



**North East Prison Ministries  
of the  
Atlantic Union Conference  
Manual**

## CONTENTS

- 2. Our Calling
- 8. Starting a Prison Ministry
- 18. Training for the Jail or Prison
- 21. Manipulation
- 24. Discipling
- 31. Volunteer Services and Support for Inmates
- 39. Starting a Reentry Ministry
- 45. Writing Letters (Pen-Pal Program)
- 49. Index

*Chapter One*

# **Our Calling**

# Our Calling

## The Mission

"Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners." Heb. 13:3

Matthew 25:35-40 "For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see you a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'"

## You Can Make a Difference

Feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, and clothing the naked may seem easier than ministering to prisoners, yet Scripture clearly says that when we serve any of these needy people, we are serving God. The call to the prison mission fields is both a challenge and a promise to those who heed it.

Men, women, and youth behind bars are not only prisoners; they are also the spiritually hungry. A caring, committed person can make a tremendous difference in the life of a prisoner. Just the fact that someone voluntarily takes the time, week after week, to bring hope and encouragement to those behind bars speaks volumes about God's infinite unfailing love for them. If those behind bars get the emotional support they long for, they are strengthened in many ways. People who write letters, send cards, or just come to visit, minister to those in prison as surely as those who are giving Bible studies.

Prison ministry does not end when the men, women, and youth are released from our nation's jails and prisons. Life's basic needs that we so easily take for granted are surely needed by those released from prison. Individuals and churches called to prison ministry can help provide a link between the family, the community, and the persons confined in correctional institutions. They can help to prepare persons confined for reentry into society (physically, mentally, morally and spiritually).

Christian fellowship is vital for successful reentry into our communities. To help a person find a redeeming religious experience involves his or her finding the same in the people around them.

Prison Ministries outreach has several basic spiritual and social objectives. The spiritual objectives could be summed up as follows:

- To present the gospel of Jesus Christ
- To share the love of God
- To express the meaning of faith
- To show the power of prayer
- To present the Bible as the full and complete source of spiritual guidance and the guide for practical Godly living

Some of the social objectives are:

- To provide a link between the community and the persons confined in correctional institutions
- To prepare persons confined for reentry into society (physically, mentally, morally and spiritually)
- To serve the families of persons confined in correctional institutions
- To help a person find a redeeming religious experience by sharing our own experience
- To know the meaning of forgiveness by accepting forgiveness from God and offering forgiveness to others
- To help individuals know the meaning of love by demonstrating love

It is difficult for an inmate to worship the Lord in terms of praise when he or she does not understand the reality of Christ dying for us. It is difficult when an individual has never known praise themselves. People generally form their concept of God from what they have experienced in their families--bad, good or indifferent. One of the purposes of prison ministry in a correctional setting is to provide a means of interpreting God's love to the inmate. Simply stated, the overall objectives of prison ministry are stated as follows:

- To introduce Christ to every inmate for He can redeem all
- To reconstruct the whole person
- To introduce the inmate and family to a new lifestyle based on Christian principles

## Study Documents Lasting Effects

In 1990 the late Associated Press religion writer George Cornel reported on a study on the impact of religious instruction on prisoner's lives.

The study involved 190 inmates, both men and women, who between 1975 and 1979 had taken part in Christian discipleship training inside the prison and a similar number who did not take the training. The groups were matched by age, race, gender, and other factors.

Both groups had been released from prison eight to 14 years prior to the study. Cornel's article in The Winston Daily Times, of Raleigh North Carolina, December 1, 1990, reported that those who had been involved in Christian discipleship training had an 11 percent lower rate of recidivism (return to crime) than the control group.

The recidivism rate for women who took part of the religious training was even lower, only 19 percent, compared to 47 percent among the control group of women. Although more studies are being conducted on the influence of religion on recidivism, this particular study suggests that prison ministries can have lasting effects on the lives of prisoners.

## Vegan Diet Impacts California Prison (Victor Valley)

Maranatha Corrections LLC owned and operated Victor Valley Medium Correctional Facility. While the State of California had a recidivism rate of 95%, the Victor Valley facility enjoyed a recidivism rate of less than 2%.

Upon arrival, new inmates attended an orientation where they received two clear choices. They could live on one side of the prison which operated using the standard California Department of Corrections (CDC) guidelines and food menus; or, they could live on the side of the prison operated under the "NEWSTART" program which included a vegan diet, bible studies, job training and anger management.

Initially, although the State of California was very supportive of the NEWSTART concept, they told Terry Moreland, CEO of Moreland Corporation which built the facility; they didn't believe that even five inmates (of the 500) would accept that kind of a diet. In fact, they told Moreland that inmates would probably "burn the place down before they became vegetarians". However, once the program was in progress, the opposite became true. On average, 85% of the inmates chose the NEWSTART side while only 15% chose the CDC program.

The remarkable behavioral changes could even be seen outside in the prison yard where according to prison officials, nobody "owned" or controlled the yard. Typical lines drawn between blacks, whites, Hispanics, gang members and other groups were nonexistent. On the NEWSTART side, everyone played basketball together and had great fellowship. The CDC side of the house had the same racial divisions experienced at any other prison.

In testimonials, inmates assert that the surprisingly good-tasting food led them to feel better, have greater energy, increased stamina and reduced problems with acne. Indeed the effectiveness of a vegan vegetarian diet in rehabilitation has been scientifically validated.

## Reasons for Prison Ministry

Prison ministry is an act of ministering to Jesus. Matthew 25:36 "Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

Prison ministry provides the church an opportunity for carrying out the great commission. Certainly the gospel commission to go and teach all nations includes the millions in prison. American prisons are a tremendous spiritual harvest field. There are many prisoners who are genuinely seeking love, change, and stability in their lives. Volunteers often hear prisoners proclaim that incarceration is "the best thing that ever happened to me" because they experience the beginning of a true relationship with Christ.

Prison ministry revitalizes the spiritual lives of volunteers and their churches. There's nothing like sharing the gospel to open ears, teaching the Word to thirsty minds, and praying for people with broken hearts to revive one's spiritual life and commitment. And the newfound spiritual enthusiasm of a prison volunteer is infectious.

Prison ministry breathes new life into church evangelism and outreach programs. In prison ministry, spiritually hungry inmates come to the Christian volunteer's program, and participants will often invite others to the programs.

Prison work can revitalize a church's Bible studies groups. Class members can pray for inmates on a personal level, participate in "pen-pal" correspondence with recently converted inmates, and pray for and encourage those who actually represent the class "behind the walls". Inmates are invariably deeply moved to know that a whole class is regularly praying for them. (This is the first time many inmates have ever experienced genuine love from anyone.) Bible study classes can "adopt" an inmate's family in their local area, opening up a vital new arena of compassion ministry.

Prison ministry enhances worship. Many prison volunteers receive a renewed vision for worship while attending church services behind the walls. When repentant Christians of all colors meet together to express their love for Christ and joy in being spiritual brothers and sisters, things happen. Prison worship is never characterized by stale routine or manufactured emotion, inmates definitely see themselves as God's chosen people.

Prison ministry enhances the church training effort by preparing volunteers to minister to the unique needs of incarcerated Christians. What they learn about sharing their faith, counseling, Bible study, and follow-up is equally applicable in "free world" ministry. Knowing they will actually utilize these skills upon entering prison makes volunteers attentive, serious learners. The necessary training can be supplied by a prison chaplain, an active prison ministry, or an active or veteran prison ministry volunteer.

Prison ministry gets church members off the pews and outside church walls. Christians of all backgrounds, education levels, and varieties of spiritual gifts participate in prison/jail ministry and re-entry. Men and women, young and old, new Christians and "senior saints" all have a place chosen by God to serve. Prison work is never very far away: city and county jails, juvenile detention centers, state and federal prisons, and "transition houses." Prison ministry promotes cooperation and goodwill among diverse Christians from different denominations, socioeconomic backgrounds, and theological points of view. Paul's admonition to keep our eyes upon Christ was never truer than in prison ministry.

## Spiritual Reasons for Prison Ministry

Isaiah 58:6-7 "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?"

Isaiah 61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound."

Mat. 25:39-40 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

The 25th chapter of Matthew presents the fact that when one opens the door to the needy and suffering we are welcoming unseen angels. "It was I who was hungry and thirsty. It was I who was a stranger. It was I who was sick. It was I who was in prison. While you were feasting at your bountifully spread table, I was famishing in the hovel or the empty street. While you were at ease in your luxurious home, I had not where to lay My head. While you crowded your wardrobe with rich apparel, I was destitute. While you pursued your pleasures, I languished in prison." -The Desire of Ages, pp. 639, 640.

"When we realize that we are workers together with God, His promises will not be spoken with indifference. They will bum in our hearts, and kindle upon our lips. To Moses, when called to minister to an ignorant, undisciplined, and rebellious people, God gave the promise, 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.' And He said, 'Certainly I will be with thee.' Ex. 33:14; 3:12. This promise is to all who labor in Christ's stead for His afflicted and suffering ones." -The Desire of Ages, p. 641.

"Christ identifies Himself with every child of humanity. That we might become members of the heavenly family, He became a member of the earthly family. He is the Son of man, and thus a brother to every son and daughter of Adam. His followers are not to feel themselves detached from the perishing world around them ... The fallen, the erring, and the sinful, Christ's love embraces; and every deed of kindness done to uplift a fallen soul, every act of mercy, is accepted as done to Him." -The Desire of Ages, p. 638.



## Qualifications for Service

Pointing lost souls to Christ is the grandest, highest and holiest business known on earth or in Heaven. The individual engaged in prison ministry should have the same concern as that of his Lord who stated plainly that he came to seek and to save lost souls. There are certain basic qualifications or personal traits that a volunteer prison worker must possess. For successful prison ministry you need reliable people. Consistency is vital for this ministry. Volunteers must not say or do things contrary to the training received or handout unapproved literature. Volunteers cannot have their own agendas or be overbearing.

- Consecration: The first and no doubt most essential qualification is consecration.
- Sense of Mission: An awareness of just how important this work is to God, and the willingness to give it priority in your life.
- A desire for Spiritual Growth: You must not only lead inmates to new spiritual growth, but must also be willing and anxious to continuously grow yourself.
- A belief in the power of prayer: You must believe that God can be moved into action by the “effectual (unceasing) fervent” prayers of his people. (James 5:16)
- Faithfulness: Showing that you are constant and trustworthy in following through with promises to be at a particular place at a particular time.
- Courage: Having the mental and moral strength to venture outside your comfort zone, for God has not given His servants the spirit of fear.
- Empathy: Possessing the ability to feel with people and put one's self in their place.
- A kind spirit: Being kind in all your dealings with your fellow man.
- Love: An unselfish benevolent concern for the good of another, an outgrowth of unselfish concern for all persons involved.
- Humility: Maintaining a humble spirit, and remembering that you are called to serve.
- Emotional maturity: Being able to control your emotions, especially anger and depression.
- Tactfulness: Being delicate and considerate of an inmate's or staff person's feelings when communicating with them.
- Patience: Having the ability to wait without getting frustrated or discouraged by any situation, inmate, or institutional staff.
- Perseverance: In the name of the Lord a prison ministry worker should work with the same untiring perseverance and unflagging zeal that Christ brought into his labors. (Don't get discouraged).
- Ability to reflect: We must search our hearts and lives and see where we may lack in any of these qualifications for successful service.

*Chapter Two*

**Starting a Prison  
Ministry**

# Starting a Prison Ministry

## Introduction:

As a Christian, you want to be involved in prison ministry, but how do you start? What can you do?

What resources are available? How do you gain access to the jail or prison?

This section details steps for starting a jail or prison ministry.

You will learn:

- Who to contact and how to gain support for your vision, goals, and objectives
- How to review your own experience, gifts, talents, and what you have to offer
- How to examine the opportunities available and select a program or activity that is consistent with your expectations, goals and abilities
- Who to talk to and the importance of gaining as much knowledge as you can about the institution
- About possible activities and services you can provide an institution
- Ways to recruit and train volunteers
- How to prepare and learn the rules for working with correctional staff
- How to prepare and submit a proposal for your program
- How to plan your first meeting at the facility

Christian volunteers help build bridges and pathways enabling offenders to develop productive lives.

You can help inmates realize that they can grow to become good citizens and can accept personal responsibility for their behavior. You are in a unique position to help inmates & parolees by being a positive role model, helping them learn to make important and constructive changes in their lives.

Inmates are aware that you are a non-paid volunteer and appreciate the fact that you have invested your time and effort to help them, their families, and the facility. As a volunteer you provide an important link between the inmate or parolee, their families, and the community, but one of your most important contributions is providing inmates or parolees with a sense of hope. You bring hope and encouragement because we serve a God who loves them and has not given up on them. A person who has this hope can look to the future in a positive way. Through your contributions of time and commitment, you can help make it happen.

## STARTING A JAIL OR PRISON MINISTRY

### Begin with Prayer

Through earnest prayer, seek guidance in implementing God's model for all aspects of prison ministry. Pray about what God wants for the specific institution, your individual role, and the role of the church. There are many individuals who have committed to pray for prison ministry, ask for their prayers as you seek to know God's will and your part in this vitally important ministry. "God's children are not only to pray in faith, but to work with diligent and provident care. Nehemiah did not regard his duty done when he had wept and prayed before the Lord. He united his petitions with holy endeavor, putting forth earnest, prayerful efforts for the success of the enterprise in which he was engaged." Prophets and Kings: A Man of Opportunity

### Consult your local church and your Conference Prison Ministries Leaders

- Prison Ministry leaders can provide you with valuable input and guidance. Others from your local conference churches may have been involved in Prison Ministry for many years and may be willing to assist in various areas of ministry.
- You will need to gain the interest and support of your pastor, church officers, and fellow church members. This support is vital to obtaining volunteers to staff the program.
- Show your pastor how this ministry works cooperatively with other programs, ministries, and services of the church.
- Share how this scripturally mandated outreach advances the Gospel by putting church members to work both inside and outside institutions.
- Having the support of your church leaders is essential! If you don't have their support, your efforts will most likely be in vain.

### Know Yourself (Spiritual Gifts)

Any skills or knowledge you possess could be just the thing an inmate needs. When people hear the term "prison ministry" they usually think of religious worship services, Bible studies, or prayer meetings. The fact is that there are many other avenues for service that are greatly needed in and out of the correctional facilities.

- Determine what type of activities or programs are most meaningful to you.
- What church offices do you hold or have you held?
- Do you prefer to assume a leadership role, or are you more comfortable being part of the team?
- Do you enjoy being part of a group process, or are you more comfortable working independently?
- Do you enjoy working on a number of activities concurrently, or are you more interested in doing one project at a time?
- Do you consider yourself to be an innovator or do you like to have things laid out for you in advance?
- Do you prefer to perform tasks with measurable outcomes, or do you enjoy working on activities which may have less tangible results?
- Do you need to see immediate results or are you more interested in long-term successes?
- What do various aspects of your career or work experiences have to offer inmates?
- Do you depend on feelings for your gratification, or do you rely on hard facts to assess results?
- Do you look for long-term relationships or short-term project oriented associations?
- Do you like working with machines, or are you more people oriented?
- Are you creative or process oriented?

## Investigate the opportunities:

Here are some questions to answer in your investigation:

- What jails and prisons are in your immediate area?
- Is there a local ministerial association? What are they doing, if anything? Are they interested in jail and prison ministry? (If they already have a program and have gained access to local institutions, perhaps you can be part of it.)
- Who is in charge of volunteers at the institution? Contact them and find out how to get cleared for ministry inside the institution?
- What needs exist in their institution?
- What needs can you and/or your church fill? Try not to duplicate efforts of other Christian organizations. We should complement, not compete with one another.
- Familiarize yourself with all the rehabilitation programs offered in local institutions where you wish to serve, as well as the population breakdown (races, religions, ages, sex, etc.) and, if possible, the philosophy of the respective administrations.
- Are there forms you need to fill out?
- Is there special training you must take?
- What identification do you need for clearance?

## Talk to the people involved with inmate & parole services.

Gain as much knowledge as you can about the institution before requesting permission to provide services and/or programs. If you know administrators, officers, or former inmates, talk to them about the needs and conditions.

- Find out what opportunities are available within the Department.
- Review activities and programs offered at each of the facilities.
- Look at where these opportunities are geographically located.
- Assess how many hours you would be able to allocate.
- Find out who is responsible for what activity.
- Attempt to learn what services may be available, such as transportation, mentoring and the like.
- List all of the questions and concerns you have in order to make an informed decision.
- If you feel that you need to visit a particular facility or program prior to taking on an assignment, communicate this to a Volunteer Coordinator.
- Be prepared, the Department wants you to feel you have made the right choice.

Possible activities and services you can provide an institution include:

- Conducting Bible studies
- In-prison church services
- Distributing literature and Bibles
- Conducting a Christian group for those with addictions
- Christmas Behind Bars
- Hosting a Christian film night or a concert

- Providing special musical programs
- Inmate education programs
- Pre-release and aftercare
- Job readiness training
- Teaching classes in a specific skill, trade, or in personal adjustment
- Substituting for the chaplain when he or she is ill or on vacation

Providing individualized services in addition to your group program:

- Providing Bible correspondence courses
- Friendly visitor program
- Recovery coaching
- Mentoring
- Pen pal program
- Providing referral information for families of prisoners
- Referring inmates to post-prison release programs

### SECURE AND TRAIN VOLUNTEERS

Prior to submitting a proposal and gaining approval to minister in your local jail or prison you will need individuals who are trained and committed to prison ministry even before access is available. You need to submit a proposal to the institution with a list of individuals who are ready to successfully fulfill the roles and responsibilities for which they have been called to and are trained for.

### The Role of the Volunteer

Correctional volunteers serve in a variety of meaningful roles. Volunteers enhance the work of prison or jail staff. They strengthen treatment programs, assist in the personal growth of inmates, and supplement educational programs. Volunteers organize recreational activities, participate in spiritual services, and assist in job readiness and placement efforts. They facilitate substance abuse prevention and recovery programs and serve as mentors or visitors. They serve as key components in helping inmates to make choices that can result in effective recovery and reintegration.

Correctional volunteers also provide services that:

- Enrich inmate growth and personal development
- Act as a conduit between the facility and your state's communities
- Broaden and bring different opportunities to the facility
- Facilitate the reentry of inmates into society
- Foster a better understanding and alleviate negative stereotypical concepts of jails, prisons, and inmates
- Give support and hope to inmates and their families

A volunteer is vitally important to all aspects of prison ministry:

- To the inmate, as a link to the outside world, a friend, and a model of mature Christian life.
- To families of inmates, in providing information and practical and spiritual help as they cope with their dilemma.
- To the chaplain, by assisting and supporting his or her programs.

- To the prison administration, as an additional resource for helping with rehabilitation and transition back into society.
- To the institution by providing services that it cannot provide because of limited staffing and budget.
- To other volunteers, as a source of encouragement, training, and example to follow.
- To the local church, as a channel of communication, increasing awareness of the need for jail and prison ministries.
- To oneself, as this ministry provides an opportunity for using spiritual gifts and putting faith into action.

There are many ways to obtain volunteers:

- Plan a “Prison Ministry Awareness Day” in the church or churches you plan to involve in the ministry. Note :( In addition to recruiting volunteers, the “Prison Ministry Awareness Day” will prepare churches to receive former prisoners into their fellowship.)
- Lists of potential volunteers from conference wide Prison Ministry Awareness Events and rallies.
- Put a notice in church bulletins.
- Make announcements in church services.
- Recruit at small group meetings or programs.
- Prepare posters and place them in strategic locations in the church.
- Have a speaker who is actively involved in prison ministry and include testimonies from former prisoners.
- Outline the program you plan and announce a meeting (date, time, place) for those who are interested in participating.

In screening volunteers, consider the following:

- Are they in good standing with the church?
- What offices have they held in the church?
- Are they a former offender? (If so, check to be sure they will be allowed access to the prison.)
- What area of ministry do they have a burden for?
- Has the person had prior prison ministry experience?
- What training have they received?
- Do they have the ability to lead a small group?
- Have they had any personal witnessing experience?
- What is their spiritual gift? (Teaching and counseling are two important gifts for jail and prison ministry.)
- What languages do they speak?
- Does the person have any musical talent?

Determine volunteer’s interests and where they will be most effective:

- Writing an inmate?
- Visiting an inmate?
- Bible study lessons?
- Newsletters?
- Ministry to inmate’s families?
- Group ministry inside the prison?
- Post-prison ministry?

Note: If women are allowed on the volunteer team for a men's institution, it is important to remember that the highest standards of conduct and dress should be insisted upon. The same is true for men ministering in women's prisons. When possible, have husband and wife teams. These teams not only prevent difficult situations from arising, they add the extra dimension of modeling good husband-wife relationships.

Train the volunteers:

- Discuss where they would fit best in the program
- Use this manual to train them for jail and prison ministry
- Review your prison ministry proposal with them

Learn the rules and regulations for working with inmates and institutional staff:

While there are some general rules, many regulations vary from facility to facility.

Volunteers may be required to attend a Safety and Security Orientation. This training will enable you to function effectively within a jail, prison, or other restrictive environment. You must become familiar with and follow all rules and regulations, the proper communication channels, protocols and responsibilities of everyone you will come into contact with. You will learn what to wear and why personal appearance matters. You will learn about contraband and why volunteers must not bring in or take out any items not specifically authorized, particularly electronic equipment or items that could jeopardize the safety of staff or other volunteers and inmates. You will learn why gifts, business ventures & personal relationships with inmates are prohibited. For your protection, you will learn about confidentiality and why you do not share personal information with inmates, including your phone numbers or address. You will be reminded that if you are unsure of what action to take in any situation, not to hesitate to ask facility supervisor for guidance. Be sure to obtain proper clearances for volunteers to enter the institution. Often those volunteering inside the institution are not allowed to visit or correspond with individual inmates or their families. Have your volunteers complete any training required by the chaplain or the administration of the institution in which you will be ministering. Arrange for the chaplain to meet and possibly interview program volunteers. Be certain everyone clearly understands their individual role in the ministry: What to do, when, and any time constraints involved.



## PREPARE A PROGRAM PROPOSAL

The institution in which you plan to minister may have a special form or format to follow in preparing your proposal.

### The purpose of a proposal:

- Define purpose, objectives, and practical aspects of your program
- Be submitted for approval to the institution where you plan to minister
- Be used as a tool for volunteer recruitment. (You must know what type of ministry you will be conducting in order to recruit qualified volunteers)

### Considerations for a proposal:

#### Goals:

- What are the objectives of your program?
- What services does your program offer to inmates?
- What services does your program offer to the Institution?
- What services does your program offer to the inmates' families?

#### Benefits:

- How will your program benefit inmates?
- How will it benefit the institution?

#### Specifics:

- What is the detailed itinerary for your program?
- What specific format will be used to present your program?
- Define the specific ministry?
- Will it be a group ministry?
- Who will your program be directed towards--inmates, families, children?
- Will you offer a post-prison ministry?

#### Director:

- Who will have responsibility for your program?
- What type of theological training, credentialing, and prison program experience does the primary facilitator have?
- What references is he or she able to provide?

#### Volunteers:

- Who will participate in your program? (How many, age, sex, etc.)
- What training have they received?
- What training will they receive?
- Who will provide the training?

#### Facilities:

- What type of facility will you need at the institution?
- Do you need to use the prison chapel, a day room, classroom, or a visiting area?

#### Schedule:

- What are the days and times you would like to meet?
- What time slots are available?

#### Equipment:

- Will you need items like an overhead projector, video projector, musical instruments, song books, musical sound tracks?
- Are these items provided by the institution or will you need to provide them?
- Will the institution allow you to bring them into the facility?
- If you plan to prepare handouts for inmates, do you have access to a copy machine?

#### Funding:

- Although most prison ministry groups are operated by volunteers, there may be expenses such as purchasing Bibles, books, tracks, or other handouts approved by the institution.

If you have already successfully conducted prison ministries elsewhere, attach letters of recommendation and/or commendation from jail or prison officials at the institutions where you ministered. If you have received requests from inmates in the institution for the specific program you are offering, attach these to your proposal.

### SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSAL

Submit a copy of your proposal to your pastor and conference prison ministry director for review. After their approval then submit a copy to the chaplain or proper authorities at the prison and wait for their response. They may call you to meet with them to discuss the proposal. If so, be on time, appropriately dressed, and properly prepared for your appointment. If you do not receive a response to the proposal after a reasonable length of time, take the initiative to call and ask for an appointment with the person to whom it was submitted. If your request to provide services is denied, try again in a couple of months. This could very well be a test of your commitment, dedication, and patience. Administrators and chaplains also resign, retire, or transfer and someone else may be more favorable to your program.

### PLAN YOUR FIRST MEETING OR OUTREACH

- Be sure volunteers are well trained
- Be sure everyone is dressed properly for visitation or group outreach at the prison
- Check that everyone has the proper identification for entering the facility
- Be sure that you are on time! (Be a little early--never a minute late)

*Chapter Three*

**Training for the Jail or  
Prison**

# **Training for the Jail or Prison**

## **GENERAL VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES**

### **The Role of the Volunteer**

Your willingness to provide time and resources to the correctional system are invaluable. Correctional volunteers serve in a variety of meaningful roles. Volunteers enhance the work of prison or jail staff, strengthening treatment programs, assisting in the personal growth of inmates, and supplementing educational programs. Volunteers organize recreational activities, participate in spiritual services, and assist in job readiness and placement efforts. They facilitate substance abuse prevention and recovery programs and serve as mentors or visitors. They serve as key components in helping inmates make choices that can result in effective recovery and reintegration. As a volunteer you will be expected to work strictly within the boundaries of your approved and specific assignment. You must avoid any issues that do not apply to you or that may hamper staff members in any way. You will learn facility protocols, rules, regulations, dress codes, expected behavior, and advice on how to work with staff and inmates. Effective volunteering requires being committed, dependable, supportive, discrete, mature, and confident.

### **Prison or jail volunteers:**

- Enrich inmate growth and personal development
- Give support and hope to inmates and their families
- Facilitate the reentry of inmates into society
- Act as a conduit between the facility and communities
- Broaden and bring different opportunities to the facility
- The alleviation of negative stereotypical concepts of jails, prisons, and inmates

### **Volunteer Training:**

- The agency will schedule security orientation sessions and specific training to prepare you to work confidently and successfully within the facility.
- You will receive training to ensure your suitability for volunteering within the system.
- You will be given instruction regarding whom to contact if you cannot keep a scheduled commitment.
- You will learn the importance of having a good working relationship with staff and how that will affect your success as a volunteer.
- The rules and regulations regarding confidentiality and reporting procedures will be covered.
- Parking, sign in, security checks, and visiting requirements will be explained.
- As with any new endeavor, you will learn much more on the job.
- To help you become acclimated to correctional setting, you will learn what to expect, as well as the most effective ways of dealing with inmates and their needs.

## Volunteer Guidelines

- Be prepared to invest your time and live up to your commitment
- Cooperate fully with staff
- Dress suitably for your role
- At all times be patient, be kind
- Be quick to listen and slow to speak, wise as a serpent but gentle as a dove
- Learn to discern, don't believe everything you hear
- Check the facts, do not be manipulated
- Respect others at all times, respect encourages mutual respect and is a basis for positive relationships
- Lead by example. Be a good role model
- Be prepared to work with individuals from different cultures and belief systems
- Many inmates have very low self esteem. Build up and encourage, don't put down and condemn
- Never force your opinions, encourage inmates to think for themselves. If your program is faith based, always encourage them to seek God's counsel through prayer and Bible study.
- Don't get caught up in gossip
- Never show preferential treatment or favoritism
- Do not make promises you cannot keep
- Remember that irresponsible behavior communicates bad faith
- Always be objective and do not take sides. You will hear negative talk about the staff and the institution, don't sympathize with their complaints, stay out of it.
- In any situation, don't let your emotions get in the way of sound judgment.
- Avoid potential conflicts, inform the chaplain or program coordinator of any friend or family relationship you may have with any of the inmates.
- Never engage in any activities, inside or outside the facility that could compromise your integrity or effectiveness as a volunteer.
- Refrain from using inappropriate signs of affection, they may be misinterpreted.
- Do not probe into an inmate's history, respect their privacy.
- Do not prejudge. We all have prejudices. Make a conscious effort to overcome your biases.
- Conduct yourself in accordance with institutional rules.
- Use appropriate language, not street slang or religious jargon that won't be understood by the average person.
- Be yourself and not a phony.
- Do not allow your activities to conflict with institutional programs.
- Be ready for setbacks. Don't give up; growth comes with commitment and perseverance.
- We all make mistakes. Don't be afraid to admit yours.

## Rules for Volunteers

- Respect the confidentiality of records and other privileged information
- Do not make a phone call for an inmate or perform any similar service for an inmate
- Do not enter into a business venture with an inmate
- Do not give gifts, loans or items to an inmate, or take anything from an inmate
- Do not take any photos on institutional property without specific permission
- Take nothing to or from an inmate, including letters or information of any kind
- When you leave a facility, leave nothing behind for an inmate to use

## Your Responsibilities

- Always be honest with an inmate
- Treat an inmate with respect
- Talk to inmates on their level
- Be professional at all times
- Be a role model
- Listen carefully with sincerity
- Accept people with different values
- Be persistent and patient
- Be dependable
- Be objective
- Be mature and confident
- Be enthusiastic
- Use discretion and good judgment
- Submits reports if required

## SECURITY ISSUES

### Appearance

- Dress simply and appropriately
- Pocketbooks and knotted hair are usually not allowed
- No short skirts, shorts, or excessive amounts of jewelry
- Open toed shoes may not be allowed
- General rule of thumb is not to expose your body

### Professionalism

- Appearance, conduct, language, and attitude reflect your character and integrity
- You will gain respect if you demonstrate good taste and show respect yourself
- Always be patient with staff, even if they are not patient with you

### Personal Parameters and Boundaries

- Use formal titles, such as “Warden, Captain, Officer, Counselor, Mr., Ms., or Sir.”
- Do not befriend an inmate for purpose of intimacy
- Do not supply your phone number or address, or personal information about yourself or your family, another volunteer, or staff
- Take nothing into or out of an institution without specific permission. Safety and security are always priorities
- In contact with former offenders outside the facility, be sure to follow the proper protocol as per your training
- In some cases you may not be authorized to have these contacts
- A facility is a restrictive and potentially dangerous setting. Staff enforces policies, regulations and rules to maintain safety and security. Know what they are and cooperate fully with them
- Contraband.
- Any item not specifically authorized by departmental administration may be considered contraband.

### Con Games

- Never agree to bend the rules; you can become a prime target for a con game.
- Refrain from long conversations about personal opinions or other inmate matters. There are times not to be a good listener.
- Avoid gossip, stories, or discussions about other inmates, staff or volunteers.
- Do not accept favors of any kind
- Deflect excessive compliments
- Deny requests for unauthorized materials

### Inappropriate or Misinterpreted Behavior

- An inmate may demonstrate a strong need for affection and see an expression of concern as a sexual signal.
- Report immediately if an inappropriate relationship is occurring or even appearing to occur.
- Be prepared to resign or be terminated as a volunteer.
- As a volunteer, you are a bridge to available resources and not a source provider.
- Volunteers have been victimized and injured by inmates who have made appeals for assistance.
- If you are approved to supply follow-up services in the community for an inmate, maintain close contact with your program coordinator.

### Client Failure

- Immediately report any confrontation, incident or information regarding security concerns.
- Report knowledge regarding escape, riot, suicide, assault or damaged property to the shift supervisor.
- Maintain a professional dialogue with custody staff and the shift supervisor.

### Bending the Rules

- Many inmates are expert story tellers. They are best handled by staff.
- Report what you have been told to your program coordinator, and ask to be informed of any follow-up consequences. Do not compromise your integrity or purpose.
- Do not allow an inmate to persuade you to mail letters.
- Never bring a package into a facility from an inmate’s family or take a package out.

### Managing Aggressive Behavior

- If an inmate becomes hostile, remain calm, back away, and immediately seek staff assistance.
- If you are alone gradually move where staff can see you.
- Never forget that an inmate has been convicted of a crime, perhaps a violent crime.
- Many inmates have lived in very harsh environments where physical intimidation and violence are common.

### Emergency Procedures and Communication

- If you hear a fire alarm, evacuate the area in accordance with posted emergency procedures.
- Listen to staff when they direct you to another area.
- Always ensure that you have signed into the facility properly and that staff knows exactly where you are at all times.
- Read and understand the emergency evacuation plan for your assigned area.
- Follow every instruction issued by staff.
- Each facility has a control center that can be reached by dialing a designated emergency number.
- If you cannot speak on the phone, knock the receiver off the hook, the officer will be able to identify your location.

### Client Incidents

- Discuss how to act in an emergency with your program coordinator.
- Do not act instinctively; heroes can get hurt.
- Calmly cooperate with the inmate who provoked the incident.
- Do not judge, condemn or provoke; do not threaten or attempt to negotiate.
- Maintain a low profile; hide or take cover if possible.
- Act naturally, listen carefully, and be quiet and observant.
- After the incident, immediately record what you witnessed and seek counseling.

### Security Risk Groups

- Inmates sometimes use volunteer programs and activities to conduct gang business.
- Gang activities can result in people being hurt.
- If you witness possible gang activity, displays of colors, hand signals, or the exchange of notes, DO NOT REACT. Avoid doing or saying anything that could compromise your safety.
- When you are away from inmate contact, report the suspected activity to the shift supervisor.

### Infectious Diseases

- Prison and jail departments make every effort to control infectious diseases, including HIV, tuberculosis, and hepatitis.
- Always use caution because viruses, germs, and contagious infections may spread quickly in a correctional setting.
- HIV and hepatitis-B are transmitted only through direct contact with blood or bodily fluids.



*Chapter Four*

**Manipulation**

# Manipulation

Matthew 10:16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”

Prison ministry is by the very nature of the environment and individuals you will be in contact with an area of ministry in which you must be cognizant of the potential attempts by someone to manipulate you in one form or another. To manipulate is to negotiate, control, or influence (something or someone) cleverly, skillfully, or deviously. Psychological manipulation is a type of social influence that aims to change the perception or behavior of others through underhanded, deceptive, or even abusive tactics. By advancing the interests of the manipulator, often at the other's expense, such methods could be considered exploitative, abusive, devious, and deceptive. It is vitally important that you recognize the red flags of manipulation so you can respond in a positive and assertive manner. You need to be aware of what the requirements are for successful manipulation, how manipulators control their victims, and to recognize your own or your team member's potential vulnerabilities that could be exploited by manipulators.

## Requirements for successful manipulation

Successful psychological manipulation primarily involves the manipulator:

- Concealing aggressive intentions and behaviors.
- Knowing the psychological vulnerabilities of the victim to determine what tactics are likely to be the most effective.
- Having no qualms about causing harm to the victim if necessary.
- Consequently the manipulation is likely to be covert (relational aggressive or passive aggressive)

## How manipulators control their victims

The following are basic ways that manipulators control their victims:

- Positive reinforcement: includes praise, superficial charm, superficial sympathy (crocodile tears), excessive apologizing; money, approval, gifts; attention, facial expressions such as a forced laugh or smile; public recognition.
- Negative reinforcement: involves removing one from a negative situation as a reward, i.e. "You won't have to walk home if you allow me to do this to you."
- Intermittent or partial reinforcement: Partial or intermittent negative reinforcement can create an effective climate of fear and doubt. Partial or intermittent positive reinforcement can encourage the victim to persist - for example in most forms of gambling, the gambler is likely to win now and again but still lose money overall.
- Punishment: includes nagging, yelling, the silent treatment, intimidation, threats, swearing, and emotional blackmail, the guilt trip, sulking, crying, and playing the victim.
- Traumatic one-trial learning: using verbal abuse, explosive anger, or other intimidating behavior to establish dominance or superiority; even one incident of such behavior can condition or train victims to avoid upsetting, confronting or contradicting the manipulator.

- Lying: It is hard to tell if somebody is lying at the time they do it although often the truth may be apparent later when it is too late. One way to minimize the chances of being lied to is to understand that some personality types (particularly psychopaths) are experts at the art of lying and cheating, doing it frequently, and often in subtle ways.
- Lying by omission: This is a very subtle form of lying by withholding a significant amount of the truth. This technique is also used in propaganda.
- Denial: Manipulator refuses to admit that he or she has done something wrong.
- Rationalization: An excuse made by the manipulator for inappropriate behavior. Rationalization is closely related to spin.
- Minimization: This is a type of denial coupled with rationalization. The manipulator asserts that his or her behavior is not as harmful or irresponsible as someone else was suggesting for example, saying that a taunt or insult was only a joke.
- Selective inattention or selective attention: Manipulator refuses to pay attention to anything that may distract from his or her agenda, saying things like "I don't want to hear it".
- Diversion: Manipulator not giving a straight answer to a straight question and instead being diversionary, steering the conversation onto another topic.
- Evasion: Similar to diversion but giving irrelevant, rambling, vague responses, weasel words.
- Covert intimidation: Manipulator throwing the victim onto the defensive by using veiled (subtle, indirect or implied) threats.
- Guilt tripping: A special kind of intimidation tactic. A manipulator suggests to the conscientious victim that he or she does not care enough, is too selfish or has it easy. This usually results in the victim feeling bad, keeping them in a self-doubting, anxious and submissive position.
- Shaming: Manipulator uses sarcasm and put-downs to increase fear and self-doubt in the victim. Manipulators use this tactic to make others feel unworthy and therefore defer to them. Shaming tactics can be very subtle such as a fierce look or glance, unpleasant tone of voice, rhetorical comments, and subtle sarcasm. Manipulators can make one feel ashamed for even daring to challenge them. It is an effective way to foster a sense of inadequacy in the victim.
- Playing the victim role ("poor me"): Manipulator portrays him or herself as a victim of circumstance or of someone else's behavior in order to gain pity, sympathy or evoke compassion and thereby get something from another. Caring and conscientious people cannot stand to see anyone suffering and the manipulator often finds it easy to play on sympathy to get cooperation.
- Vilifying the victim: More than any other, this tactic is a powerful means of putting the victim on the defensive while simultaneously masking the aggressive intent of the manipulator.
- Playing the servant role: Cloaking a self-serving agenda in guise of a service to a more noble cause, for example saying he is acting in a certain way for "obedience" and "service" to God or a similar authority figure.
- Seduction: Manipulator uses charm, praise, flattery or overtly supporting others in order to get them to lower their defenses and give their trust and loyalty to him or her.
- Projecting the blame (blaming others): Manipulator scapegoats in often subtle, hard to detect ways.
- Feigning innocence: Manipulator tries to suggest that any harm done was unintentional or did not do something that they were accused of. Manipulator may put on a look of surprise or indignation. This tactic makes the victim question his or her own judgment and possibly his own sanity.

- Feigning confusion: Manipulator tries to play dumb by pretending he or she does not know what you are talking about or is confused about an important issue brought to his attention.
- Brandishing anger: Manipulator uses anger to brandish sufficient emotional intensity and rage to shock the victim into submission. The manipulator is not actually angry; he or she just puts on an act. He just wants what he wants and gets "angry" when denied.

### Vulnerabilities exploited by manipulators

Manipulators exploit the following vulnerabilities (buttons) that may exist in victims:

- The disease to please: addiction to earning the approval and acceptance of others.
- Emotophobia: fear of negative emotion.
- Lack of assertiveness: inability to say no.
- Blurry sense of identity: having soft personal boundaries.
- Low self-reliance: Excessively dependant on others.
- Naïveté: victim finds it too hard to accept the idea that some people are cunning, devious and ruthless or is "in denial" if he or she is being victimized.
- Over-conscientiousness: victim is too willing to give the manipulator the benefit of the doubt and see their side of things in which they blame the victim.
- Low self-confidence: victim is self-doubting, lacking in confidence and assertiveness, likely to go on the defensive too easily.
- Over-intellectualization: victim tries too hard to understand and believes the manipulator has some understandable reason to be hurtful.
- Emotional dependency: victim has a submissive or dependent personality. The more emotionally dependent the victim is, the more vulnerable he or she is to being exploited and manipulated.

### Protectors against Being Manipulated

Manipulators generally take the time to scope out the characteristics and vulnerabilities of their victim.

- Be supportive of institutional staff, when inmates talk against or about them.
- Ask for clarification, if you don't understand what an inmate is saying to you.
- Monitor "casual" comments from the inmate, during conversation, and avoid "flippant" remarks or "off color" jokes.
- Learn how to say "No" in a firm but kind way, if an inmate asks that you go contrary to any rules, avoid being naive or gullible.
- Always keep everything in the open, and beware of inmates who want you to "keep a secret". Seek counsel from your group leader and a seasoned volunteer, if you are not sure whether an inmate is attempting to manipulate you or not.

*Chapter Five*

# **Discipling**

# Discipling

## Bible Studies: How to Lead a Prison Small Group Bible Study

Basic principles for leading small groups in jails or prisons

### Teach the basics:

It's an awesome experience to help new Christians grow in a close-knit setting. Make sure to teach the basics of the Christian life and give training in basic ministry skills. This is not the time or place to be giving deep theological discourses or Bible studies. The best part of all is sharing the Gospel and helping the group develop a heart for reaching others for Christ.

### Realize your impact is far-reaching:

Small group studies are a big part of Prison Ministry outreach. The prison will benefit from your small group. Know that you will be helping to reach the entire block or dorm through the training of your group. Your students' hearts will also begin to desire to help fulfill the Great Commission. By leading a group, you will offer important accountability and intimacy that the students want and need. Your study will also provide a non-threatening place to discover truth. They'll love digging into the Word and seeing how it applies to their lives. The best part is seeing the students begin to lead others and invite them to the group because of the impact Jesus has made in their lives.

### Interact and give assignments:

Jesus showed us an example of small groups through his relationship with His twelve disciples. Interact with your students and give them assignments. Paul learned from Jesus' example. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom" Col. 3:16.

"The things that you heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" 2 Timothy 2:2. This is an example of discipling group members to grow and multiply spiritually.

### Evaluate the needs:

Think through these important things before you begin your small group Bible study. Begin evaluating the needs of each person in the group. Based on their needs, you will decide on the study's content and begin to plan your lessons. Then make arrangements for your first meeting. As you get to know the people in your group, you'll find out more needs and topics you can cover. After some time of leading the group, evaluate your progress and how the students are doing.

### Reach out to new students:

Consider methods of outreach to gather new members to your group. Although you may not have direct access to the prison population, you may brainstorm with the group to come up with ideas for encouraging individuals to attend the studies. You will be encouraged as you see how faithful your students are in inviting others to the group.

### Identify and respond to specific needs:

These students have needs (fear, loneliness, depression, anxiety) but you won't know their needs automatically. If you are allowed to talk with your students individually use 10-15 minutes of your session for this. Ask questions and make a mental list noting things that will accelerate their personal spiritual growth. Maybe you've noticed that a certain student struggles with guilt. Do a study on forgiveness for this student. Another student in the group is a brand new

Christian; he knows little about God and spirituality but he wants to know and love Jesus. You will need to focus on the basic foundations of the Christian faith for this student. Know what materials are approved for handing out and always have some on hand. Your students will give you positive feedback after reading Steps to Christ or Desire of Ages and they will encourage others to read these books.

Find appropriate materials for your study:

Once you've figured out the students' needs, outline Scripture verses that relates to their maturity level. It will be helpful to find material that is already written. This will save you time. Another benefit to using pre-written material is that the students can use the same material in the future for leading their own studies. Bible Gateway [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) is an excellent resource for copying and pasting scripture onto a word document for your study outline. Some of your students will greatly appreciate and benefit from having a hard copy of your lesson study. (Note: depending on the facility you may not be allowed to give your notes or an outline of the Bible study). A series of studies may not be appropriate for minimum security groups or county jails, since some of your participants may attend only one or two sessions due to a high turnover rate.

Be consistent and dependable:

Be on time and always have a backup facilitator. If you say you are going to do something like, bring a Bible or study a topic, DO IT! Your students will greatly appreciate the fact that you can be counted on, that you are a person of your word and that you walk the talk.

Include key components as you schedule out your study:

A schedule of your typical study should look a like this: Spend about 10 minutes letting the participants share and interact with each other--remember their group is a shelter from the storm. After pulling the group together, ask if any of the participants has something they are thankful for, or a personal testimony to share and stress that for the sake of time, we should not to be long winded (set the example). If possible, briefly relate their experiences to the planned Bible study. Open the Bible study time in prayer, and end the study 10-15 minutes before ending the session. Give the participants a summery at the end of the study and then spend the last 5 minutes in closing prayer.

Be flexible:

Keep in mind that as you discuss the lesson with the participants, things don't always go as planned. Be flexible and help point them back to the central truth of the study.

Create an environment of acceptance:

During your meeting, you want to create an environment where the students will know they are accepted and that the lesson applies to specific areas of their lives. Do this by encouraging good questions, being enthusiastic, and making sure you are familiar with the material. Try to use Bible stories they can relate to. A topical and an exhaustive concordance are helpful tools.

Be real:

Allow the inmates to get to know you as a real person. This is where they will be able to see Christ in you. Let the group know that this is not an "us and them" learning experience. We are here to learn at the feet of Jesus, as a group. The leader is a facilitator of the learning experience, not an answer man or women. The leader does not have all the answers to the many questions that will arise, but presents the Bible as the source of the answers.

### Debrief after each study:

After each Bible study, take time with your co-facilitator to determine the effectiveness of your time together. Make a few mental notes on things that could have been done differently. Ask yourself, "What specific needs came up? Which students need to be drawn out at the next meeting? How effective were the learning activities? What did and didn't work well? Did they retain the main point of the lesson? Did they leave the Bible study wanting to know God and His word?" By asking these questions you will be honing your skills and will continuously improve your teaching.

### Pray for and evaluate each student:

Pray specifically for each student. And let them know you are praying for them. Ask God to help them understand and apply the lesson.

### Evaluate their personal progress:

As time goes by and the students begin to grow, observe and evaluate their personal progress. Do they have a growing dependence upon, and love for Christ? Are they growing in love for one another? Do they understand that there is victory in Christ? Do they have an increasing compassion and concern for a lost world? Do they know how to study for themselves?

## Build relationships with members of the group

Some ideas for building relationships between you and your group are:

- Remember that there but by God's grace go I. Any one of us could be in prison and we are called to be servants, not placing ourselves above anyone else. I Cor. 9:19-22. "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some".
- Share what God is teaching you and how God is working in your own life. Don't be afraid to share some of your own needs. Rev. 12:10. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death".
- Be an encourager. Think the best of others. Heb. 3:13. "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, those who are mistreated since you yourselves are in the body also".
- Show special kindness. Learn to be a giver of your time.
- Be patient with the "experts" and those who are confrontational.
- Find out what their interests are and be genuinely interested in them as you would a close friend. Focus and listen attentively!
- Put them and their needs before your own.
- Let them know you are praying for them during the week.
- If allowed, write to them letters, cards, with words of encouragement.
- Let them know that you are concerned with their successful reentry into the community.



Be knowledgeable about the reentry process and services that are available upon release.

- Talk to the group about Christian events and experiences outside the walls.
- Your sharing experiences will be an encouragement.
- Let them see how you live out your life, that active service for Christ is not a part-time job. They will develop a heart for telling others about Christ too!

Get your students involved in a fellowship group outside the prison. Be sensitive to the fact that you will be studying with individuals with many different denominational backgrounds and experiences. Do not strive about doctrinal differences! 1 Cor. 2:2. "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified". Many of the participants you study with may not have ever attended a church, or go to one that is not teaching God's Word. Depending on their situation, you will want to encourage your students to continue in fellowship with a group of people that will nurture their faith.

### Frequently Asked Questions?

Q: What do I do if a student asks a question I can't answer?

A: Don't be afraid of students asking questions. Encourage it. Don't fake an answer. Refer the question to the whole group and see what kind of responses follow. Explain that you don't know the answer, but would be more than happy to find the answer for the next meeting.

Q: What do I do if the students want to study a topic that isn't found in basic Christ centered materials (i.e. Prophecy, other religions, cults, controversial subjects or doctrines, etc.)?

A: Keep in mind that the overall purpose of discipleship is to "present every man mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). Students need to first know the basic truths of their faith but don't discourage their interest in other issues. Encourage them to thoroughly learn the basics before going to graduate school.

Q: How do I handle a student who tends to dominate the discussion, or a student who never says anything?

A: Establish group ground-rules. Explain how important it is for everyone to have a chance to share. With really quiet students, it helps to understand why they aren't involved. They may feel uncomfortable about giving their comments. Get them involved by asking them specific simple questions.

Q: Some of the students seem to be losing interest in the group. What can I do?

A: Take some time to honestly ask students about what's happening in their lives and if the group is ministering to them. As you receive their responses, make appropriate adjustments. Typically, students respond to loving, directive, serving leadership. Have you communicated the vision and purpose for the group? Perhaps they need to hear again from you why you're giving your time to lead the group. Do you talk too much, not allowing the group members to share their thoughts, feelings, and points of view?

## GIVING THE BIBLE STUDY

The following points should be considered in the actual conducting of the Bible study:

- Whenever possible it is important to have the participants sitting in a circle. This allows for better facilitating the discussion and for participation from all members of the group.
- Never talk down to an inmate or come across like you are the “expert”. Let them know that you do not have all the answers but that we know the Bible does and that we are all learners at the foot of the cross.
- Stress the absolute necessity of prayer for the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit whenever we open the Holy Bible.
- See that all inmates have their own Bibles and encourage them to lookup, read, and follow the Scripture texts in giving their answers. This method helps the inmate to become more familiar with the Bible. Do not read the Bible texts yourself, encourage them to do so.
- Be sensitive to the fact that you may be seeing an inmate for the first and last time and that you have a small window of opportunity to plant precious gospel seed.
- Don’t get into deep doctrinal discussions and distinctive doctrines which many will not be ready for. 1 Corinthians 2:2. “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”.
- Do not argue. It is better to lose an argument and win a soul for Christ. Share with them, “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient”. 2 Timothy 2:24.
- It is essential that the inmates be taught how to study the Bible for themselves, teach them how to use a concordance, how to study themes and topics, and that the Bible interprets itself.
- Show them how the Bereans responded to Paul’s teaching: Acts 17: 11. “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”.
- Do not put down any religion or church or group by making comparisons between churches. It is inevitable that questions will arise, but remember, you are there to uplift Christ, not to put down churches.
- The facilitator must keep the study within the prescribed time. The Bible studies should average anywhere from 30-45 minutes, one hour being the maximum time.
- The Bible study facilitator should not ignore questions nor be discourteous to the inmate. Explain the purpose of the lesson that you are now studying and state that you can answer that question, from God’s word, in a future study session. Stay on track.
- Any inmate who deliberately attempts to disrupt the class or test the facilitator should be handled with patience and courtesy. In an extreme case, the inmate may be asked to leave. If so, do not cave in and change your mind, or you will lose the respect of the other participants.
- In a difficult situation, prayer is the best remedy.
- An inmate should be encouraged to give the closing prayer.

# PREACHING

## Preaching Guidelines

- Remember, you represent Jesus Christ as His appointed emissary. Look the part, speak the part
- Never preach without sufficient prayer and preparation
- Never say “I really didn’t want to be here today,” or “this really isn’t my gift.”
- Don’t preach long sermons, 20-30 minutes should be long enough
- Don’t waste time or words--be succinct. Pray for the ability to describe spiritual principles in as few words as possible
- Don’t preface any scripture reading with “you’ve probably heard this before...” or “you’re probably quite familiar with this scripture”
- Never say um when you pause, embrace the silence between thoughts and words
- Always make eye contact and don’t look over everyone’s heads
- Never pound on the Bible or show any degree of disrespect for the Scriptures
- Never reprimand or scold the inmates
- Don’t put down or criticize other faiths or beliefs
- Never talk negatively about the prison staff or system itself
- Never come across like you are an authority or above your listeners
- **DON’T SHOUT YOUR MESSAGE.** Speak clearly so the person in the back row can hear you  
The power should be in the message itself, not in the volume of your voice
- Try not to read your message. Notes are valuable; just don’t be a slave to them
- Never go off on tangents. Stick to the message
- Never use scriptural terms and phrases that may not be understood by the majority of the inmates, make it clear.
- Never be so open about yourself and personal matters that may later be used against you
- Never bemoan your inadequacies from the pulpit
- Make sure your sermon calls for action and response from the listeners

## WORSHIP

### MUSIC:

Music for worship services in prison should be encouraging and uplifting. Songs that could be misunderstood by residents as condemning or as "put down" should not be used, e.g., "Rescue the Perishing". Neither should depressing music like "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen".

If you are using overheads, song books, or sound tracks, have these items ready. Always receive clearance from the chaplain or program coordinator before arranging musical activities which are different from that which your team normally does.

### PRAYER:

Here are some suggestions for prayer time:

- Keep prayers short and to the point unless the Holy Spirit moves in a special way. A lengthy prayer could not only make the worship tedious but could be misunderstood by the prisoners as saying, "These people need long prayers".
- No particular position or posture is important, but when there is a large crowd (50 or more), it would be advisable to leave the congregation seated or standing while offering prayer rather than calling them forward to kneel.
- Spend most of the time praying for the physical, social, mental and spiritual welfare of inmates, their concerns and those relating to their families. Pray also for institutional staff. It is okay to keep your eyes open and raised to heaven

### SCRIPTURE READING:

The person reading the Scripture, during a worship service, is "echoing" the voice of God and setting the tone for the sermon or lesson. Have the text read with expression, reverence and impressiveness. Announce clearly, before beginning to read, where the Scripture is located (book, chapter and verses). Allow time for those who have Bibles to find the passage. Project your voice to those in the back of the room. Stand erect and speak clearly. Read God's Word so impressively that the prisoners' emotions will be stirred and their hearts turned heavenward.

### TESTIMONIES:

If you are asked to give a testimony, do not view this as your golden opportunity to preach. Keep your testimony short and to the point. No one cares about the details of your past life of sin. Do not use denominational jargon such as, "Since I came into the message" or "After I accepted the truth". It is better to use such phrases as "Since I became a Christian" or "After I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior".

*Chapter Six*

**Volunteer Services and  
Support for Inmates**

# Volunteer Services and Support for Inmates

## HOW TO WORK WITH INMATES

### What to Expect

If you have never been incarcerated or have not been involved in some form of prison volunteerism, what you may expect as you enter into this new environment will probably turn out not be what you anticipated. The following will give you an overview of what you can expect and what you should know about those who you will be ministering to:

#### About the inmates themselves:

- Some of the men or women you meet will be open and respectful while others will need time to develop trust in a newcomer. Some inmates tend to be leery of people who are new to them.
- Many inmates have been physically or emotionally abused.
- Most will be very straightforward with you and will tell you like it is.
- Inmates often experience many limitations and few personal visits.
- They often experience periods of isolation and loneliness and feel they have no one to trust or share personal issues.
- Inmates who participate in volunteer activities learn to appreciate and respect those volunteers who commit to regular programs.

#### Their backgrounds and experiences:

- Many inmates come from inner-city environments.
- The majority of inmates incarcerated are typically from minority backgrounds.
- Some of them have relatives who are or have been incarcerated.
- Many inmates have held full time jobs, some have been business owners, and some have never been employed.
- Some are college educated, many are high school graduates, and some quit school at an early age or may be illiterate.
- Many have abused alcohol or have used illegal drugs.
- Many inmates may have experienced traumatic brain injuries as youth or adults.

#### Inmates and positive change:

- Some inmates are anxious to learn new skills and to work diligently.
- Change of behavior for most inmates is a long and tedious process, be patient with them as God has been patient with you.
- Inmates need to believe that change is possible.
- Inmates can learn by your example that they can seek Bible based solutions to their problems.
- Your example and consistency will go a long way for encouraging the inmate that change is possible.

#### Cautions:

- Always expect the unexpected.
- Some inmates are keen judges of character and superb con artists.
- Inmates may try to persuade you as a volunteer to satisfy their needs.

## VOLUNTEER RULES (DO'S AND DON'TS)

### Don'ts:

- Try to be cool, you're probably not
- Swap war stories and give the impression that you are glorifying your past evil deeds
- Come to help yourself, prison ministry is not about you. You will be blessed but you are called to be a blessing
- Try to be a theologian, you don't have all the answers but, "you know where to get the answers"
- Have a "holier-than-thou" attitude
- Ask why a person is or has been in prison or how many times they have been incarcerated
- Under any circumstances become angry or impatient with staff member or inmates
- Confront the administration about rules and policies
- Try to push people into making a decision for Christ
- Try to get inmates to attend or join your church, that is not why you are there
- Hold hands when praying together
- Criticize staff, other races, institutions, countries, or religions
- Give anything to an inmate that is not approved by the institution
- Shake hands with inmates through prison bars
- Take anything out of the prison
- Become involved in transacting personal business for inmates
- Let inmates talk you into giving or sending them money
- Give anything that can be converted into money
- Give out phone numbers and addresses to the inmates
- Talk to one resident about another
- Be intimidated by anything a prisoner may say or do
- Make promises to the inmates that you know you can't keep
- Reprimand an inmate about anything
- Let an inmate think he or she can manipulate you in any way, you will be tested
- Bring into the prison or jail a camera or a tape recorder
- Allow gripe sessions in your groups; focus on why you are there
- Attempt to visit an inmate that may have been sent to a hospital unless you have permission
- Bring gum into the prison

- Run on prison grounds
- Enter into a one on one relationship with an inmate if you are of the opposite sex
- Give hard cover books to inmates
- Become fainthearted or discouraged

Do's:

- Be yourself, be natural
- Dress properly
- Obey all the rules of the institution
- Meet and arrive together at the designated prison or jail, and arrive on time
- Stay with your group
- Be very kind and courteous to everyone
- Try to find ways to encourage and give hope
- Share your faith with inmates
- When in doubt, ask
- Be careful about physical contact
- Leave personal items in your vehicle
- Bring only approved literature
- Be patient, honest, dependable, and a good listener
- Take the time to develop trust. A volunteer may be a person an inmate can trust
- Do be prepared to handle flirting or romantic advances
- Take problems, complaints and questions to the program sponsor if the group or individual with whom you work is unable to help you
- Listen to problems, offer suggestions if solicited, and respect confidentiality
- If allowed, do write to the inmates to whom you have spoken or who have impressed you
- Remember that the responsibility you assume as volunteer is a very serious one, every action you undertake in behalf of the inmates must be taken with utmost dedication
- Remember that in many cases, until you see the inmate at the following meeting, you hold his or her love, their hope and future in your hands. Guard these well and remember that through Christ every inmate is redeemable.



## How to communicate with inmates

Some individuals find it difficult to converse with an inmate. How do you get to know an inmate? How do you talk to one? Is there a secret way to do so? There is no secret in conversing or communicating with an inmate. Remember that the inmate is a human being, just like any other person. This is where most people make their greatest mistake. We must never lose sight of who an inmate is and why he or she is incarcerated. Every inmate is there because they have allegedly broken the laws of society and must pay with the loss of personal freedom. Some are innocent, some are guilty, and some are there due to the greed and selfishness of others. Some wanted only to provide for members of their families and were not given a decent chance to do so. An inmate could be one of your own children or could in fact be you. A prison ministry volunteer must consider all of these things when communicating with an inmate.

A prison ministry volunteer must learn how to gain the inmate's confidence and respect. Here are listed seven suggested ways in which a volunteer can gain the confidence and respect of an inmate:

- Always display concern, especially in your words and attitudes.
- Know when to talk and when to listen but make sure that you are in control of the situation not the other person.
- Never give a false impression, explain what you can and cannot do.
- Make only promises you know you can fulfill.
- Never compromise your ideas or standards.
- Try to handle problems by relying on prayer and divine wisdom.
- Encourage the inmate to express his or her thoughts or feelings on the subject at hand.

If the volunteer follows these suggestions he or she will seldom have problems in relating to the inmate. It is rather difficult to empathize with an incarcerated individual unless you have shared a similar experience. You should never say, "I know how you feel" if you have never been in prison, because you don't. Better to say, "It must be very difficult for you." By your actions and words an inmate can determine your prison experience and even the sincerity of your efforts.

A prison ministry volunteer should offer loving concern first, teaching second and preaching third. Once you are accepted by an inmate the battle is half won because then he or she is more apt to listen to what you have to say. Remember, first the inmate must accept you as someone that can be trusted, and in so doing he or she learns to accept themselves as a valuable human being.

Getting the inmate to realize that not everyone "on the outside" has rejected them plays a major role in learning to know and relate to the inmate.

The first question usually on an inmate's mind is "what's in this for you?" They may be skeptical about anyone from the "outside" as they may have often been lied to, had unfulfilled promises and been disappointed and frustrated by many "do-gooders."

You can go into an institution talking about "Jesus cares" but the inmate sees you. He or she wants to know, "do you care?" Once he or she has decided that you do care, then you can begin to explain that God works through human instruments. Let the inmates know that you are here because God loves them and cares about their physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Because you represent how God cares for them, share the source of your happiness, so that they too may know real joy and peace.

The best way to show that you care is practical concern for the inmate inside and outside the prison. Are you familiar with support resources that are available to former offenders upon release? Do they have a plan? Do they know where to have spiritual fellowship on the outside? Will they have shelter, access to recovery services, food, a winter coat?

Not everyone will accept you with friendship. Some are there with the same attitudes that crucified Jesus, thus we must as the Scriptures say, "be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." It will take "pure, unadulterated love" to deal with some of these attitudes.

## Active Listening

Following are several rules of listening.

Active listening is perhaps the most important part of ministering in jails or prisons. You may not have a lot of time to listen to an individual inmate so the window of opportunity for listening one on one or even in a group setting must have your full concentration and dedication. This takes discipline, practice, and a desire to want to be a good listener. Most people believe they are effective listeners however research indicates that on average we are effective listeners at only a 25 percent efficiency level. Much of the time we think we are listening. Bad habits such as interrupting, finishing sentences, allowing ourselves to be distracted, jumping to conclusions, daydreaming or giving in to boredom prevent us from becoming the kind of listeners we should be. The only way to progress is to make some conscious changes. Listening is a simple act. It requires us to be present, and that takes practice, but we don't have to do anything else. We don't have to advise, or coach, or sound wise. We just have to be willing to sit there and listen.

How well do you listen?

Most people are not good listeners. A good listener encourages positive results. Personal listening awareness is the key to constructive change.

Four key elements of Listening:

- Hear the message: Listen to both verbal and nonverbal information.
- Interpret the message: A good interpretation is a understanding of meaning between the speaker and the listener.
- Evaluate the message: Your opinion as a listener should be based on all available information. Ask questions.
- Respond to the message: Good listening means giving the speaker an appropriate response, verbally and/or nonverbally.

Suggestions for good listening:

- Listening is a skill and a gift that should be given generously.
- Understand your biases and control them when you are listening.
- Set aside your ego and focus on the speaker rather than yourself.
- Be patient with the speaker, even if he or she rambles on and repeats themselves, you may be one of the few individuals who are willing to attentively listen to them.
- Even if you become bored with the inmate, listen for key ideas and underlying feelings, rather than for specific facts and words.
- Refrain from constantly interrupting.
- Ask questions for clarification.
- Be sensitive to your listener's needs.
- Use good eye contact and maintain it most of the time.
- Use your listener's name often.
- Be totally in the moment when listening; don't let your mind drift or wander.
- Listen not only with your ears but with your eyes and your heart.
- Listen for the speaker's emotional meaning as well as subject matter content.
- Do not finish other people's sentences unless asked to do so.
- Appropriate the speaker's gestures, expressions, and voice patterns to create comfortable communication.
- Control your emotional "hot buttons" Knowing what makes you react emotionally is your key to preventive maintenance. Always maintain your composure.

## VISITING INMATES

Many inmates in jails and prisons have no one to visit them. Their family may live a great distance from where they are incarcerated or do not have the necessary transportation or finances to visit. Their family may have rejected them or they may have no family. Former friends may have rejected them. Personal visits with an inmate are one of the most rewarding areas of jail and prison ministry.

### The Importance of Personal Visitation

Visiting an inmate on a one-on-one basis is an important ministry for the following reasons:

- Every soul is valuable to God: “The Lord is not willing that any should perish” (2nd Peter 3:9). Jesus ministered to multitudes, but He always had time for the individual (for an example, see John 4).
- Many inmates will not attend religious services. Perhaps they have been “turned off” to the church by negative experiences. They may also be afraid going to prison services will be interpreted as weakness by other inmates and make them vulnerable.
- Many inmates have never experienced true, Godly, unconditional friendship. They have only known abusive or impure relationships.
- As for most of us--it is easier to open up in a personal rather than group setting. You can discuss many issues in a one-on-one visit that you cannot discuss in a group setting. The inmate can share personal needs with you, you can pray and study the Word together, and forge an intimate spiritual bond.
- You become a bridge back into society for the inmate. They will have a friend waiting when they are released from prison.
- One can't have too many friends. You will not only be a blessing, but you will be blessed by a true friendship with an inmate.

### How to get involved in one-on-one visitation with inmates

- Inquire about the visitation program at the jail or prison where you want to volunteer. Many have an organized program for matching inmates with volunteers who want to visit one-on-one.
- If the institution does not have an organized program for matching inmates and visitors, ask the chaplain to match you with an inmate. If there is no chaplain, consult the administrator in charge of visiting and ask for a match.
- People who are ministering inside the prison on a group basis in religious programs are also a good source. They often know of inmates who have no one to visit them or who would benefit from personal attention.
- If possible, exchange a few letters with the inmate prior to your first visit. You will already feel like friends when you meet for the first time.

## Visitation guidelines:

- Go through proper channels to be approved by the institution as a visitor. You may have to fill out certain forms, be pre-approved before your first visit, carry a specific type of identification, etc.
- Learn and abide by all rules for personal visitation in the institution where you are to visit. Rules may include issues like days and hours for visitation, appropriate dress, safety, and dress codes. They usually govern what can and cannot be taken into the institution with you. Many jails and prisons have their rules in writing.
- It is best to visit one-on-one with a person of your same sex. This avoids the pitfalls of improper romantic relationships.
- Normally, it is best not to give money to an inmate or their family. If you believe there is a legitimate need and you really believe God is directing you to do this, it is best to channel your help anonymously through the chaplain or another contact in the institution.
- If you forge a spiritual relationship with an inmate it will be easier to discuss spiritual matters and share the Gospel with them.
- Don't preach or lecture. Ask God to show you how to share His love and the Word of God in a way that will be accepted. After an inmate becomes a believer, continue to disciple him in the Word of God.
- If the institution permits, give a Bible and discipleship literature to the person you are visiting. Depending on institutional rules, you may be allowed to send these items through the mail, take them in yourself, or give materials to the chaplain to deliver.
- Unless you have had training or you are gifted by God in the area of personal counseling, don't assume this role in the relationship. Don't feel you must give an answer to every issue raised.
- As in any association, be a good confidant. Keep personal information shared to you confidential unless there is the potential for the inmate to do harm to themselves or others.
- Prison is a very impersonal, dehumanizing place and an inmate doesn't have much opportunity to receive individual attention. Make the man or woman you are visiting feel special. Make your visits a positive, uplifting time.
- Always remember you are there as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ--but don't spend all your time on spiritual matters. Foster a balanced relationship just as you do with your own personal friends. Discuss current events, laugh together, have fun with the inmate you are visiting.

*Chapter Seven*

**Starting a Reentry  
Ministry**

# Starting a Reentry Ministry

## Introduction:

Inmates being released from prison have many needs as they reenter society. This section will help you identify these needs, understand various types of post-prison ministries, and define your role in ministering to former offenders. The ministry goal of assisting former offenders is transformational; to help each former offender leave the lifestyle of life-repeating problems and to help the former offender understand that they can have an improved quality of life for themselves and their families. This is the advantage of faith-based influence rather than governmental services. The trend of increased concentration of returning prisoners can be viewed as an opportunity for faith-based organizations, communities, foundations and corrections agencies to collaborate together in an effort to focus reentry efforts on selected areas.

## THE NEEDS OF THE FORMER OFFENDER

Some inmates are blessed to be returning to supportive families or churches upon release from prison, but if they do not have such a support network then post-prison ministry is very important. Each person is different and has unique needs, but here are some common needs most former offenders share upon discharge from an institution:

- He or she needs to be accepted in a local church that is nurturing and supportive so they can develop spiritually. If your church is a loving accepting church, invite him or her to go to church with you. Sit with them and invite them to have a meal or snack with you after service.
- They need a strong support network of friends who will love and accept them, pray for and with them, and help them work through problems.
- They need housing, food, and clothing. Inmates who have no “street clothes” sometimes need clothes, underwear, and shoes that can be worn when they leave the institution grounds.
- They may need vocational training.
- They will need employment.
- They may need financial counseling (basics of budgeting, maintaining personal finances, etc.)  
*A special note: Don't give financial help personally to an former offender. It is better that financial assistance is channeled through your church or the administrators of a reentry program.*
- Family counseling is important if the inmate is trying to reunite with family members.
- They may need additional personal counseling for addictions like drugs and alcohol. Believers who have made a commitment to Christ may find addictive temptations one of their first spiritual battles on the outside.
- If he or she has been incarcerated for a long time, they may need assistance with even simple decisions because inmates have very limited options for making decisions in prison.

## REENTRY PRISON MINISTRY

### Begin with Prayer

As with any ministry, all things are fueled by prayer. Pray about what God would have you do in the area of post-prison ministries. God's children are not only to pray in faith, but to work with diligent and provident care. Nehemiah did not regard his duty done when he had wept and prayed before the Lord. He united his petitions with holy endeavor, putting forth earnest, prayerful efforts for the success of the enterprise in which he was engaged. *Prophets and Kings: A Man of Opportunity*

Consult your local church and your Conference Prison Ministries Leaders, Reentry ministry is a collaborative effort

- Prison Ministry leaders can guide and provide valuable input to you; many others from your local conference churches have been involved in Prison Ministry and Reentry programs for many years and will assist in various areas of ministry.
- You will need to gain the interest and support of your pastor, church board, church officers, and fellow church members. This support is vital to obtaining volunteers to staff the programs.
- Show your pastor and church board members how reentry ministry works cooperatively with other programs, ministries, and services of the church. Community Services, Sabbath School, Youth Department, Literature Evangelists, Women's Ministries, and Personal Ministries.
- Share how this scripturally mandated outreach advances the Gospel by putting church members to work both inside and outside institutions.
- Having the support of your church leaders is essential! If you don't have their support, your efforts will most likely be in vain.

### Do an analysis:

Here are some questions to answer in your analysis:

- Are there any local post-prison reentry ministries? If so, what are they? (You may want to become part of a post-prison ministry already in existence.)
- Are there any non-profit or other agencies in your community that focus on reentry?
- Follow-up by researching and/or contacting the organizations to gain a greater understanding of the organization's reentry program.
- What needs exist in your community in regards to reentry resources?
- What needs can you and/or your church fill?
- Are there an active Reentry Roundtables or Reentry Counsels in your state or community?
- How has the reentry crisis affected your community?
- What is the crime rate in your community?
- How many men and women are reentering your community from prison?
- Do former inmates in your area have access to a reentry program?
- What can be done to address the issues caused by crime and prisoner reentry in your community?
- Which of these services can be offered by your organization?



### Visit a similar ministry:

Do not attempt to re-invent the wheel. Do research into the best practices in former offender reentry. If you decide to start a post-prison ministry, visit a similar ministry that exists elsewhere. Learn from their successes and failures. Many pitfalls and obstacles can be avoided by learning from those who have gone before you.

### Determining your role:

What will your role be in reentry ministry? It depends on the answer to the following questions:

- What is permitted by the institution in which you minister?
- Some institutions prohibit volunteers who minister inside the prison from working with inmates after their release. They reason that, should the inmate return to prison, they might be too familiar with the volunteer or be shown special favors because of their relationship outside the institution.

Where could you be the most effective?

- Are you more effective ministering to inmates inside or upon release from prison?
- Where does your interest and vision lie?
- Which gives you the greatest joy and the greatest spiritual results?

What are your time and energy limitations?

- You can't be everything to everyone. Due to personal time and energy restraints, you may need to confine yourself to ministering to inmates either inside or upon release.
- If your institution does not permit your involvement with inmates upon release or you do not have the time or burden for post-prison ministries, then you will want to serve only as a referral agent.
- Make a list of churches and individuals involved in reentry ministries and refer inmates to them.
- Don't become a crutch for the inmate.
- Be available, but don't smother him or her.
- Encourage self-reliance.

### Determine organizational issues to consider:

Funding:

- Post-prison ministries need financial resources. Determine how funds will be secured and develop an operating budget.

Facilities:

- What type of facility is needed and where will it be located?
- Can you get required approvals by the local government to locate the facility in the area you are considering?

Staffing:

- Who will run the post-prison ministry and what are the necessary qualifications?
- Will the positions be paid or volunteer?

## MINISTRY CATEGORIES:

- Basic Educational Services
- Community Service
- Community Building
- Volunteerism

There are different types of post-prison reentry ministries which you may want to start and/or to which an inmate can be referred. Every state has a network of centers that offer a variety of free services that can help prepare former offenders for work and assist them in finding employment and other services.

## COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Reentry initiatives are a collaborative effort, you could be working with a network of various assistance providers:

- The local prison or jail.
- Your local Churches (All denominations)
- Support of your home church, your Conference and Union.
- Foundations and Corporations.
- Non-profit agencies.
- Social Service Providers.
- Your local State and Federal Government.
- Public/Private Partnerships.
- Local Rescue Mission.
- Government or privately operated programs.

## MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

### Stabilizing Ministries

- A local church may choose to start a former offender's group.
- Family emotional support.
- Extended Angel Tree Programs.
- After care emphasis and planning with Correctional Facility before release.
- Support regeneration.
- Collaborative training workshops.

### Christian Transitional Housing:

- This is a group home for former offenders; it is a transition between prison and getting back into normal society.
- This type of ministry usually provides housing, food, counseling, and job placement assistance to its residents.

- Participants may remain there for a set time dictated by authorities or until they find employment and housing.
- Some group homes have a discipleship program and participants are required to complete the program before moving out on their own.
- If you start transition housing, it is important that you have strict rules concerning drugs, alcohol, curfews, and other general behavior standards.

#### Personal Ministries:

- Transportation for Visitation
- Visit Schools
- Meals on Wheels
- Youth Mentoring
- Working with children of incarcerated parents
- Assist with home repairs
- Recovery Coaching
- Facilitating 12 step recovery programs
- Provide volunteer opportunities for former offenders

#### Community Service and Basic Needs:

- Emergency clothing
- Letter writing pre-release
- Release bags, essentials backpacks
- Facilitate ongoing case management
- Offer assistance in housing, counseling, and job placement
- Food pantry
- Street sheets and booklets listing resources and services
- Vouchers for transportation and educational services

#### Educational Programs and Skill Building:

- Learning to Live life skills programs
- Tutoring and mentoring
- Health, safety and fitness classes
- Support groups (Parenting, Coping)
- Adult literacy programs/GED

- Financial management
- Self-Worth initiatives
- Computer skills
- Alternatives to violence programs
- Family life and relationship building
- Communication skills training

#### Community Building

- Host community forums
- Reentry counsels and Roundtables
- Support advocacy for former offenders
- Provide meeting places for training events
- Offer Community Service opportunities
- Enhance community environment with beautification projects
- Develop information & referral centers
- Build community support systems
- Support housing initiatives

#### Employment and Job Readiness:

- Business owners in the church may be recruited to give an ex-felon a job
- Facilitate “On the Job” training
- Job Readiness training and placement
- Facilitate temporary and transitional employment services
- Training for resume writing and interviewing skills
- Provide access to job listings, postings, and referrals
- Provide job-related magazines and local want-ads
- Availability of computers with internet
- Availability of printers, fax machines, phones, and copiers

*Chapter Eight*

**Writing Letters  
(Pen-Pal Program)**

## Writing Letters (Pen-Pal Program)

Letter writing provides spiritual and psychological support as well as Christian fellowship to men and women behind prison walls. Inmates are longing for someone who cares and is willing to take the time and effort to correspond in Christian love. It is impossible to reach all those that would have knowledge of salvation due to the fact that we do not have volunteers working in every prison. Not every inmate will come to our programs but many would like to have some Spiritual correspondence. All letters should include some spiritual direction and inspiration. The pen-pal is there to do a job for the Master and everything that is done must represent Him. Therefore, it is necessary to do all things in decency and in order. This ministry is meant to reach out to prisoners through letters only. Many prisoners are lonely and may seek romantic involvement with a male or female pen-pal. This is absolutely prohibited. Therefore No person of the opposite sex will be allowed to have a one on one relationship with an inmate.

Correspondence with an inmate is a ministry that should be undertaken only after careful, prayerful consideration requiring continuing care and mature discernment. Volunteers who follow the guidelines listed in this material and who seek spiritual counsel as appropriate during the correspondence relationship will be richly rewarded. Remember that you are free to end the pen-pal relationship at any time.

It is the purpose of this pen-pal correspondence to uplift CHRIST to the inmates. Please keep all correspondence on a spiritual basis as much as possible to avoid any undesirable personal or emotional attachments with your pen-pal. Keep Jesus as your guide and the Holy Spirit will direct your words. May the Lord bless you in your endeavors to work for Him.

### How to Communicate to Your Pen-pal

You as pen-pal writer should learn how to communicate with an inmate. In the first letter spend the time evaluating his or her needs as they share their problems and background to you. Actually listening in your correspondence is one of the finest tools you as a pen-pal has. You must try to understand the inmate's point of view but not come across as being judgmental.

Following are several rules of “hearing” what is being said in your correspondence:

- Pray before reading and sending the letters
- Ask for the Holy Spirit to reveal what you need to respond
- Listen for ideas and underlying feelings
- Allow for your own bias
- Keep your mind on what the inmate is saying
- Make a conscious effort to evaluate the logic of what you hear
- Let Christ, who is the answer, have the last word, not yourself
- Don't judge the inmate's motives

## Gaining your Pen-pal's confidence and respect:

Your first encounter sensitizes you and the inmate pen-pal to each other. You must never begin the response by telling the inmate what you think is wrong with him or her. They have probably heard this often from the arresting officer, or the judge, or the social worker, or the court attorney, or the corrections officer. A pen-pal must learn how to gain the inmate's confidence and respect. The first question usually on an inmate's mind is "what's in this for you"? They may be skeptical about anyone from the "outside" because they have often been lied to, had unfulfilled promises and been disappointed and frustrated by many "do-gooders".

- Never say, "I know how you feel" if you have never been in prison, because you don't. Better to say, "It must be very difficult for you".
- By your actions and words an inmate can determine the sincerity of your efforts.
- Getting the inmate to realize that not everyone "on the outside" has rejected them plays a major role in learning to know and relate to the inmate.
- You can write and talk about "Jesus cares" but the inmate reads your words. They want to know, "do you care"?
- Once your pen-pal has decided that you do care, then you can begin to explain that God works through human instruments.
- Share the source of your happiness, and encourage them that they also may know real joy and peace.
- Always display concern, especially in your words and attitudes.
- Know when to talk and when to listen but make sure that you are in control of the situation, not the other person.
- Never give a false impression, explain what you can and cannot do.
- Make only promises you know you can fulfill.
- Never compromise your ideas or standards.
- Try to handle problems yourself by relying on prayer and divine wisdom.
- Encourage the inmate to express his thoughts or feelings on the subject at hand.

Do's:

- Follow the pen-pal rules
- Try to find ways to encourage and give hope
- Share your faith with your pen-pal
- Be dependable, patient, and honest
- Be trustworthy when someone shares with you personal or confidential information

- Write at least once a month
- Be aware that your pen-pal may have emotional ups and downs; they may stop writing for a while.
- Be aware of con games
- Be prepared to handle flirting or romantic advances
- Use your first name only or a pseudonym on the envelope and in the letter
- Give the name and address, of the Pen-Pal P.O. Box only
- Include the prisoner's number after his name on the envelope
- When in doubt, ask your pen-pal program coordinator

Don'ts:

- Make promises you can't keep
- In any way reprimand them about their previous conditions or what they "may" have done to be confined.
- Make the mistake of letting an inmate think he can run a game on you (con you, or fool you) simply because you are a Christian. Be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.
- If a doubtful situation arises, consult your leader or prison ministry coordinator
- Try to be a theologian
- Have a "holier-than-thou" attitude
- Be "preachy" or push people into making a decision for Christ
- Nothing is to be given to the inmates
- Never send your photograph to an inmate
- No telephone numbers are to be given to the inmates
- Give money to an inmate
- Ask why a person is or has been in prison
- Criticize staff, an institution, other races, countries, or religions
- Enter any personal or business transactions with prisoners. It could be a FELONY and you could be prosecuted.
- No worker's home address is to be given to an inmate at any time
- Become involved in the legal matters of a prisoner's case, this includes writing letters to the parole board or attorneys.
- State from the beginning that this is a Christian friendship and all other matters must be taken to a lawyer or case worker.
- Visit or receive phone calls from your pen-pal



## Prison Mail Regulations

- There are strict rules regarding what prisoners can receive through the mail in the prisons
- Prisoners are not allowed to receive cash, packages, food or clothing from the outside
- Cards must be of a single thickness of paper without layers or stickers
- Never put stickers on your letter or envelope
- Do not send laminated prayer cards or laminated book marks
- Prisoners are only allowed to order books through an approved vendor that the prison designates
- You are allowed to help your prisoner buy books only through the approved vendors
- You can cause your prisoner undue hardship by not following the rules of the prison

There are other basic viewpoints that a pen-pal must bear in mind when communicating with the inmate. The pen-pal must understand fully the social and spiritual needs of the inmate. Many inmates who are completely sincere in their conversion are disappointed that the individual involved in leading them to their conversion actually stops short of giving the help they so greatly desire and that is so essential when they are released from prison. The freedom that the inmate yearns for is also the freedom that is dreaded. The inmate looks for and longs for personal liberty but likewise dreads the freedom that deprives him or her of employment because of past sins against society. This view-point and employment problems are matters that the church and those involved in prison ministry reentry must deal with.

## INDEX

Page:

1. **Our Calling**

The Mission

2. You Can Make a Difference
4. Study Documents Lasting Effects
5. Reasons for Prison Ministry
6. Spiritual Reasons for Prison Ministry
7. Qualifications for service

8. **Starting a Prison Ministry**

9. Starting a Jail or Prison Ministry

Begin With Prayer

Seek Counsel From others

Know Yourself (Spiritual Gifts)

10. Investigate the Opportunities

Questions to ask in your investigation

Talk to the people involved with inmate & parole services

11. Possible activities and services you can provide an institution

Providing individualized services in addition to your group program

11. Secure and Train Volunteers

12. Importance of volunteers for all aspects of prison ministry

There are many ways to obtain volunteers

Screening Volunteers

13. Determine volunteer's interests

Train the volunteers after determining their particular areas of interests

13. Learn rules and regulations

14. Prepare a program proposal

The purpose of a proposal

Considerations for a proposal

15. Submit your proposal

Plan your first meeting or outreach

16. **Training for the Jail or Prison**

General Volunteer Guidelines

Prison or Jail Volunteers

Volunteer Training

17. Volunteer Guidelines
18. Rules for Volunteers  
Your Responsibilities
18. Security Issues  
Appearance  
Professionalism
19. Personal parameters and boundaries  
Contraband  
Con games  
Inappropriate or misinterpreted behavior  
Client failure  
Bending the rules
20. Managing aggressive behavior  
Emergency procedures and communication  
Client incidents  
Security risk groups  
Infectious diseases
21. **Manipulation**  
Requirements for successful manipulation  
How manipulators control their victims
23. Vulnerabilities exploited by manipulators  
Protectors Against Being Manipulated
24. **Discipling**  
Bible Studies  
How to Lead a Small Group Bible Study
25. Giving Bible Studies to Inmates
26. Build relationships with members of the group
27. Frequently Asked Questions
28. Giving the Bible Study
29. Preaching  
Preaching Guidelines
30. Worship  
Music, Prayer, Scripture reading, Testimonies
31. **Volunteer Services and Support for Inmates**  
How to Work with Inmates  
What to expect

34. How to communicate with inmates
35. Active Listening
36. Suggestions for good listening
37. Visiting with Inmates
  - The Importance of Personal Visitation
  - How to get involved in one-on-one visitation with inmates
38. Visitation guidelines
39. **Starting a Reentry Ministry**
  - The Needs of former offenders
40. Starting a Reentry Ministry
  - Begin With Prayer
  - Seek Counsel From Others
  - Do an analysis
41. Visit a similar ministry
  - Determining your role
  - Determine organizational issues to consider
42. Ministry Categories
  - Basic Educational Services
  - Community Service
  - Community Building
  - Volunteerism
42. Collaborative Effort
  - Ministry Opportunities
  - Stabilizing Ministries
  - Christian Transitional Housing
43. Personal Ministries
  - Community Service and Basic Needs
44. Educational Programs and Skill Building
  - Community Building
  - Employment and Job Readiness
45. **Writing Letters (Pen-Pal Program)**
  - How to Communicate to Your Pen-pal
46. Gaining your Pen-pal's confidence and respect
47. Pen-pal do's and don'ts
48. Prison Mail Regulations