AngelTreeChristmasIntro](https://prisonfellowship.org/AngelTreeChristmasIntro).

## Mentor Q&A

This month's Q&A session will focus on using the Crossroads mentor portal. We will show you how to log in, what features the portal offers, and other helpful tips for reporting your students' progress. If you have questions about the mentor portal that you would like to discuss during this session, please email them to [GatheringsQA@cpministries.org](mailto:GatheringsQA@cpministries.org). For questions specific to your student, please email [mentor@cpministries.org](mailto:mentor@cpministries.org) or call (800) 668-2450, and we will respond as quickly as possible.

Tuesday, September 17, at 3:00 p.m. (ET)

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

Meeting ID: 841 8295 6475

Passcode: 329410

## How Do I Respond to a Student Whose Answer Isn't Correct?

We had a good dialogue at our last mentor Q&A regarding this question. We want to remind you that the mentor handbook is a great place to start if you are feeling stuck while reviewing a student's lesson. Pages 15–17 of the mentor handbook address this question and other questions you may have while reviewing lessons. The digital copy of our mentor handbook can be found at [cpministries.org/resources/mentors](https://cpministries.org/resources/mentors).

## Scripture Reading and Prayer Guide: Job and Ecclesiastes

In the book of Job, intense testing by God brings Job to an understanding of God's greatness. Most of us have gone through times when we felt like we lost everything. God can use those seasons to bring us to the end of our own understanding and force us to rely on Him.

Job lost his possessions, his family, his health, and even his will to live. But in the end, he gained an understanding of God's greatness and his own inability to fully comprehend why God does what He does.

Each quarter, our students receive a *Just for Students* newsletter that includes a Scripture reading and prayer guide. This fall, instead of a daily reading topic and prayer focus, we've given our students a weekly prayer

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focus. We encourage you to follow this prayer guide over the next few months as well. As you spend time in prayer and Scripture each day, we pray that God reveals more of Himself to you.

You can find the *Just for Students* newsletters, including current and prior Scripture reading and prayer guides, online at [cpministries.org/resources/mentors/just-for-students](http://cpministries.org/resources/mentors/just-for-students).

<b>Week</b>	<b>Passage</b>	<b>Reading Topic</b>	<b>Prayer Focus</b>
Sept. 1–7	Job 1–6	Job loses his will to live	Pray for God’s encouragement in your life
Sept. 8–14	Job 7–12	Job’s friend accuses him	Pray for protection from Satan’s accusations
Sept. 15–21	Job 13–19	Job answers his accusers	Pray for strength in your prayer life
Sept. 22–28	Job 20–27	Job feels abandoned	Pray God will give you peace through His presence
Sept. 29–Oct. 5	Job 28–37	Job’s final argument	Pray God will use you to share His truth
Oct. 6–12	Job 38–41	God speaks	Pray for ears to hear God’s voice
Oct. 13–19	Job 42	Job gains wisdom about God	Pray for God to reveal Himself to you
Oct. 20–26	Ecclesiastes 1–6	Solomon’s riches fail him	Pray for spiritual blessings from God
Oct. 27–Nov. 2	Ecclesiastes 7–12	Wisdom	Pray for God to give you wisdom