

A RENEWED MIND



CROSSROADS
PRISON MINISTRIES

ANSWER KEY

Cover artwork by Carmine C., Crossroads student



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STUDY TOOLS

Throughout this course, students will be provided the tools listed below to assist them in their studies. These tools provide ways that you can interact with students.



CONVERSATION BOXES: We have included some spaces throughout the lessons that we call **conversation boxes**. Students can use these boxes to write questions and thoughts they have about the lesson or about life. You can also respond to a student in any space that the student has not filled.



ACTION STEPS: At the end of each lesson, we have included a challenge called an **action step**. It asks the student to apply what they have learned. If they feel that they need help or encouragement to complete it, they may simply write down what they plan to do. You can follow up with the student by asking if they have completed it.



Crossroads provides NIV Bibles, upon request, to students who need them to complete the lessons (if allowed by their facility).

Glossary of Terms

Each lesson contains Bible names, terms and ideas that may be new to students. We will do our best to provide definitions that are easy to understand. The list below includes all of the terms found in this course. In each lesson, we have included an asterisk (*) the first time each term appears.

Associations – Friendly or cooperative relationships between people.

Attitude – A feeling or emotion toward a fact or person.

Attitudes – How we think or feel about someone or something, often shown in how we act.

Colossae – An ancient city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The first church there was started by Epaphras. Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians to this church.

Commitment – An agreement or pledge to do something in the future. It could be a promise you are making to yourself or someone else.

Conform – To change yourself to behave according to the expectations of others or society.

Consequences – A result or effect of an action or condition.

Confrontations – Hostile or argumentative meetings or situations between people who disagree.

Glorifying – To give praise or admiration to someone or something.

Immune system – A network of biological systems that protects us from diseases.

Influence – To have an effect or impact on the way someone behaves or thinks.

Meditate – To think reflectively about a topic, idea, or God. When we meditate on God's Word, we are sitting quietly, considering what the Bible might be showing us about God, ourselves, or others. We can also simply be thinking about and appreciating God's holiness and goodness.

Metanoia – A Greek word used in the New Testament that is translated as repentance. Repentance isn't just about changing behavior. It is about having a "new mind," changing our thinking about God and the attitudes and behaviors that lead to behavior that is sinful or prevents us from experiencing God.

Perch – To sit on or close to the edge of something.

Selfish Ambition – The desire and action to do and accomplish things that satisfy our own selfishness. This could be an unhealthy desire for riches, power, fame, or the approval of others.

Social setting – The immediate physical and social environment in which we live or in which something happens or develops. It includes the culture that a person was educated or lives in and the people and institutions with whom they interact.

Sower – A person who plants seeds, like a farmer in a field.

My Notes

LESSON 1: Metanoia: A New Mind

1. When was there a time in your life when you changed a behavior because you had a new understanding about the impact or harm of that behavior?

The student should identify a specific behavior that they changed because of how it impacted someone else. If the student cannot identify a behavior, they should be challenged to examine their past more critically.

2. As you look at your life, and some of the choices you made that led to bad outcomes, what were the thinking errors that contributed to making those choices?

Possible answers could include, but are not limited to, some of the following:

- **I won't get caught.**
- **Why even try to do right? It is a waste of time.**
- **I'm only hurting myself.**
- **It's not my fault. They deserved it.**
- **I'll just do it this one time.**
- **I can't let others disrespect me.**

The student answer should reflect an understanding that the thinking that led to the bad outcome was faulty.

3. How would the world be different, or our own lives be different, if each of us were more concerned with looking out for the interests of others, rather than being more concerned with our own selfish ambitions?

The student's answer should reflect an awareness of the importance of having concern for others being more important than selfish behavior.

4. When was a time in your life where your selfishness negatively impacted people you cared about?

A student's answer should include a specific act of selfishness that negatively impacted their family or friends. Sample answers could be (but are not limited to):

- **I was selling drugs and didn't consider the impact coming to prison would have on my children.**
- **When I was deep in my addictive behavior, I didn't care about anyone else, including my family.**

- **My sexual addiction was out of control. I hurt the people I loved the most to satisfy my lust.**

5. Have you ever felt like the world was against you? If so, explain what that was like and how it impacted your behavior.

Believing that the world is against us is a common thinking error of someone who is anti-social. The student's answer should reflect an understanding of why this is a wrong perception. A student may simply answer, "No, I never felt that way." That is a valid, but less than insightful, answer. You can affirm their "no" answer but include: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

6. Do you believe that God is for you? If so, why? If not, why not?

The student may answer yes or no. Neither is a wrong answer. Use their response to affirm the truth that God is indeed for them. They should include a "reason" for their belief. If they answer, "Yes, because the Bible says God is for me," that is acceptable. But if they can point to a specific example from their own life that either confirmed God's love for them or made them believe God was not for them, that will give you as the mentor more information to provide helpful feedback to the student.

7. Think of a time where you said or did something that you later came to regret because you were determined to "not lose." What would you have done differently if you could go back in time to do it over?

A common student answer might be related to an argument or physical altercation that they came to later regret because of the consequences. The student's answer should include a reasonable, more thoughtful or alternate way they could have responded in that situation.

8. What is a way that you can love and honor someone when you have a disagreement with them or are angry with them?

Possible answers include (but are not limited to):

- **Apologize**
- **Try to see the situation from their perspective.**
- **Do not overreact or let your anger get out of control.**
- **Pray for them.**
- **Ask God to help you have a good heart regarding the disagreement.**

9. Why do you think Christians, knowing that God has forgiven them, sometimes have a difficult time forgiving others?

Possible answers include, but are not limited to:

- **People's behavior towards us can be very hurtful.**
- **We are human and forgiving others is not always easy.**
- **When we are in our feelings, we can easily lose sight of the grace and forgiveness God gave us.**
- **We don't fully understand how our unforgiveness of others hurts us.**

10. What are things you can do in your life now to sow good seed, or in other words, actions you can take that can provide a good result or outcome in your personal and spiritual life? List at least 3.

Possible answers include (but are not limited to):

- **Pray.**
- **Serve others.**
- **Study God's Word.**
- **Surround ourselves with Christians and positive people.**
- **Forgive others.**
- **Repent of sin when we identify it in our lives.**
- **Trust God in difficult times.**

My Notes

LESSON 2: A New Attitude

1. Rewrite the above verse, Proverbs 4:23, in your own words as if you were explaining its meaning to someone who asks what it means.

Sample Answer:

“I need to work on having a good heart and attitude, because that affects all of the things I say and do.”

2. How has anger negatively impacted your life or the life of someone you know?

No one is immune from having experienced anger that has impacted them. The student’s answer should reflect an awareness of how anger can be harmful to us and others.

3. Take some time to think and pray thoughtfully about your personal character. In the list that follows, mark each character trait with either S, N, or W. (**S** = one of your strengths, **N** = needs work, **W** = one of your weaknesses)

___ **honest**: truthful with yourself and others

___ **ethical**: morally good or correct

___ **charitable**: helps those in need

___ **integrity**: does the right thing even when no one sees

___ **wise**: shows good judgement

___ **humble**: a modest, accurate estimate of one’s importance

___ **respectful**: treats others with respect

___ **compassionate**: shows concern for others

___ **kind**: doesn’t cause harm to others

___ **responsible**: others can depend on you

___ **patient**: accepts delays without getting annoyed

___ **merciful**: able to forgive others

Use the student’s responses to better understand your student. You can provide some simple feedback on one or more of their answers in the list.

4. After completing the above checklist, what stood out to you as areas to focus on in your personal and spiritual growth? Explain why those character traits are most important for you to work on.

The student should have been able to identify some areas of their life they want to focus on for improvement. The student's answer will help you as a mentor better understand your student.

5. In the following list, put a check mark next to those items that you think may be problem areas in your life.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Uncooperative | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like a "victim" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unreasonable expectations of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Negative moods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others are "the enemy" or "the competition" | <input type="checkbox"/> Stubbornness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to take criticism | <input type="checkbox"/> Arrogance (an exaggerated sense of our own importance) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly opinionated | <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to be happy for the success of others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inflexible | <input type="checkbox"/> Disrespectful to others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to apologize when we have wronged someone | <input type="checkbox"/> Demanding respect from others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Believing we are better than others | |

The student should be able to identify one or more problem areas in their life.

6. As you look again at those items in question 5 that you put a check mark next to, what item(s) stand out to you as attitudes you need to change? Explain your answer.

The student should provide an explanation of why a particular attitude in their life should be a focus for growth.

7. Think of a person you know that seems to be happy and has a "good heart" or positive attitude towards life. What stands out to you as to how this choice they make improves their life?

The student is being challenged to consider how choosing to have a positive view of life improves their motivations and relationships. By looking at the fruit of a positive attitude in the lives of others, the student should make connections about how a more positive outlook could impact their own life. Students may say:

- **They don't seem to have as much drama in their lives as others.**
- **They are always working towards positive goals they have set.**
- **They seem to have more friends and positive work relationships.**
- **They seem to have less worry and stress.**

8. In your life, have you experienced violence or trauma that you suspect may have negatively impacted your life? ____ Yes ____ No. If yes, how has it influenced the way you look at life, others, or your future?

Especially among men and women in prison, the experience of violence and trauma are very common. They can answer “no”; it is not a wrong answer. It can be difficult for people to examine how they have been hurt or experienced trauma. If they answer “yes,” you can use their full answer to provide encouragement or share the love of God.

9. The condition of my heart is generally (check one):

____ Rocky – I easily fall away from God.

____ Thorny – Life chokes out my joy and love of God.

____ Good – I am able to receive and enjoy God’s Word.

There is no correct answer to this question.

10. Explain why you answered the question above as you did.

The student’s answer here will provide a window into the student’s thinking and struggles.

11. **Prayer:** Write a short prayer asking God for a good heart and godly attitude towards others:

There are no requirements for the student’s prayer to be a certain length. Affirm their willingness to pray and let them know you will also be praying for them.

12. **Repentance:** What are some attitudes that you need to repent of? In prayer make a confession to God and request for forgiveness and a willingness to change:

Everyone can find attitudes that they have that are not healthy or pleasing to God. Provide the student here with encouragement and your own life experience changing your attitudes.

13. **Forgiveness:** Who is someone that you have refused to forgive for something they did?

There is not a right answer, and the student may not want to provide a name or details. That is perfectly okay. If we are honest, most of us can think of someone that harmed us that we haven’t fully forgiven.

14. **Serving:** This week I am going to serve others by doing the following:

The student should provide a concrete example of how they will intentionally serve others in the coming week.

15. **Gratefulness:** Three things I am grateful to God for today are:

Being grateful is an important part of our spiritual health. The student should be able to identify three things for which they are grateful.

16. **Fruit of the Spirit:** Read Galatians 5:22-23. From the list of fruit of the Spirit in this verse, this week I am asking God for more of which three? (Pray and ask for more of this fruit.)

The student should list at least three from Paul's list in Galatians 5 that they are making a commitment to pray about.

17. **The Word of God:** Write out a verse or verses from the Bible that, this week, God has used to remind you of something He wants you to do:

The student can choose any verse that the reminds them of something God wants them to do or an area of their life that needs attention.

18. **Worship:** This week I spent time worshipping God through _____
(attending a worship service; spending quiet time listening to worship music; writing a poem, song, or letter to God acknowledging His goodness; other). Explain your time of worship:

The student can describe what they did as part of their worship that week. Use their answer as an opportunity to affirm the importance of worship.

19. **Pruning:** Pray the prayer that David prayed in Psalm 139:23-24:

*"Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting."*

What came to mind as a sin you may have avoided as you prayed this prayer?

The student's answer may provide insight into their current spiritual health or struggle.

20. **Love:** Who is someone in your life you have not loved well recently? What will you do this week to love them the way God loves you?

The student's answer should reflect a specific act of love that they are committing to doing for someone.

My Notes

LESSON 3: The Things We Do

1. Give an example of how you have seen your faith in God grow over time (more trust in God, more faith that God loves you and has forgiven you, more love for others, faith that God desires a good future for you, other). Explain:

Hopefully, your student is experiencing growth in their faith. Affirm the student's answer and provide encouragement for their growth. If they write that they are not growing in their faith, look at their explanation and provide some ways that they may begin experiencing growth.

2. In the Parable of the Sower,* Jesus explained that the seed planted among the thorns did not bear fruit. The thorns, Jesus taught, are the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth. What are some of the worries in your own life that make it difficult for your faith to grow?

There is much that can potentially be worrisome for your student, especially living in the prison environment. Provide the student feedback and possibly a lesson you learned in your own life that helped you trust in God and worry less.

3. When you first asked Jesus into your heart and came to faith, what were some of the behaviors that changed quickly in your life?

If your student has embraced faith in Jesus, they should be able to point to some behaviors that changed quickly at conversion. It is okay if your student says they have not yet come to faith. If they have not yet become a Christian, encourage and pray for them. God has perfect timing. There is no need to pressure them.

4. What are some behaviors (or sins) that have been harder to see changes in?

Every one of us struggles still with some sin in their life. Use the student's answer to encourage them, provide some Bible verses that may be helpful, or spiritual advice to experience freedom.

5. What behaviors in your life would the people you live with be able to see that demonstrate that you have faith in God?

James wrote that his faith could be seen in the way he lived his life. Encourage the student as they identify areas of their life that demonstrate growth.

6. Think about the words you speak. Do they point to “good things” or things that might be red flags of some negative thoughts and attitudes? Explain:

The words that come out of our mouths indicate the things in our hearts. The student here is asked to reflect on their language and what the things they say reflect about their spiritual life.

7. Take a few minutes now to be quiet and ask God to show you other things in your life that might be red flags that something needs your attention. List some of the red flags that you identified here.

The student should be able to identify some things in their reflection time that could indicate something in their life that needs to be attended to and prayed about. The student here is giving you another glimpse of their spiritual life so you can better know them.

8. Have you ever tried to keep a set time or habit for spending time with God? Were you unsuccessful or successful in your efforts? Explain:

It isn't easy to develop new, consistent, healthy spiritual practices. Offer the student advice from your own life about developing healthy spiritual habits.

9. Think of a new, healthy spiritual habit that you want to create in your life. What is the new habit and how do you plan on creating that habit? (For example: I want to get up at 5AM each morning to spend 10 minutes with God in prayer to start my day. I will start going to sleep earlier, set my alarm for 5AM, put a check mark on a calendar each day that I do this behavior, and will commit to doing this for 1 to 2 weeks.)

Habit: _____

What will I do to make myself do this even when I may not feel like it?

The student should be specific about the new spiritual habit they are going to try to develop and how they will be consistent even when they don't feel like it.

10. Think of a situation that you recently had that led to negative consequences. What was the **environment** you were in? (For example: at work Thursday with someone that is not easy to like.)

The student is being asked to identify a specific situation they encountered. Provide the student with feedback on their answer.

11. What **thoughts** entered your thinking about that person?

This may not be an easy question for some students but will help them think about how they could have responded differently.

12. What were the negative **attitudes** that resulted from your thoughts about this person (grumpy, hurt, angry, embarrassed, revengeful)?

Our thoughts feed the attitudes that we hold on to. Provide the student with feedback on their answer.

13. What **actions** resulting from your thinking and attitudes did you take against that person or someone else that happened to cross your path (swearing, short temper, getting depressed, negative confrontation)?

The student is being asked how having a bad attitude can impact their emotions, thinking, and behavior. The question is specific to the example the student offered in questions 11 and 12.

14. Read Matthew 5:27-28 again, slowly, and think about the words of Jesus. Is this teaching too difficult? Does it make sense to you? Is it realistic? Is repentance in your thought life, attitudes, and actions something to which you are committed? Write out your thoughts here about these two verses:

This exercise is designed to help the student be self-reflective and more aware of how sin begins in our hearts long before we act out. This is not an easy concept, but it is important for the student to understand the importance of developing spiritual practices to cultivate a good heart. Provide feedback and encouragement to the student.

LESSON 4: Our Friends, Family, and Associates

1. Describe your social setting at the facility where you currently reside. Think specifically about the challenges associated with the people you live around and have to interact with.

The social setting the student lives in at their facility includes the people and culture of the environment. The question asks the student to identify challenges that are inherent in the environment they live in at their facility. Possible answers include, but are not limited to, some of the following examples:

- **Hectic and noisy**
- **Dangerous culture that requires hyper vigilance**
- **Facility staff that do not treat us with respect**
- **Isolated from the people I most care about**
- **People that are trying to take advantage of others or looking for weaknesses to exploit**
- **Lack of freedom to make choices**

2. Think of some things in your life that might be important to you but have the potential to get in the way of following Jesus. List some of those here (money, a girlfriend or boyfriend, your physical appearance, etc.):

The student should be able to identify things in their life that distract them from their relationship with God. Give the student feedback and advice on making their spiritual life their number one priority.

3. Have your friends and family been supportive of the changes you are making in your life? Have they tried to discourage you from making positive changes? Explain:

Our family and friends may not support our commitments to our Christian faith and the positive changes we are trying to make. When they are not supportive, it can endanger our walks with Christ. Provide the student with ways they can set boundaries with those friends and family members that are not supportive.

Adders, Subtractors, Multipliers, and Dividers

4. **Person 1: The Adder** – The attitudes, wisdom, and influence of this person made me a better person. Describe how they influenced you positively and made you a better person:

The student should identify someone in their life that adds a positive influence on their personal or spiritual health. Provide the student with affirmation or feedback.

5. **Person 2: The Subtractor** – The attitudes, thinking, or behavior of this person had a negative influence on me. Describe how they influenced you negatively or led you to unhealthy thinking or behavior:

The student should identify someone in their life who is or has been a negative influence on their personal or spiritual health. Provide the student with affirmation or feedback.

6. **Person 3: The Multiplier** – This person was a major influence on the course of my life and changed how I see the world or myself. (This could be an historical person you have read about who influenced you.) This person helped me change my life in the following ways:

The student may or may not have, or had, people in their lives that provide wisdom and encouragement to help them realize the potential God has for them. If they can't identify someone, encourage them to look at people in the Bible that they want to emulate.

7. **Person 4: The Divider** – I now see how this person influenced my life in a way that led to addictive, criminal, or destructive behavior. This is a person I know I need to cut out of my life because:

Dividers are people that bring chaos and destruction to our lives. The dividers are people that we need to cut out of our lives. Having them in our lives jeopardizes our walks with God and can lead to coming back to prison after being released. Provide the student with feedback.

8. Describe a time when someone close to you distracted you from your walk with God:

This may seem like a redundant question in light of the previous questions but challenges the student to look for people in their life that may not be an existential threat to their growth but provide enough distraction to make them lose their focus.

9. What type of people are the most difficult for you to work with? Why?

Provide the student with lessons you have learned from your own life that helped you deal with difficult coworkers.

10. Think about the most positive experience you have had working with a boss or supervisor. What made that experience positive? What did you do and what did they do that made it a positive relationship?

This question challenges the student to think about the type of people they want to work with or for. Provide encouragement and feedback.

11. Thinking back to all you learned in this course, list 5 habits that you are developing in your life to help you in your thinking, attitudes, and behaviors:

This question allows the student to summarize their learning in this course. Provide feedback and encouragement.

My Notes

My Notes

My Notes

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