

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



APRIL 2020

Dear Mentor,

For several years after my release from prison, I did not speak about my incarceration outside a small circle of friends. I did not feel safe speaking about it. I wanted to protect my family, knowing that people who found out about my past might put negative labels on us that could tear us apart at the seams.

Those of us who have been incarcerated have no choice but to address it in certain contexts, such as seeking employment, finding a place to live and relating to neighbors. These experiences can be very demoralizing and demeaning.

I have heard Crossroads mentors and church leaders express a very honest truth about their church: formerly incarcerated men and women would feel unwelcome there.

Unwelcome.

If someone is told often enough that they are not accepted or valued, it can destroy their self-worth. It took a toll on me, and it can do the same for our students. After their release, many formerly incarcerated individuals face questions like:

Where do I belong?

Who cares about me?

It is the role of the Church to tell them, "You belong here! We care about you. So does God."

With this in mind, here are a few tips for writing letters to your students this month:

- Our self-worth is often tied to what other people say about us. Remind your students that our true identity and value are found in what God says about us. "*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!*" (1 John 3:1).
- One of the most loving things you can do for your students is to be vulnerable and honest. Share your story—the good parts and the bad. Opening your heart to them and welcoming them into your life shows them that they matter to you.

I have been told many times that I don't look like I have been to prison, and I'm not sure what people mean by that. When I look around a prison, I see men and women who look just like me. I see broken people who have value and worth but often struggle to understand or believe this. I see myself in each one.

I see *us*.

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I see people the Church should long to embrace so that, as the body of Christ, we can carry one another's burdens and lift each other up (Galatians 6:2).

If we don't, who will?

Serving alongside you,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Cupery".

Douglas Cupery
Church Mobilization Director

Have a question? You can contact the mentor support team at mentor@cpministries.org or 800-668-2450.

Timothy Project

In the coming weeks, you will receive information in the mail about a mentor recruitment campaign we are calling the **Timothy Project**. The inspiration behind this recruitment effort is the relationship between Paul and Timothy in the New Testament. Their friendship is a great example of the transformative power of one-on-one mentoring relationships. Their legacy lives on in many churches and organizations, including ours.

In order to foster more transformative relationships between students and mentors in our program, we would like to introduce the one-on-one mentoring component earlier in each student's journey with Crossroads.

To make this a reality, we have determined that we need to add 2,500 new mentors to the Crossroads team. We are inviting you to help us in this effort.

Who in your life might make a great mentor? Maybe a family member or someone who goes to your church is coming to mind. Will you personally meet with them, tell them why you love serving with Crossroads and invite them to join you as a mentor?

Your ministry is making an ever-increasing impact on the lives of men and women behind prison walls. As you share your story and invite others on the journey of walking alongside incarcerated men and women, that impact will continue to grow.

The Power of Partnerships

"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

– Ecclesiastes 4:12

At Crossroads, we love this verse. It is a powerful description of how we are stronger together. As a ministry, we continue to purposefully seek out and strengthen relationships with ministries that share our goals, values and efforts. Over the past few months, we have established formal partnering agreements with several like-minded ministries:

- Kairos Prison Ministry
- Alpha Ministries
- Forgotten Man Ministries
- Bill Glass Behind the Walls
- The Chalmers Center
- Prison Fellowship

We are stronger together as we share time, talent and treasure for greater Kingdom impact!