

WHAT IS A MENTOR?



CROSSROADS
PRISON MINISTRIES

ANSWER KEY

Cover artwork by Jerry R., Crossroads student



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PRISON MINISTRIES

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INTRODUCTION

What Is a Mentor? is the final course in the first tier of the Crossroads program. It is designed to help students prepare for their experience with a one-on-one mentor. Lesson 1 examines biblical examples of mentoring relationships. Lesson 2 describes how Jesus mentored His disciples. Lesson 3 challenges students to begin setting realistic expectations for their one-on-one mentoring experience.

As you review lessons from this course, look for ways to affirm and encourage each student as he or she prepares to move to the second tier of courses, the Growth Program. Find opportunities to offer advice on how to get the most from a one-on-one mentoring relationship. We also encourage you to share your own experiences of being mentored in your Christian walk.

STUDY TOOLS

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



CONVERSATION BOXES: We have included some spaces throughout the print versions of lessons that we call **conversation boxes**. Students can share questions or thoughts about the lesson or life. Students completing digital lessons can use the comment box at the end of the lesson for the same purpose. You may respond in any open space.



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.

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.

Apostle — Someone who is sent to share with others the teachings they have learned.

Cloak — A robe or fur shawl. In biblical times, it represented authority, such as the authority of a king. Elijah's robe represented the spiritual authority of his ministry as a prophet of God.

Commitment — An agreement or promise to do something.

Confidentiality — The practice of keeping personal information private or secret.

Criticize — To point out someone's faults or need for improvement.

Disciple — Someone who learns from a teacher.

Doctrine — A set of beliefs taught by a religion.

Exodus — The second book of the Bible. The word "exodus" means an exit or act of leaving. The book of Exodus tells the story of the Israelites leaving Egypt to go to the place that God was preparing for them to live.

Fruits of the Spirit — Qualities displayed in the lives of Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Humble — To take on a spirit or manner that is the opposite of prideful or boastful.

Humility — The lack of any feelings of being better than others.

Influence — An effect or impact on the character or behavior of someone or something (noun); to have an effect or impact on the character or behavior of someone or something (verb).

Inheritance — Something that is passed down from one generation to the next.

Israelite — A person from one of the twelve tribes of people in the family of Jacob (also called Israel).

Lineage — A person's family line, including their grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren, etc.

Mature — Advanced or well developed. This can relate to physical growth, personal growth, spiritual growth, etc.

Maturity — The quality or state of being mature.

Mentee — Someone who is mentored by another person.

Mentor — A trusted counselor or guide (noun); to counsel or guide another person (verb).

Peer mentor — Someone equal in position, usually a friend, who helps provide guidance and feedback to a mentee.

Pharaoh — A ruler of ancient Egypt, similar to a king or queen.

Professional mentor — Someone with a well-established career who provides career advice and guidance to a mentee.

Resurrected — Brought back to life after death.

Salvation — The act of saving someone from harm. The salvation we are offered through Jesus saves us from sin and death.

Spiritual friendship — A friendship between two people who share the same beliefs and encourage each other in their faith journeys.

Spiritual mentor — Someone with mature faith who recognizes where a mentee needs to grow and guides the mentee along his or her faith journey.

LESSON 1: Mentoring in the Bible

Lesson Focus:

Great men and women in the Bible had mentors who helped them become wise leaders.

The people in our lives help to shape us. We can all identify people in our lives who have had a negative or positive influence* on us. Some may have encouraged us to accomplish something we didn't think we could do. Others may have criticized* us or discouraged us from doing something we really wanted to do.

1. What person in your life has had the most positive influence on you? How have you been influenced by this person?

This question is intended to help the student make a mental connection to previous positive influences as they prepare to begin a one-on-one mentoring relationship. Consider sharing how you have been positively influenced by a friend, family member, or spiritual mentor.

There are many men and women in the Bible who accomplished great things. You might identify with or be inspired by a particular hero in the Bible. None of the accomplishments of these Bible heroes were done without the power of God. These Bible heroes were great because they believed in God and were willing to obey God in doing the things He asked them to do.

2. In the Crossroads lessons you have studied so far, you have read about many people in the Bible. Who is one man or woman in the Bible that inspires you? Why do you look up to this person?

Whichever biblical figure a student has chosen, the point of this question is for the student to articulate what it is about that person that inspires them. In response, consider sharing the biblical figure that most inspires you.

Later in this course, you will learn more about a biblical model for being in a mentoring relationship. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a mentor as "a trusted counselor or guide." Mentors are people we look up to and count on for good advice.

3. Who do you trust to give you advice and guidance? Why do you trust this person?

This question challenges the student to ponder the issue of trust as they prepare for one-on-one mentoring. Hopefully, they will say that the person they trust has traits like wisdom and honesty. This will set some expectations for their upcoming one-on-one mentoring relationship.

Jethro and Moses

One of the most important prophets in the Bible was Moses. Moses was chosen by God to lead His people to freedom from slavery in Egypt. God used Moses to speak to and establish His law with His people. Moses wrote the majority of the first five books of the Bible.

In the second chapter of Exodus,* we learn that, as a baby, Moses was adopted and raised in the household of the Pharaoh* by Pharaoh's own daughter. Raised as royalty, Moses received an excellent education and a life filled with riches, power, and advantage. However, as a young man, Moses ran away from Egypt to Midian after he killed an Egyptian who was attacking a fellow Israelite.*

In Midian, Moses began to learn what it meant to serve God under the mentorship of a man named Jethro. Jethro was not an Israelite, and he did not worship God like Moses did. He served as a priest of one of the other existing religions in Midian. Jethro became Moses's father-in-law when Moses married his daughter, Zipporah. He also became an important mentor to Moses.

God used Jethro to help Moses become the man who would eventually lead God's people from slavery. Jethro's wisdom and experience strongly influenced Moses's growth as a leader.

Just as Jethro and Moses had different beliefs and worshiped different gods, you may have had mentors in your life who were not Christians. Please remember that we can learn important life lessons from wise people who may not share our beliefs.

Moses spent forty years working for his father-in-law before God called Moses into service. Mentoring is a long-term commitment.* A counselor or therapist may meet with someone for a short period of time to address a specific struggle, but a mentor has the advantage of guiding someone over a longer period of time. Because they have known the person they are mentoring longer, they will be able to help the person set and keep boundaries. A mentor is less concerned with solving immediate problems and more concerned about a person's spiritual and personal growth over time. Of course, there may be times when a mentor helps a person work through immediate problems or questions, but that is just a small part of mentoring.

Read **Exodus 2:21–3:2**.

4. Moses spent forty years being mentored by Jethro before being called by God. Who has known you for a long time?

In thinking of a person who knows them well and reminiscing on their relationship, students will hopefully have considered the impact that a long-term relationship can have.

5. What advantages might there be to receiving advice from someone who has known you for a long time?

The student should articulate how someone who has known them for a long period of time can view the student's life from a unique perspective. They have seen the student at their best and worst, and they know the most effective ways to communicate with them.

Not only was Jethro committed to mentoring Moses, but Moses was also committed to being mentored by Jethro. It takes humility* to submit to someone else's guidance.

Read **Exodus 18:7**.

6. What does this verse tell you about Moses's relationship with Jethro?

The verse says that Moses bowed down and kissed Jethro. This indicates Moses's respect for Jethro and his humility and willingness to submit to Jethro as a father figure and a wise elder. The student is challenged to examine what it means to be willing to accept input from a mentor.

Read **Exodus 18:13–25**.

7. What advice did Jethro give to Moses in verses 17–23?

Jethro understood that Moses needed the help of others to do everything God had called him to do. He advised Moses to identify others who could carry some of the responsibility by serving as judges for the people. He also urged Moses to be faithful in teaching the people about God and representing the people to God. This demonstrated Jethro's wisdom and his understanding of Moses's abilities as his mentor.

8. How did Moses respond to Jethro's advice?

Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he told him to do. The student should see this as an example of a mentee taking the thoughtful advice of his mentor.

Naomi and Ruth

Another important person in the Old Testament was a woman named Ruth. Ruth lived during the time in Israel's history known as the period of the judges. Before Israel had its first king, Saul, they were led by people called judges.

Ruth was not an Israelite. She was from the country of Moab. Ruth was mentored by her mother-in-law, Naomi, who was an Israelite. It is important to note that Ruth and Naomi were from different countries and cultural backgrounds. We should be open to learning from people who are different from us.

As a direct result of Naomi's mentoring, Ruth was used by God to become the great-grandmother of King David. The lineage* of King David would eventually include Jesus. God used Naomi to change the course of Ruth's life and the course of history.

9. Matthew 1:1–17 lists the lineage of Jesus. What is the name of Ruth’s son, the grandfather of King David (verse 5)?

Ruth’s son was Obed. This question is designed to help students see how God used Ruth’s faithfulness to bring about the kingship of David and the birth of Jesus.

Naomi was a spiritual mentor to Ruth. Ruth saw Naomi’s faith in God, and she refused to leave Naomi even though Naomi gave her permission to leave. Ruth decided to follow Naomi’s God, saying, “Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God” (Ruth 1:16b). Our spiritual mentors show us how to follow and serve God.

10. Throughout your life, who has influenced your spiritual journey by their faith in God?

Some students may identify a family member, friend, or pastor; some may write the name of someone well-known whom they do not know personally. Other students may struggle to identify someone, especially if they are new to the faith and did not grow up in a Christian home.

11. Who are some of the spiritual mentors in your life now? How are they helping you?

Students should be starting to make connections with other believers who provide encouragement and spiritual support, whether friends, chaplains, family members, or pastors. The student should identify how these people help them (e.g., pray for them, hold them accountable, give wise advice). If a student was unable to identify a spiritual mentor, assure them that their one-on-one Crossroads mentor will fill this role once they have been paired together in the Growth Program.

Elijah and Elisha

Elijah was an important prophet in the history of Israel. He lived almost nine hundred years before Jesus was born. Matthew 17:1–5 tells us about Elijah’s importance in Israel’s history. Jesus took His closest disciples—Peter, James, and John—to a high place on a mountain. Although Elijah had gone to heaven hundreds of years earlier, he appeared to Jesus and the disciples.

Read **Matthew 17:1–5**.

12. Who else appeared on the mountain with Elijah?

Moses also appeared on the mountain.

Elijah was the teacher and mentor of another great prophet, Elisha. When Elijah went to heaven, Elisha took over the ministry of Elijah. Elijah had prepared him for that responsibility.

Read **1 Kings 19:19–21**.

13. What was Elisha doing when Elijah found him?

Elisha was plowing a field with twelve yoke of oxen.

14. What did Elisha do to prepare to follow Elijah (verse 21)?

Elisha slaughtered his oxen, burned the plowing equipment to use as heat to cook the meat, shared the food with the people, and followed Elijah. He left his old life behind to serve God.

When Elijah threw his cloak* over Elisha, it was a sign that God had chosen Elisha to continue Elijah's ministry.

Read **2 Kings 2:9**.

15. What did Elisha ask Elijah for before Elijah was taken up to heaven?

Elisha asked for a "double portion of [his] spirit."

Although Elijah said that Elisha had asked for something difficult, he granted Elisha's request. The double portion was the portion of an inheritance* that was given to the firstborn son. Elisha's request meant that he was willing to take on Elijah's responsibilities and more. Good mentors want to see their students do even greater things than they have done. Good mentors are not jealous when God blesses their students with spiritual blessings and gifts.

16. Before Elisha made his request of Elijah, what was his relationship to Elijah? (See 1 Kings 19:21.)

Elisha was Elijah's servant.

17. What are some ways you can humble yourself in your future relationship with your one-on-one mentor?

Students may answer that they will carefully consider the spiritual advice they receive from their mentor. They may answer that they will treat their mentor with respect. They may answer that they will allow their mentor to keep them accountable. If a student struggled to answer this question, offer a few ideas to consider.

Barnabas and Mark

In the book of Acts, we read about a man named Mark (sometimes called John Mark). Mark's mother, Mary, was a believer who held prayer meetings at her house, and God's Spirit led the apostle Peter to visit one of these meetings. This was likely Mark's first introduction to the apostles. Acts 12:25 tells us that Mark joined their ministry, leaving Jerusalem with two other apostles.

Read **Acts 12:25**.

18. With whom did Mark leave Jerusalem?

Mark left with Barnabas and Saul (Paul).

Mark traveled with these two apostles as their companion in ministry. Mark is believed to be the author of the Gospel of Mark in the New Testament. But he needed a lot of mentoring in the early years of his ministry.

Read **Acts 15:36–39**.

19. What did Paul think about taking Mark along to visit the churches they had started? Why did Paul think this way?

Paul did not think it was wise to take Mark with them because he had abandoned them previously. Paul did not think Mark could be trusted.

20. As a mentor to Mark, what did Barnabas do to help restore Mark in the ministry?

Barnabas gave Mark another chance to be part of his ministry team. He believed in Mark and continued to mentor him despite Mark's previous failure.

Mentors sometimes believe in us when others do not. Mentors will often recognize gifts or abilities in us that we have not seen in ourselves. Barnabas was known as an encourager. As Mark's mentor, he believed that Mark had grown and learned from his mistakes. He was willing to defend Mark to Paul. He was willing to work with Mark again in ministry when Paul was not willing to. As it turned out, Barnabas was right to believe in Mark.

Read **2 Timothy 4:9–11**.

21. Near the end of Paul's life, what did Paul say to Timothy about Mark?

Paul told Timothy to bring Mark with him to see Paul because Mark was helpful to Paul in his ministry. Given a second chance, Mark was able to prove his value to the Kingdom.

Although Mark needed a lot of mentoring at first, he ended up becoming very valuable to the ministry of the Gospel, and he became a mentor to others. As you grow in Christ, you will discover opportunities to mentor others too. You may already be doing so.

22. Who believed in you when no one else did?

Affirm the student's response. If a student writes that no one has ever believed in them, remind them God will always believe in them and will never give up on them. Consider sharing a personal experience or a Scripture passage, such as Romans 8:38–39.

23. Who might benefit from receiving guidance or mentoring from you?

**Encourage the student to follow through and offer to guide or mentor that person.
Challenge them to look for small things they can do to be a positive spiritual influence on others around them.**

Action Step

Write down some of your hopes and expectations for your relationship with your one-on-one mentor when you begin the Growth Program.

LESSON 2: Jesus: The Perfect Mentor

Lesson Focus:

Jesus was a mentor to the apostles, and we can look to Him as our mentor, too.

As the Son of God, the Savior of the World, and someone who never sinned, Jesus was the perfect model for what a mentor should be. Jesus believed in mentoring. He spent three years teaching and encouraging His disciples,* showing them how to follow God. Through Jesus' mentoring, God prepared twelve of the disciples, also called the apostles,* to spread the Gospel and turn the world upside down.

There are different types of mentors—for example, *spiritual mentors*,* *professional mentors*,* and *peer mentors*.* The Crossroads mentor that you will soon be paired with will be a spiritual mentor. Spiritual mentoring is different from other types of mentoring because the focus is the spiritual growth of the mentee.*

Jesus was a spiritual mentor. In this lesson, you will learn how Jesus mentored His disciples. We believe this will prepare you for your upcoming one-on-one mentoring relationship in the Growth Program.

Jesus Chose the Twelve

Jesus chose the men that He mentored; they did not choose Him. On the surface, they did not seem to be the best choices. Most of them were uneducated. Some were ordinary fishermen. Some were disliked by many people. They were not wealthy or important in their communities. But Jesus saw something else in them and chose them on purpose.

We may think that, like the apostles, we are not qualified to be followers of Jesus or that He would not want to use us to share His Gospel. However, like the apostles, Jesus saw something in us and chose us to receive the gift of faith in Him.

Read **1 Samuel 16:7**.

1. What is the difference between the way the world sees a person and the way God sees a person?

People look at the outward appearance. God looks at the heart.

2. Why do you think some people have a hard time believing that God wants to have a relationship with them?

Students may answer this question from personal experience. They might say that

people think they are not worthy to have a relationship with God because they have hurt others, committed crimes, failed to follow God, etc. Remind and encourage students that no sin is too great to exclude a person from a relationship with God.

You will not choose your Crossroads mentor. Your mentor will be assigned to you by Crossroads. Trust that God knows exactly what you need in a mentor. The staff at Crossroads prays that each mentor-student match will be guided by the Holy Spirit.

It is possible that you will not have much in common with your mentor. Your mentor might not have spent any time in jail or prison, and their family, background, and life experiences might be very different from yours. But none of that is needed for a good mentoring relationship. Jesus never sinned, yet He mentored twelve men who were sinners.

Read **Hebrews 4:15**.

3. Why can Jesus, as the perfect high priest without sin, understand our weaknesses?

Hebrews 4:15 says that our high priest, Jesus, experienced temptations just like we do (although, of course, He never succumbed to these temptations). Because of this, Jesus can empathize with us.

4. What concerns do you have about being paired with a mentor who might be very different from you?

Students may have concerns that their mentor will judge them, will not be able to understand their history and experiences, or will be very different from them in culture, faith background, or age. Encourage students to leave their worries with God and trust that He will work through any potential differences the student and mentor may have.

Jesus Prayed for His Disciples

Jesus loved and cared for His disciples. Before He was arrested, Jesus spent time in deep prayer for them. One of the main responsibilities of a spiritual mentor is praying for their mentee. Just as Jesus was committed to praying for His disciples, your mentor will be committed to praying for you.

Read **John 17:6–17**.

5. What did Jesus tell God that He had done for His disciples (verse 6)?

Jesus had revealed God, His Father, to them.

6. What did Jesus ask the Father to do for His disciples (verse 11)?

He asked God to protect them by the power of His name.

7. What specific prayer of protection did Jesus pray for His disciples (verse 15)?

He prayed that God would protect them from the evil one, Satan.

8. Jesus asked the Father to sanctify the disciples (or make them holy) by the truth. According to verse 17, what is the truth?

God's word is truth.

Jesus' Life and Example

Spiritual mentors do much of their mentoring by living in a way that provides a positive example to their mentees. Jesus' disciples lived and traveled with Him for three years. Jesus did not always tell the disciples what to think or do. He wanted them to learn by watching Him. One day, Jesus asked His disciples what other people were saying about Him.

Read **Matthew 16:13–20**.

9. Who did some people think Jesus was (verse 14)?

Some said Jesus was John the Baptist. Some said He was Elijah. Some said He was Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

10. What did Simon Peter say about Jesus (verse 16)?

He said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

11. Why did Jesus say that Simon Peter was blessed (verse 17)?

Jesus said that he was blessed because God Himself had revealed to him the truth about Jesus.

12. After their discussion, what did Jesus tell the disciples not to do (verse 20)?

Jesus ordered them not to tell people that He was the Messiah.

It might seem strange that Jesus didn't just tell the disciples that He was the one God had promised to send to save the world from sin. Your mentor may not always answer every question you ask, either. Sometimes, instead of giving you an answer or advice, they will encourage you to read certain parts of the Bible so you can see for yourself what God has said.

You will learn a lot from your mentor as they share their faith journey with you. Pay careful attention to everything your mentor tells you about their walk with God and find ways to follow their example. The mentor you will be paired with is committed to living out their faith by serving others. Your mentor will be giving a lot of their time to review your lessons, write letters to you, and pray for you. They will be committing to a long-term mentoring relationship with you.

Jesus Spoke the Truth

Friends may not always be completely honest with us. They may fear that telling the truth might hurt the friendship, so they will tell you what they think you want to hear instead. However, your spiritual mentor will commit to being honest with you. At times, your mentor may need to say difficult things.

Look at this advice from the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament:

Being warned openly is better than being loved in secret. Wounds from a friend can be trusted. But an enemy kisses you many times. (Proverbs 27:5–6)

This proverb means that it is better to have someone warn us when we sin than it is for someone to simply tell us what we want to hear.

At times, Jesus had strong words for the disciples. Because He loved them, He understood that they needed to hear the truth and turn from their sins. Simon Peter, also called Peter, was one of Jesus' closest disciples. When Jesus went back to heaven, He gave Peter the responsibility of looking after the other disciples.

In Matthew 16:17, Jesus said Peter was blessed. But later in that chapter, we see that Jesus spoke strong words to Peter.

Read **Matthew 16:21–23**.

13. When Peter disagreed with Jesus' statement to the disciples, what did Jesus say to him (verse 23)?

Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan!"

14. If you were Peter, how might you have felt to hear those words from Jesus?

The student may say they would have felt hurt, shocked, angry, confused, etc.

15. Why did Jesus say those words to Peter?

Jesus said those words because Peter was expressing his own desires, not the will of God.

16. Do you think Jesus' response was too strong? Why or why not?

There is no right or wrong answer. Some students may say that Jesus' harshness was necessary to correct Peter. Others may feel that Jesus could have said something less harsh to correct Peter.

How might you respond if your mentor tells you something difficult? What if your mentor says that you need to take responsibility for your past actions or for your family? What if your mentor

tells you that something you believe is not biblically correct? A wise person is willing to look at what others see in them without getting angry or shutting them out. Your mentor is human and may not always be correct, but your willingness to consider their words is a sign of maturity.*

We can find and learn from many examples of Jesus' mentorship in the Bible. As you continue to read the Gospels in your studies, you will learn more about Jesus' mentoring style. Your Crossroads mentor will use what they have learned about Jesus to provide godly spiritual mentoring to you.

The Disciples Learned by Doing

Most of us learn best by *doing*. We can read directions or hear instructions from someone else, but until we try it ourselves, we do not really know if we can do it.

One way Jesus taught the disciples was by sending them out on their own to do the work of the ministry. The disciples needed to see for themselves that God was with them and would answer their prayers.

Your Crossroads mentor may encourage you to do things like share your faith, trust God with your finances, or pray for someone who has harmed you. Your mentor knows that exercising your faith will help you grow spiritually.

Luke 9 tells us that Jesus gave the twelve disciples the authority to heal, cast out demons, and preach about the coming of the Kingdom of God. But they were not the only ones who received that authority from Jesus. Jesus also sent out seventy-two others to preach in His name.

Read **Luke 10:1–17**.

17. Jesus sent out the seventy-two in small groups. How many were in each group?
Why do you think He did this?

There were two in each group. Answers will vary, but we hope students will infer that Jesus wanted His disciples to have the support of another believer. Jesus may have been setting a ministry pattern for them to follow by not letting them go alone. Another possible answer might be that Jesus wanted them to have someone with them to witness and verify the miracles they saw.

18. Jesus told the seventy-two not to take a purse, bag, or sandals with them (verse 4). What do you think Jesus was trying to teach them through this?

Jesus was teaching them that they could and should depend on God to supply their needs. As part of His mentoring process, He was providing an opportunity for them to learn to trust God.

19. What does verse 9 say that Jesus told the seventy-two to do?

He told them to heal the sick and proclaim that the Kingdom of God was near.

20. What did the seventy-two say to Jesus when they returned from their ministry trips?

They joyfully reported that even the demons submitted to them in Jesus' name.

21. How would you feel if you prayed for someone who was sick and Jesus healed them?

Responses will vary. Students may report that they have experienced praying for someone who was later healed. Some might say that they would be amazed or grateful to God.

Jesus Trusted the Disciples to Continue His Ministry

Like Jesus, a mentor understands that the purpose of their mentoring is to help others grow in their ministry. Your mentor will rejoice when you have opportunities to serve God. Your mentor will be happy to see you do many things in service of God's Kingdom—maybe even more than they have done themselves.

Read **John 14:12–14**.

22. What did Jesus say about people who believe in Him (verse 12)?

Jesus told them they would do the same works Jesus had done and even greater things.

23. Jesus told His disciples that they could ask for anything in His name and He would do it. What do you think that means for those who follow Jesus today?

As Christians today, we can and should go to God in prayer with our requests. When we pray according to God's will, He does what we ask.

Following Jesus does not mean that everything in our lives will go smoothly. But it means that we can have a personal relationship with God. It means that God will give us His Spirit to guide us as we learn how to follow Him. It means that we can experience peace and joy even when we are going through difficult times.

Jesus mentored His disciples to teach them how to live in His Kingdom. When we surrender our lives to God, allowing ourselves to be taught by God's Word and wise people like mentors, we will experience the full life that He has promised.

You only have one more lesson to complete until we match you with your Crossroads mentor! Ask God to prepare your heart for this relationship.

Action Step

Your Crossroads mentor will be an important spiritual mentor in your life, but it is helpful to have additional spiritual mentoring from another trusted, mature* Christian. This week, reach out to the pastor of a church in the area you will live after your release or make an appointment with a Christian chaplain at your facility. Share your spiritual journey with them. Ask them for prayer or tips for developing healthy spiritual habits. If you are not able to connect with a pastor or a chaplain, see if you can find another Christian at your facility whose faith you admire. Talk to them about the ways you see Jesus working in your life.

LESSON 3: Crossroads One-on-One Mentoring

Lesson Focus:

As you get to know your mentor, always remember to keep Christ at the center of your mentoring relationship.

You have reached the final lesson in the first tier of the Crossroads program! Galatians 5:22–23 lists the fruits of the Spirit,* and one of those fruits is faithfulness. Faithfulness means taking care of your responsibilities and commitments, even when you are busy, tired, discouraged, or going through a difficult time. Your hard work throughout your time as a Crossroads student shows your faithfulness and your desire to learn more about God and follow Him. You have spent many hours studying God’s Word and learning how it applies to your life. God promises that His Word will accomplish exactly what He wants it to. As He said to the prophet Isaiah, “The words I speak are like that. They will not return to me without producing results. They will accomplish what I want them to. They will do exactly what I sent them to do” (Isaiah 55:11).

1. What did you find the most difficult about completing the first tier of Crossroads courses?

This is an opportunity for students to reflect on their experience in the first tier of the program. Students may have feedback about the lesson difficulty, the mail delivery and processing, or personal spiritual challenges. Congratulate them on their perseverance and accomplishments.

2. What have you enjoyed most about your experience so far as a Crossroads student?

Affirm the student’s response and encourage them to remain faithful in their studies as they look forward to the Growth Program (Tier 2).

In your courses so far, you have received letters of guidance and encouragement from many Crossroads mentors. We hope that those letters have been a blessing to you. In the Growth Program, you will be paired with a personal mentor who will review all your lessons. You will be able to write letters back and forth with your mentor. You and your mentor will get to know each other over time, and you will develop a spiritual friendship.* At Crossroads, we believe that Christ-centered relationships change everything. God will work through this mentoring relationship to help you both grow in your faith.

About Your Mentor

After you have finished this lesson and sent it to Crossroads, you will have completed Tier 1. Crossroads will mail you a Tier 2 Growth Program enrollment form. When we have received your completed form, we will match you with your one-on-one mentor. Although the match is

selected by our computer system, God knows what you need in a mentor, and the Crossroads staff prays that He will bless each student-mentor match.

In many cases, a student and mentor will study together and correspond for years. As you wait for your match, pray for God to bless this upcoming relationship. Pray that your mentor will challenge you, encourage you, pray for you, and help you grow in your faith. Pray that you will have an open heart to receive the advice, encouragement, and correction that your mentor may offer.

3. What is one quality or trait that you hope your one-on-one mentor will have?

As the student prepares to be paired with a one-on-one mentor, they should begin thinking about their expectations for the mentor. In Lessons 1 and 2, the student has been given examples of qualities demonstrated through mentoring relationships in the Bible. Provide the student feedback on their expectations, whether realistic or not, and recommend how they might best communicate their expectations respectfully to their one-on-one mentor.

There are some things we want you to know about your mentor. Every Crossroads mentor goes through an application and training process. Every mentor is part of a community of Christian believers. Every mentor is required to agree with Crossroads' statement of faith:

- The Bible is God's Word; we can rely on it to guide us.
 - There is one true God, who is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior.
 - The Holy Spirit lives in us, enabling us to follow Christ.
 - Every person is made in God's image, but because of sin, every person needs salvation.*
 - We are saved by grace, through faith in Christ, not by anything we can do.
 - The dead will be resurrected.*
 - We are called to be unified in Christ with all believers.
 - We are called to work with one another to share the message of the Gospel.
4. Why do you think it is important for all Crossroads mentors to agree with our statement of faith?

It is important for each student to know that their one-on-one mentor is an active, faithful Christian who has a biblical foundation for their faith and that the mentor is accountable to Crossroads for representing the beliefs listed in the statement of faith.

During your time as a student so far, you have probably realized that mentors are required to follow certain guidelines that Crossroads has established. These guidelines help us maintain trust with prisons and jails so they will continue allowing us to send lessons into their facilities. Guidelines for mentors include the following:

- Do not send any materials not provided by Crossroads to your students.
- Use only your first name when communicating with students and do not share your personal address.

- If a student asks for a parole recommendation letter, contact the Crossroads office about this request.
- Do not contact family, friends, or others on behalf of your student.
- Direct any special requests from your student to Crossroads.
- Do not contact the correctional facility where your student is located for any reason.
- Crossroads does not send photos of students to mentors since mentors are not allowed to send photos to students.
- No electronic communication is allowed.

If a mentor does not follow Crossroads' guidelines, they will not be allowed to continue serving as a mentor. It is important for you to be aware of the guidelines your mentor is required to follow. Please help your mentor by not asking them to do things they cannot do.

The Impact of a Mentor

Your Crossroads mentor will likely have a big influence on your spiritual growth. One of the staff members at Crossroads, who was a Crossroads student himself during his incarceration years ago, wrote the following about his experience with his one-on-one mentor:

"As I look back on my life, I am reminded of different mentors who came alongside me to guide, challenge, and encourage me. I struggled with trusting others and sharing my thoughts and feelings. Yet these men and women didn't let those things get in the way. They just continued to show me love and remind me who I really was."

"My mentor was one of those people. Throughout our journey together, my mentor built trust by faithfully writing me when others wouldn't, guiding me through the Crossroads lessons, and encouraging me through the letters they wrote. They challenged me as we studied together, and over time, the Bible came alive to me. My mentor helped me understand Scripture and strengthen my relationship with Jesus. They often reminded me that my past needed to stay in the past because I had been set free through Jesus Christ."

The Power of a Letter

Writing letters is something most people don't do anymore. Learning to write a good letter takes time and effort.

Soraya Diase Coffelt, an author, lawyer, and former judge, wrote the following about the power of letters: "Letter writing can be seen as a gift because someone has taken his/her time to write and think and express love."

Until about one hundred years ago, writing letters was the only way to communicate with friends and family who lived far away. There were no phone calls, texts, emails, or social media messages. Because letters were so important, letter writing was a skill that people worked hard to learn. It was important to write clearly and use the right words so the person receiving the letter knew exactly what the writer wanted them to know.

If you have sent emails or texts, you might recognize these abbreviations: LOL, JK, LMK, BTW. (If you don't understand them, this is what they stand for: *laughing out loud, just kidding, let me know, by the way.*) Today, we can text a thought with a few letters. We don't have to take time to write complete sentences. Years ago, people used to take pride in their handwriting, but in today's world, learning how to type on a computer keyboard has become more practical. Writing good letters is an art form that is becoming a thing of the past. This makes the letters we receive from our family, friends, and mentors even more special and meaningful.

5. Have you ever received a very meaningful letter from a family member or friend? How did that letter encourage or comfort you?

This question challenges the student to reflect on the impact that a thoughtful letter from someone who cares about them can have on their life. The student should identify specifically how they were impacted by that letter. If a student says they have never received a thoughtful letter from someone who cared about them, let them know you are praying that their upcoming one-on-one mentor relationship will provide that experience.

The Letters of the Apostle Paul

The apostle Paul was one of the most educated people of his time. As the apostle to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people), Paul started churches in many cities far from his hometown of Jerusalem. The letters he wrote to these churches provided encouragement and instruction to Christians everywhere.

Paul's letters are important for our own spiritual growth today. His letter to the Christians in Rome, as recorded in the New Testament book of Romans, is considered the best overview of the Christian faith and the best presentation of the doctrines* of the Christian Church. In the book of Romans, Paul explained God's plan of salvation through faith in Jesus. He clearly communicated important truths about God and humanity.

A letter in the Bible that is more like the letters we write today is Paul's letter to Philemon, a leader in the Colossian church. It contains only twenty-five verses, yet it offers a great amount of encouragement, instruction, and heartfelt love. The letter was meant to be shared with the entire church that met at Philemon's house. Paul communicated his love for the church, a blessing of God's grace, and a sincere prayer for their well-being. He told them how much they had encouraged him. He also asked Philemon and the church members to forgive and accept a man named Onesimus, who had previously harmed the church.

Read **Philemon 1:1–25**.

6. Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

Paul was in prison.

7. Why did Paul thank God for Philemon and the church that met in his home?

He thanked God for them because of their love for God's people and their faith in Jesus Christ.

8. What do you think is the main message or theme of Paul's letter to Philemon?

The themes in the letter are forgiveness and restoration of broken relationships. Paul, as a mentor to Philemon, encouraged him to restore the relationship that Onesimus had damaged.

9. How do you think Philemon might have reacted to Paul's letter?

Answers will vary. Some students may say Philemon might have been angry or offended by Paul's suggestion to forgive Onesimus so easily. Some students may say that Philemon might have received Paul's advice well because he respected Paul as a mentor. In their upcoming one-on-one mentoring relationships, it will be important for students to receive and respond to advice from their mentors. This may be an opportunity to offer advice on preparing their hearts for the accountability that comes with mentorship.

So far, you have received letters from many different mentors. Reflect on the letters you have received. If you kept your letters, take a few minutes to reread them.

10. Think about a letter in which the mentor gave you advice or instruction. What advice did the mentor give? How did you react to their advice?

As the student prepares for one-on-one mentoring, it is important that they are learning to listen to and act on godly advice or correction from other believers. Encourage the student to keep their heart open to receive wisdom from their mentor.

11. Think about the most encouraging letter you received. Did you feel the mentor's care and God's love through the letter? If so, how?

Hopefully, students will respond with positive reflections about the encouragement they have received from their mentors so far and how it has impacted them. Assure them of God's love for them and tell them you are praying that their upcoming relationship with their one-on-one mentor will be filled with Christ-centered love and encouragement.

Although the letters from your mentors contained encouragement, wisdom, and love, you were not able to respond or connect with the mentors who wrote them. In the Growth Program, your experience will be different, because over time, you will get to know your mentor and your mentor will get to know you. Your mentor will know about the ups and downs in your life, celebrate your victories, and encourage you in your difficulties. Your mentor will pray for you and with you over weeks, months—maybe even years.

Encouraging Your Mentor

As you develop your relationship with your one-on-one mentor, you will also bless and encourage your mentor. Mentors are human like you. Their lives are not perfect either. At times, they will probably experience disappointment, pain, or grief. The devil will try to discourage and attack them, as he does to everyone who follows Jesus. We encourage you to share words of love and hope with your mentor just as they encourage you. As Romans 12:15 says, "Be joyful with those who are joyful. Be sad with those who are sad."

Words are powerful. As you become comfortable writing back and forth with your mentor, you will see how powerful your own words can be. The most meaningful friendships are centered around good communication, and we pray that is exactly what you and your mentor will experience.

Prayer

1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Never stop praying." Pray while you are completing a lesson. Pray when you are reading your mentor's comments and letters. Listen for what God might be telling you through your mentor's written words. Pray when you are writing to your mentor. Ask God to guide your hand as you write your letters. Ask your mentor to pray for specific things in your life, and ask what areas in your mentor's life need prayer. Give thanks to God for your mentor as you pray for them.

Boundaries

Sometimes, students share details about their lives that may shock their mentors. Know that your mentor doesn't need to read every detail about sins you have struggled with or difficult things you may have experienced. You can tell your mentor if you are struggling with a certain sin so they can pray for you, but your mentor doesn't need to know the specific details. Remember that God is aware of your thoughts and struggles.

Your mentor will become a friend. But remember, your friendship is for the purpose of your spiritual growth and encouragement. Your friendship with your mentor will take place in the letters you write back and forth. Set good boundaries in your relationship with your mentor. It is possible that your mentor may ask you questions that you are not comfortable answering. If you are ever uncomfortable with something your mentor asks or writes, only share with them what you are comfortable sharing.

There is a very good chance that your mentor has never been to jail or prison. They may be curious about your past. It is okay if you don't want to share those details or if you want to wait until you know your mentor better before sharing. In any friendship, both people should set boundaries in order to keep the relationship healthy.

Crossroads cannot guarantee confidentiality* in your communication with your mentor. Your lessons and letters will be seen by a volunteer in the Crossroads office before being sent to

your mentor. Our volunteers are trained to protect your privacy and will do their best to respect confidentiality.

The mail room at your facility has the authority and ability to read what you and your mentor write to each other. Be honest in your communications, but know that your mentor may not be the only person who sees what you have written.

Congratulations!

Completing all the coursework in the first tier has taken hard work and faithfulness. You should be very proud of yourself! But don't stop here. Keep studying God's Word as you continue on your faith journey. We pray that your Growth Program mentor and the Growth Program courses will be a blessing to you and will help shape your walk with God. Remember to keep Christ at the center of your spiritual friendship, and He will work through the relationship in powerful ways.

In his letter to the Philippian church, Paul wrote, "God began a good work in you. And I am sure that he will carry it on until it is completed. That will be on the day Christ Jesus returns" (Philippians 1:6). Until that day, stay faithful to God as He continues His good work in you.

Action Step

Find someone you know and trust who has been mentored by someone. Ask them for advice about how to prepare for and be in a healthy mentoring relationship.



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