



Mentoring / Discipling Female Prison Inmates

Orientation Handbook

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**Prepared by Metanoia Prison Ministries
of the
Presbyterian Church in America**

What I want to ask you is simply this (though it means tremendously much to me). I've been trying to get a church here in Northwest Georgia to be my home church, because I've been forsaken by all my family and past friends for the entire 28 long years now I've been imprisoned, except for just a short time of "token shows of help" by three persons who did not prove true and lasting....

Letter from Walker State Prison inmate
December 28, 2011

Foreword

Deliberate, long-term, one-on-one mentoring and discipleship of inmates is foreign to most men and women. Bad guys? Aren't they getting what they deserve? Perhaps, but as Christians, nowhere do we find that we should forget them. The writer of Hebrews exhorts us to:

“Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering” (Hebrews 13:3).

We understand the very nature of our judgment before Christ in terms of the evidences of true faith - our works of mercy. Prison and prisoners feature prominently:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world....I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you....in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” Matthew 25:31-40

Don't think for a minute that the walls and bars of men, meant to keep inmates in, can keep Christ out. And do not think that the same Spirit of God that raised Christ from the dead will be constrained from bringing inmates forth from prisons with great power and might to proclaim Him in their families, cities and churches, to the honor and glory of God:

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.” Isaiah 61:1-3

In God’s eyes, there is no sin that has been committed by inmates that is any worse than the sin we harbor in our own hearts this instant. All have sinned and God hates all sin:

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8)

“...as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

“Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.”

“The venom of asps is under their lips.”

“Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”

“Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.”

“There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Romans 3:10-18)

So what does that make men or women in prison who have given their lives to Christ as we have? Why, it makes them Christians like us. They are adopted into the family of God. They are fellow heirs of Jesus Christ. Their names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. They are brothers and sisters of ours in Christ. And what is our responsibility towards brothers and sisters in Christ who are hurting? Don’t we bear

their burdens (Galatians 6:2)? Don't we commit not to abandon each other but encourage one another (Hebrews 10:25)? Don't we have a Christ-given Biblical charter to make disciples as did Paul?

“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

Colossians 1:24-29

Our chosen method of engaging Christian brothers and sisters building time in prisons, given the nature of the darkness in these places, is to disciple in the context of relationship -- deliberate, founded on Scripture, and sticking closer than brothers. This is mentoring. It is not “content-on-life” like you would get in a small group Bible study. We practice “life-on-life”, investing ourselves like Christ gave Himself to His apostles, and like Paul gave himself to Timothy. This is a well proven model of “making disciple makers”. We will be the Church coming alongside Christian brothers and sisters in prisons, to mentor them -- in Christ.

By the time inmates reach pre-release facilities, we will come alongside them to be - what possibly is - the last, meaningful opportunity for godly, deliberate, structured, nurturing life-on-life relationships prior to release from incarceration.

Transformation of the heart followed by deliberate mentoring, has a dramatic impact on recidivism. Match-Two (M2), a faith-based ministry, has 39 years of experience mentoring inmates. Find their story on the internet. M2 began in California in 1971 as a pilot program in four correctional facilities. By 1987, less than one-third of inmates matched with an M2 mentor during their incarceration returned to prison. Through the 1990s, seven of ten inmates who received 12 mentoring visits in a year didn't return to prison. See a letter from one mentor during that period covering his experience with a male inmate...

February 29, 2012...

It is a pleasure to talk about my experience mentoring an inmate in the California prison system. It all started for me with an invitation from the local director of Match-Two (M2), a mentoring outreach ministry, who also was a member of my church. He had heard me talk of experiences I had with the Bill Glass Prison Ministry over several years of going into the prisons witnessing to the inmates. I was told that the M2 program was for inmates with no local family to visit them and he asked if I would be available for a monthly visit over a 12-month period. Since Corcoran State Prison was only 25 miles away from my home in Visalia, I agreed.

When I arrived at the prison I was given six or seven applications from inmates and was told to choose one. I picked a man named Mark*. From the outset he seemed to be very cordial. He was pleased to be picked. Little did I know that Mark was a Christian man. He had accepted Christ in a local jail prior to coming to Corcoran. My original thinking was that I could do about anything once a month for a year, so I visited him.

The relationship grew and I would look forward to our visits and the discussions which ranged from Bible beliefs, to living and

dealing with problems in the prison system. The visits were so excellent that I told my wife that she probably would enjoy them with me. Prison officials accepted her application to serve with me, and she was cleared to visit. She began accompanying me and sure enough, she was thrilled. Even though my original commitment was for one year, we continued visiting Mark regularly until his release *over a period of about 14 years.*

It was obvious to us that God had big plans for Mark since he was a model prisoner with both the correctional officers and other inmates. Since his release we have followed his personal growth and development, including seeing his wonderful wife and child become such an important part of his life. As we continue to pray for his family and his ministry we know that God will certainly use him in a mighty way. What started out as a casual once a month visit to walk alongside a prisoner actually helped to change my life. I saw what God can do for someone who, in the eyes of society had committed a serious crime, and was locked up for a long long time. God made such great changes in this man. He has become a solid citizen.

Only a loving God knew the plans for Mark and today what a marvelous Christian leader he has become of which makes my wife and I very proud of the opportunity we have had to know him.

In Christ's Name,

Vern ...

*Editor's note: Today, Mark Casson is the happily married father of two children, an Elder in his church, the director of the Presbyterian Church in America's (PCA) prison ministry, and the executive director of Metanoia Prison Ministries, a national prison ministry of the PCA.

Table of Contents

Introduction	13
Understanding Prisoners	
I. The Prison Itself	15
II. Inmate Characteristics	18
III. Inmate Needs	21
Mentoring and Discipling Inmates	
I. What is a Mentor?	25
II. What are Some Additional Qualities of a Mentor?	29
III. Accountability Aspects of Being a Mentor to Inmates	33
Engaging in the Prison	
I. Dress Code for Mentors	35
II. Calling in Sick or Missing Commitments	36
III Confidentiality	36
IV. Basic Rules for Mentors While in the Prison Facility	36
V. How Can You Tell If An Inmate Is Getting To You?	39
VI. Manipulation	41
VII. Other Security Matters for Prison Mentors	42
Appendices	
“Pray for Me”, a story by Patrick Clark	45
Statement of Faith	52
Accountability Agreement	53

Introduction

The Need for the Gospel and Discipleship in America's Prisons

The United States of America has an incarceration rate of 743 per 100,000 of its national population, the highest in the world. This works out to about 2.4 million people, or about 1% of the adult population. Over 10,000 ex-prisoners are released from America's state and federal prisons weekly. More than 650,000 are released from prison every year. *The recidivism rate in America is between 60% and 70%. This means that approximately two-thirds will likely be rearrested within three years of release.*

Compelling evidence shows that recidivism is reduced dramatically for persons who are discipled in prison, have kept bridges to their families, and who are integrated into caring communities upon release. The Church has a role to play in preventing inmates from returning to prison by honoring God as we engage the Word of Truth - the Gospel - to disciple Christian inmates in the faith, and by God's grace be instruments through which others may hear it for the first time and be transformed.

Another shocking statistic is the number of adults under correctional supervision in the United States. At the beginning of 2010 this had reached more than 7.2 million, or more than 3.1% of the adult population. Correctional supervision includes all persons incarcerated (in jail or prison), or supervised in the community (probation or parole). It would be helpful for all of us to understand these terms, defined below:

Jail - confinement in a local jail while pending trial, awaiting sentencing, serving a sentence that is less than 2 years, or awaiting transfer to other facilities after conviction.

Prison – generally involves confinement in a state or federal correctional facility to serve a sentence of more than one year.

Transition Facility – no longer time-building; temporary quarters while still remaining under care prior to release.

Probation - court-ordered period of correctional supervision in the community generally as an alternative to incarceration. Probation can be a combined sentence of incarceration followed by a period of parole and community supervision.

Parole - period of conditional supervised release in the community following a prison term.

Indeed, the work of our volunteer mentors is a very high calling. Neither harsh prison conditions, nor training programs, nor educational curriculum breaks recidivism's back as does the Gospel. Through presentation of the Gospel message and the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, hearts are transformed and lives are made new. Inmates who learn and apply Bible-based life skills are equipped to handle extended periods of incarceration living for God and experiencing the joy of His salvation, even while remaining in these dark places. Many more pass through periods of parole or probation well equipped and with a new purpose - living for God in their families and communities with an everlasting hope that only comes by knowing Jesus as Lord.

Sources: Bureau of Justice, <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov>. Correctional Populations in the U.S., 2009 (NCJ 231681); Pew Charitable Trust, Prison Fellowship International, Christian Assoc. for Prison Aftercare, and the Barna Research Group.

Understanding Prisoners

I. The Prison Itself

We can ask the question, “Is there anything special about mentoring a prisoner?” The answer to this question is somewhat complex. In order to answer it, we have to figure out who the prisoners are. Prisoners are a special class of people unlike any other. They have their own culture, language, customs, values, etc. They also live in an environment unlike what we live in out here on this side of the fence. When you are walking out of the prison and back to your car to drive home, you should be aware of what the prisoner is walking back to. Compassion is defined by Webster’s as “sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to help alleviate it.” We need to understand what the environment is for prisoners before we can begin to walk with them as mentors.

Living quarters. Imagine a place in which you live in a box that is about half the size of a small bedroom. In that 7’ x 9’ cell, you have two beds, two lockers, a small writing desk with stool, a sink/toilet combination, and whatever property the two occupants have. Oh, yeah, you also have two grown adult men or women men in there. Most of us have sheds for our lawn mowers that are larger than most prison cells! This cell is in a building with scores of others. There may be several buildings on the “yard”. This yard is enclosed by one or more fences topped with razor wire with towers scattered about manned with gunners. This is the environment in which prisoners live their lives. Some prisoners live in dormitories instead of cells. Now, imagine yourself a Christian in this environment, surrounded by prisoners who have broken every law known to man. You once were one of them, but now you are a new creature in Christ Jesus. What sort of fellowship does light have with darkness? You can get the idea that prison isn’t a fun place to be, especially so for a Christian. Many inmates live in over-crowded dormitories where privacy is non-existent.

Culture. The culture of prison is dark. Prisons are filled with wicked persons who have done wicked things, and many of them relish in their wickedness and revel in the “glory” of their evil deeds. The Christian, whether a mentor from outside or a Christian prisoner, must walk as light in this darkness. As mentors, we must make sure that we don’t get caught up in this culture and partake of the wickedness that we may find there. The prison culture loves its evil deeds. Prison is also a culture that is filled with gangs of every flavor (Black, White supremacist, Hispanic, other ethnic, etc.). Most of the gangs are racially-based. The prison culture is highly racist and full of hatred. Other points to think about:

- This is like a foreign society / sub-culture
- It can be a very violent place (stabblings, rape, fights, fires, suicide)
- Prejudice prevails
- No freedom – demeaning treatment destroys self worth
- Single sex environment
- Suspicion is everywhere. Prisoners work to try not to be vulnerable. With whom can they share their deepest thoughts and feelings? Possibly no one.
- Survival of the fittest / hardest / most manipulative - whatever gains control or power
- Evidence of what we call the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, kindness, etc.) are signs of weakness in the prison culture

Environment. Something that is unique to prison is what some term the “fishbowl existence”. This means that prison is, in many ways, like living in a fishbowl. Everyone can see you at any time and in any circumstance. Even in your cell you don’t have privacy, and this includes when you need to use the toilet. Any person can walk up to your cell at any given time and knock on the door, so you really have no escape from the environment.

Noise is an issue in prison. In the early morning hours, you might get moments in which things are relatively silent. Some prisoners make their own ear plugs to try and drown out the constant din of the prison. Others just get used to the noise and it becomes secondary.

Prison “speak”. The language of prison is pretty interesting. What you find there is a mixture of urban ghetto slang, country bumpkin speak, educated institutional language, foreign words and phrases, and some made up stuff that is quite interesting. Keep in mind that every jail or prison is different. Women are not immune from falling into this pattern of communications.

In addition to this sort of unique language, you will hear a lot of profanity and vulgarity. It makes one wonder if some prisoners take pride in knowing every third word they speak is profanity.

Inmate values. The value system of prison is about as backwards as it can be. What is meant by this statement is that prisoners have a ranking system based on how bad a person is rather than how good they are. So, a murderer is high on the food chain while a petty thief is down low. Think about that for a moment. The prisoners can look up to the person who has done worse deeds and look down on the “white collar” guy.

With this being said, there are two areas in which prisoners are typically right on track with the outside world: patriotism and family. You might be surprised to find out that a good number of prisoners are former military. Prisoners are very patriotic and this includes foreigners. Many foreign prisoners identify strongly with their nationality and heritage. Equally strong is the concept of family. Nothing is as sacred as a man or women’s family in prison. Generally they are off limits when there are issues between rivals. When something happens to a prisoner’s family member (illness, death etc.) many of his or her fellow prisoners are there for support. There are many cases in which sworn enemies gave something to help an enemy when something happened to family members.

II. Inmate Characteristics

When it comes to individuals in prison, you will find everything under the sun. You will find uneducated people who can't read, and medical doctors who won awards in their field. You will find athletes and businesspersons, gangsters and hoodlums, prostitutes and pimps. You will find individuals who lived on the streets and some who lived in mansions. The spectrum is very broad.

Any sin that can cause a person to be incarcerated you may encounter at the prison where you serve -- murder, violence against another person, sexual assault, child molestation, forgery, robbery, you name it... We will not ask our mentors if they will or will not accept mentees based on their crime. Neither will we ask mentors if they will or will not accept persons of an-other race as mentees. We have come to serve brothers and sisters in Christ who desire a life changing relationship with Christ. Let's look at a cross section of the prison population we may encounter.

Women, in particular have needs that are different than men when it comes to mentoring since in addition to the criminal behavior, they have a disproportionate amount of victimization from sexual or physical abuse in their pasts. Furthermore, males have tended to abandon their families while women maintain responsibility for children in addition to caregiving roles. Women have a greater likelihood to be addicted to drugs, and have mental illnesses. Not only are the needs of women so much greater, unfortunately they are often last in receiving services.

Education. Most prisoners are not high school graduates. According to an Oregon organization called "Fight Crime: Invest in Kids", 68% of state prison inmates do not have a high school diploma. You will find persons with nine years of schooling who function on a fourth or fifth grade level. Many inmates will have little or no vocational training and many will have worked for minimum wage, if they worked at all.

While it does not hold true in every case, it has been Metanoia's experience that the longer the sentence prisoners have, the more they will work to educate themselves in prison. A person who has a two or three year sentence typically will not think about getting his / her GED or other education. But an inmate who has 10 years or more is very likely to get a GED and probably some additional education if available. A mentor will encourage them to take advantage of every available educational opportunity.

Drugs/Alcohol. In February 2010, the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University published a report entitled: "Behind Bars II: Substance Abuse and America's Prison Population". In this report, the researchers concluded that 85% of prisoners are in prison due to alcohol and/or drug related crimes! *"It is no coincidence that of the 2.4 million inmates in U. S. prisons, 65 percent--1.5 million--meet the DSM-IV medical criteria for alcohol or other drug abuse and addiction. Another 20 percent -- 458,000 -- even though they don't meet the DSM-IV medical criteria for alcohol and other drug abuse and addiction nevertheless were substance involved; i. e., were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time of their offense, stole money to buy drugs, are substance abusers, violated the alcohol or drug laws, or share some combination of these characteristics."* What this means for us is that it is highly likely that you will be mentoring someone who has sin issues related to drugs and/or alcohol.

Pride. Pride is a sin that has been the downfall of man since the Garden of Eden. When one looks at Lucifer as told in Isaiah, we see the pride come out of him, "I will do this and I will do that". Pride is a besetting sin that many of us struggle with, but prisoners take to a different level. Many prisoners wear their tattoos as symbols of their pride. Fights and arguments break out when one person beats another in a particular game or sport. Chess matches often look like boxing matches as the two players taunt each other verbally across the board. Our women mentors should not be surprised to see the very large proportion of women in

prison wearing tattoos. If Christ can look beyond external adornment, can we find it in our hearts to do the same?

Pride is dangerous because it doesn't allow inmates to ask for help. It doesn't allow us to ask for clarification if we don't understand something. It doesn't allow us to lose or to be seen as weak in any way. We Christians know that pride is a killer and a liar and we must constantly fight against it.

Talent. You will find some of the most creative and talented people in prison. This includes artists, musicians, poets, etc. Mentors should look for areas of talent and encourage prisoners to use their talents for God's glory. If prisoners are musicians, then perhaps they can play music in the chapel or write songs for God. If poets, perhaps they can write poems or songs. Artists can draw for God's glory.

And, normal. Perhaps one of the biggest things that strikes people as odd is that prisoners are normal people like everyone else. ***We all are sinners.*** Prisoners are sinners who have committed sins that result in prison sentences. Some of us are guilty of sins which would have resulted in prison sentences in other generations. Prisons are made up of a wide range of people from all walks of life. Mentors must realize that in God's eyes, the sins for which an inmate was incarcerated is no different than that sin that any of us on the outside harbor in our hearts at this instant.

III. Inmate Needs

Mentors will want to watch for the times when inmates may be preoccupied, worried or stressed. It is in such times that mentors are worth their weight in gold. If ever there was a need for a mentor it will be in crisis times such as these:

- Going before judge or parole authorities
- Death or severe illness in family
- Returning to society
- Being threatened / fighting
- Marital / girlfriend - boyfriend / problems
- Times when other important routine life events go on with families (births, etc.)
- Problems with sons and daughters
- Sexual approaches

Inmates have other needs, too. They differ from what you will find in open society. Understand these needs and you will be able to navigate your way into special enduring relationships.

Inmates need Christian friends who can show genuine concern, without leaving the impression of being “better than you”. This friend may be a chaplain, another inmate, or a friend from outside. Seldom will it be a correctional officer. Even in faith and character-based programs there will be an arm’s length relationship here and elements of mistrust. Keep in mind the value of your friendship to the inmate. For many this is their only outside contact. We must be people who keep our word. We must show up when we say we will. This helps model a Christ-like life.

Inmates need to be taught how to be disciple makers to live the vibrant Christian lives in obedience to Christ’s call for all Christians to go make

disciples. It is part of who the Christian person is and what he or she is called to do in the Church.

Inmates need people who can listen more than talk and who through wise and loving questioning can lead him or her to explore some alternatives to their problems.

Inmates need worthwhile relationships based on mutual trust, respect, honesty and understanding. Our showing up can stop lives from spiraling down into or returning from “institutional nothingness”.

Inmates need a realistic plan of self-adjustment to their present situation and future opportunities. Mentoring curriculums can include helps to build confidence in advance of release or transition to another facility (if in pre-sentencing facility prior to sentencing.)

Mentors will reassure Christian mentees of the security a Believer has, the personal value that they have as children of God and the knowledge that even though they have sinned they have an “Advocate with the Father”. Much is passed around in the prison culture that is unsound doctrine and very poor practical theology. Good teaching counters that.

Inmates desire real love and want to love others. The non-Christian inmates needs to know that God loves them, that Jesus died for them, and that God wants them to be members of His family of “Born Again Believers.” They also need to know that you love them as persons and the opportunity to share Jesus Christ with them may not come in the first minutes of conversation. Only the Holy Spirit can convict of sin and convert the soul. You will need to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Inmates need continued friendships among other prisoners. The mentor will have the opportunity to foster a “circle of trust” between inmates that they will not find anyplace else.

Inmates need to know they can trust you to care for them and that you will not fall for the games they will try to play with/on you but that you will continue to love in spite of them as God loves us.

Other inmate characteristics so we can understand their needs:

- Inmates feel victims of injustice. It is hard for many to face the fact that they are personally responsible for imprisonment.
- Guilt – dealing with sin (need to admit, repent, humble themselves)
- High incidence of inmates from broken homes – little love or discipline. Accustomed to doing whatever they wanted to do.
- See themselves as losers
- Loneliness – often first time separated from family and friends; few if any acceptable good relationships. Tends to seek own kind in prison.
- Frustration – helpless to control lives
- Fear (courts, family outcome, rape, gambling or other debts)
- Anger / defiance against law and authority. Has “them vs. us” mentality. “Them” includes police, judges, lawyers, courts, wardens, prison officers, chaplains, pastors, and churches. “Us” includes all other “losers” that have been arrested and imprisoned.
- Bitterness – friends and family have forsaken them
- Wants out of prison and wants out now
- If they had religious training as children, they feel God let them down
- Doubts security as believer and are not sure God will hear and answer prayers
- If they have never had any Christian training, assume God and church are for others
- Poor self-esteem and now covers that with an outward bravado

Mentoring and Discipling Inmates

I. What is a Mentor?

Like most words in the English language, mentor means different things to different people. To some the word means teacher. To others, a mentor is a friend who is a bit older. Still others view mentor as a guide or leader of a group. For our purposes, we define a mentor as “A person who enters into a personal relationship with another for the purpose of enriching the other person’s life through their guidance, teaching, encouragement, example, accountability, and love.”

Several important characteristics that make up a good mentor:

The Mentor is personal. The mentor is entering into a personal relationship with the mentee. Personal means that we must take time to get to know the person. We must find out about them. This takes time and effort. It also involves telling someone about ourselves and allowing them to get to know us. When Jesus was choosing His apostles, He called them individually by name and entered into a very personal relationship with them. He knew each of them and they knew him. These men had a different relationship with Jesus than other people had with him.

The mentor is life-enriching. The mentor is entering into a personal relationship that is enriching to the other person. While this may seem something that is a given, it bears mentioning here. All too often it is possible to enter into a relationship for the purposes of “fixing” someone or “setting them straight”, and such relationships end up being damaging rather than enriching. One of the characteristics of a good mentor is that they are always giving of their time, talent and treasure in such a way that you don’t realize it. In other words, they take the time to get into the car, drive down to the prison and visit, but never say, “Do you know how much time I’ve invested today to come here and see you?”

Enrichment always involves the thing or person being in a better state than before.

The mentor guides and teaches. These two things are very similar, yet worlds apart. It is probably accurate to say that they belong together on the same coin. Teaching is done in various ways and so is guiding, but they are not synonymous.

Guiding involves leading and direction. It is a big picture sort of thing. One could say that teaching involves the minutia. Teaching is instruction; guiding is moving what is taught. Drawing an analogy from baseball, you can teach someone the fundamentals of the game: how to hit, bunt, field a pop fly, and take a grounder and how to slide. This is done through repetition, practice and memory. You can also teach them all the rules. However, it takes good guidance to lead a team to victory, or a championship. Often times it isn't the team with the best players who win championships. Rather, it is the team that has the best leader who can guide the team through a good start in April as well as the dog days of August. He can lead through a five-game losing streak as well as a seven-game winning streak. This guide isn't teaching his players anything. Rather he is guiding them utilizing their strengths and weaknesses. He points them towards the right decisions and allows them to use their skills to maximum benefit. A mentor does both the teaching and the guiding. You may teach someone how to go through a job interview or how to eat a three-course meal. You also may guide them towards singing in the choir because they have a gift for singing.

The mentor is an encourager. This is one of the most important aspects, if not the most important aspect of the mentor/mentee relationship. We live in a fallen world inhabited by sinners. According to the Apostles, we live in a war zone, continually behind enemy lines. We are called to fight the good fight of the faith. This world is, with all its beauty and blessing, a cursed place. As such, it can often be a discouraging place. For the prisoner, prison is a highly discouraging place. It's a place where you are reminded every minute of your sin and its consequences

on this earth. In the midst of this, the prisoner needs encouragement. The Apostle Paul tells us to encourage one another and to bear one another's burdens. We are called to speak the truth in love to one another. We all probably know the person who is Mr. or Mrs. Discouragement. No matter what someone is going to do, it won't work, or isn't good enough, or not the best idea, etc. Please don't be that person. The world is filled with enough Donny Downers.

The mentor sets an example. This is another great characteristic of a mentor. People are often more influenced by what we do than by what we say. We are called to "be witnesses" for Christ. Let's be continually aware that we are being watched by everyone around us, and, most importantly, by God every second. When visiting your mentee, don't start talking badly about the correctional staff that made you wait ten minutes to get into the visiting room. Don't talk about ways that you may have skirted a bad situation by not complying with the letter as well as the spirit of the law. Don't exhibit rude or sinful behavior. There should be a consistency of character that is seen by everyone.

Mentors are accountable. A huge part of the mentor/mentee relationship is accountability. Christians should have accountability partners. This is someone you know well and trust enough to discuss your sins and shortcomings. Our hope is that you will develop such a relationship with your mentee so that he feels comfortable enough to allow you to be their accountability partner. In some sense we are all our "brother's keepers" (see Genesis 4). In other words, we all are accountable to each other as Christians. This concept has lost a lot of luster in recent years, but it is true nonetheless. What does it mean to hold one another accountable? This involves both doctrine and practice.

Mentors model love. Love is the motivating factor that compels us to be mentors. If you are involved for any reason other than love, then perhaps you should step back and reconsider mentoring. Everything we do ought to be done out of a motive of love: love for God and love for

our neighbor.” You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.” (Matt. 22:37-40) Mentoring works the best when those being mentored are aware that the mentor has a genuine concern and care for their development & success.

When you look at what a mentor is more closely, you’ll find that, at the end of the day, we are talking about a disciple-maker. A good mentor is really one whose goal is to disciple people for Christ. In his book, “The Mentor Leader”, Tony Dungy writes, “*At its core, mentoring is about building character into the lives of others, modeling and teaching attitudes and behaviors, and creating a constructive legacy to be passed along to future generations of leaders.*”

Mentors help inmates heal themselves. Teach them how to forgive. Forgiveness is a decision to treat other persons like something never happened, while still holding them accountable for their actions. Accountability is to insure that it does not happen again.

Forgiving themselves requires that they admit their wrongs to the people involved and accept the consequences of their own behavior.

They pay their debts to their family, their victims, and society by doing their time, changing their lifestyle, and making any needed restitution. Then, help them to accept the fact that they now have a clean slate. Show them how to stop punishing themselves and start living the rest of their lives as if their moral failures never happened. Inmates must understand that this may be hard to do. It becomes especially hard when they face unforgiving people who constantly remind them of their failures.

Give the gift of self-esteem because of who they are in Christ:

We are created in the image of God...

We have been forgiven...

We are salt and light in the world...

We have been crucified with Christ and we no longer live, but Christ lives in us...

We are a new creation...

We are dead to sin and alive to Christ...

We are children of God, adopted as sons...

We are fellow heirs with Christ...

We have direct access to God...

We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit...

Self-esteem and the feeling of completeness that follows, has four aspects: feeling loved, feeling accepted, feeling competent, and following ethical Biblical principles. Mentors can help inmates develop self-esteem by explaining who they are in Christ, then giving or showing them respect and acceptance as brothers and sisters in Christ. Helping them to develop areas of competence and teaching them how to practice Godly living will give them the ability to achieve the others.

Men and women will be better prepared to return to their communities as contributing members of society. They not only will become church members, they will improve the churches in which they enter.

Men and women leaving via transfer to other prison facilities will be equipped as disciple makers. Their mission will be to reveal Christ in those places and then to nurture and mentor men themselves.

II. What are some additional qualities of a Mentor?

Mentors:

... prepare thoroughly and well for each session they lead.

- ... encourage mentees to take advantage of every program, Bible study and Chapel service offered at the facility or prison. We will not be doing formal Bible study. We will be modeling Christ and engaging with the Gospel. You will find that formal Bible studies are provided by other volunteer teams at the prison where you serve.
- ... help inmates deal with guilt realistically. Mentors do not defend their crimes and failures. Point them to the “Great Physician” who can make them whole. Tell them that God’s “Whosoever” includes them. Mentors do not judge.
- ... will encourage inmates about future plans. What does he really want to do? You may discuss and even facilitate plans for achieving realistic goals such as employment, schooling, and so forth.
- ... don’t defend what they have; don’t ask crime; point them to God
- ... are listeners. You will get plenty of opportunities to talk, but you want to listen carefully to the mentee. They NEED to express themselves. You may be their ONLY outlet. Listen for the positive and commend them for it. A little praise goes a long way. Don’t feel that you must have an answer to all the inmates’ problems. Instead, try to understand how they feel. Most people can solve their problems when they believe that someone cares and understands.
- ... challenge mentees to proper attitudes and behavior and expect them to accept responsibility for themselves. They may be looking for others, including you, to do things for them that are his responsibility. This is a natural, but self-defeating, response when one is down.
- ... listen for repetition (problem areas).
- ... are not shocked or surprised.
- ... are real and do not put on a façade of any sort. Prisoners are generally pretty good at spotting fakes. What you are and how you relate may mean more than what you say.

- ... act like themselves. Much like the item above, it is important to be who you are.
- ... are consistent. If you are scheduled to be at the prison on a day and time, please make every effort to be there. Many prisoners come from homes where they didn't know their father or the male figure in their life was inconsistent. Many have only known chaos.
- ... are friends.
- ... treat mentees as they, themselves, wish to be treated.
- ... encourage inmates to become involved in a church upon their release. This is so very important in the lives of returning inmates.
- ... are flexible. You might want to discuss something but the conversation doesn't go that way. That's OK. There will most likely be another time to discuss it.
- ... are patient. It may take a little time to develop a relationship with someone. That's OK. The inmate may not know how to relate well to others. Expect them to distrust you at first and be patient while they learn to trust you. Expect great things to be accomplished because with God all things are possible! Don't become discouraged if you don't see immediate results.
- ... work with the institution. Observe the rules for visiting and for correspondence. Almost never agree or disagree with criticism by the inmate, but try to help him consider all sides of the issue. Things are not always as they seem.
- ... pray for the mentees, mentors, coordinators, chaplains, staff, etc. Remember, it is God's power that changes lives, not our cleverness.
- ... abide by all the rules established by the facility or prison. Breaking these rules could be a felony.

Mentors do not:

Mentors do not ask the mentee about their crime. If they wish to discuss it at some point, that is their prerogative.

Mentors do not believe everything they hear

Mentors do not give legal advice

Mentors do not bad-mouth the system in front of prisoners.

Mentors do not enter into any business arrangements with prisoners.

Mentors do not give inmates gifts in person or through the mail.

Mentors do not major on the minors. Some of us can get into discussions where we have to make our point no matter what, and at the end of the day, the point doesn't matter that much.

Mentors do not think that they have to have all the answers.

Mentors do not talk about other prisoners or mentors behind their backs. This can have dire consequences.

Mentors do not bad mouth other groups. As my mother used to say, "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything." We aren't there to put down a politician, or a TV preacher, or anyone.

Mentors are not there to promote our denominational religion. We bring Christ. Do not debate predestination vs. Arminianism. Do not argue forms of Baptism. Do not argue eschatology (end times), etc.

Remember what has been attributed to Augustine: "In the essentials - unity; in the non-essentials - liberty; and in all things - love." There are things Christians must agree on and about which inmates must learn if they are to have a solid foundation such as the Divinity of Jesus, the accuracy and authority of the Bible that Jesus is the only way to salvation, etc. But we should be gentle when disagreeing.

Mentors do not give out personal information such as home address, phone numbers, etc. Establish a post office box or a church address for this purpose.

Mentors to not discriminate against anyone based on anything! (i.e. race, religion, socio-economic background, educational background, crime committed.)

Mentors do not think of the prisoner/mentee as a project. They are Christians who need our love, encouragement, kindness, etc.

Mentors are not surprised by Christian prisoners who know more of the Scriptures than they do. These prisoners have a lot of time to study and meditate on the word.

Mentors don't make promises they will not keep.

III. Some Accountability Aspects Mentoring Inmates

As a volunteer mentor you probably be asked to agree to:

- Notify the facility or prison chaplain, staff or mentor coordinator of any change in your volunteer schedule, any change in your address and/or phone numbers, or if you need to be absent during the time you committed to serve;
- Be accountable to the mentoring ministry team for your activities by submitting any required attendance or monthly report forms;
- Emphasize what we hold in common as Christians concerning salvation and spiritual growth rather than denominational issues / distinctives, and other controversial interpretations that may cause division / confusion with the inmates (In many prisons, Christian inmates form “camps” and volunteer teaching stimulates division rather than unity.);
- Abide by the rules and regulations of the facility where assigned;

- Resign as a mentor volunteer if at any time you are unable to follow these guidelines.
- If you are not a “rule keeper”, then prison ministry is not for you.

Engaging in the Prison

I. Dress Code for Mentors

Volunteers entering most correctional institutions are encouraged to dress comfortably and in casual attire, and shall be expected to dress in good taste. Simple decency and modesty without excessive external adornment should be the norm. Wardens and Directors will further define these requirements in local policy on a prison-by-prison basis.

Volunteers will find that most prisons hold to similar guidelines:

- Clothing shall fit appropriately, and be neither too large nor too small, creating no obvious gaps or exposure.
- Open toe shoes or sandals may not be permitted in certain facilities.
- Steel-toed shoes, shower shoes, and flip-flops, may be prohibited.
- Make sure you know the specific guidelines of the facility in which you serve before showing up in shorts or skirts as you may be denied entrance.

Other clothing that may not be permitted includes:

- Any clothing that is transparent or translucent in nature;
- Sleeveless shirts and blouses;
- Dresses or clothing exposing a bare chest or midriff;
- Camouflage attire;
- Worn or tattered clothing with holes;
- Clothing with logos that contain pictures, slogans, or vulgarity; or contain signs or symbols of security threat groups. The association may be made by color combination, designs, or logos affixed to the clothing, or the manner in which the clothing is worn.
- Bandannas;

- Volunteers may not be allowed to wear excessive clothing such as two pairs of pants or an extra shirt under their top layer of clothing. This prohibition is necessary in order to prohibit the exchange of clothing between inmates and visitors.

II. Calling in Sick or Missing Commitments

If a mentor is sick or for some reason cannot report for their volunteer work, they should call the mentoring ministry point of contact in sufficient time to make alternative arrangements. Failure to do so is disruptive to the program and especially to the offenders. Volunteers who are repeatedly absent may be dismissed.

III. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an ever-present issue that concerns both the mentor and the prison staff. It is imperative that the mentors respect the confidentiality of the verbal and written information about an offender obtained by the mentor.

A mentor must report any information obtained that might involve possible injury to any person or about any activity which may jeopardize security or safety in the institution. Such information must be reported as soon as possible to correctional officers.

IV. Basic Rules for Mentors While in Prison Facilities

- You are a guest. Being a mentor is a privilege; not a right. You are here to support the staff and the institution.
- Keep to your Christian witness before inmates, guards, facility staff and everyone with whom you come in contact at the penal institution.

- One of the easiest pitfalls for a mentor is being on the inmate's side "against" the institution.
- Inmates will play one individual against another. "That officer John Wayne mentality – he's always nitpicking and tries to enforce all the meaningless rules. Not like you, who uses good judgment when it comes to dealing with inmates."
- As a volunteer, your relationship and how you relate to inmates will be different than staff. Don't undermine security staff because of the role they must maintain. No matter how good your intentions may be the institutional staff knows more about an inmate than you.
- Arrive 15 minutes prior to your scheduled service.
- If the facility requires you to call in advance, you must do so.
- Park only in the parking lots designated and lock your car.
- Leave everything in your car except your volunteer badge (if issued), car keys, driver's license and what you will need to perform your service.
- Most facilities have you sign in at a security desk where you indicate the location where you are going to provide your assigned service.
- Remember to go only to your scheduled service location. Stay with your group and escorting officer at all times.
- Stay at the facility only for your allotted time.
- You may be asked not to neglect signing out.
- Be sure to follow all entry/exist rules of the facility.
- Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs will be strictly prohibited on the grounds of any correctional facility and their possession, on your person or even in your vehicle is a criminal offense. Mentors shall not enter the institution if under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- **NO CELL PHONES ARE ALLOWED IN THE PRISON.**
- No firearms or knives or matches/lighters are allowed. This includes persons that may have firearms carry permits issued by the county, state and/or federal government.

- Do not attempt to bring anything out of an institution that you did not have with you when you first entered.
- Only come to the institution for scheduled services.
- All materials that will be used by your group for volunteer activities should be approved by the chaplain, staff or mentor coordinator prior to your visit.
- Over involvement and over identification with inmates are the most prevalent reasons for the downfall of a volunteer.
- Report any inappropriate behavior immediately to correctional officers, chaplains or mentoring ministry coordinator.
- Don't argue with correctional personnel; obey all institutional rules at all times.
- Many prisons may say there is to be no extra contact by phone.
- Mentors should not to add money to inmates' accounts.
- If inmates need large print studies or Bibles, contact your chaplain or coordinator. Do not purchase reading glasses for them.
- Don't discuss problems concerning the institution, prison system or personnel with inmates. We do not "take sides".
- Don't touch, shake hands, or hug inmates unnecessarily. You will find that warm greetings will become commonplace. Nevertheless, physical contact is to be kept to a minimum.
- It is proper to show care and concern, but do not over do it.
- Don't enter into a romantic or financial relationship with an inmate.
- Don't send inmates anything from the outside that they might request.
- As a rule, mentors shall not make calls, contacts or perform any services for inmates. Don't send or carry messages, written or verbal, to an inmate's friends or family. **AS A RULE, THERE IS TO BE NO DUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH INMATES AND FAMILIES.** You do not know if court orders prohibit such things or if continued relationships are bad for the inmate.

- Any proposed plan or idea for an event (i.e., refreshments, DVD, etc.) must be discussed with your mentor coordinator or prison chaplain before mentioning it to an inmate or group.

REMINDER...

I MAY BRING IN...

- **NOTHING BUT WHAT IS NEEDED FOR THE MENTORING SESSION;**
- **NO CELL PHONES;**
- **NO MEDICATIONS;**
- **NO CAMERAS OR ELECTRONIC DEVICES;**
- **NO FOOD;**
- **NO MONEY;**
- **NO CIGARETTES; and**
- **NO CHEWING GUM.**

V. How Can You Tell If An Inmate Is Getting To You?

- You feel anger towards the system and see yourself as an advocate for the inmate (losing your professional distance).
- You often are irritated at officers or staff for delays in getting you to your volunteer site, for not letting inmates / residents out of their cells or living areas in a timely fashion, etc., to the exclusion of considering that there may be valid reasons for delays (for example: a count has not cleared, the officer's must do several at the same time, the shift is short-staffed, etc.).
- You presume that staff causes a delay, not considering that an inmate or inmates may not assume responsibility for being ready on time.

- You begin favoring an inmate over others and show it by spending more time with him / her or by sharing personal information with some but not others (if in a group class setting).
- You enjoy hearing stories of how other volunteers are awful and you are wonderful.
- You begin to think about bending rules for the inmates, or do bend a rule for an inmate.
- You feel a strong sense of pity for inmates, often to the point of wanting to rescue them from the natural consequences of their actions.
- You feel superior to other helping people or have an inflated view of what impact you can have on an inmate.
- You fail to report questionable behavior or requests because you do not want to get an inmate into trouble.
- You unquestionably believe stories about cruel officers and find yourself buying into the “gossip”.
- You are susceptible to inmate interest in you – Inmates will engage you in long conversation about what you like, dislike, or other personal matters.
- You are overly empathic or sympathetic with inmates – Inmates will tell you truthfully and sometimes untruthfully about the problems that they have such as a sick child, a dying mother, etc.
- You believe the “us/them” syndrome – Inmates will try to put you and them against the system, especially if they can determine that someone or some organization has treated you unfairly. They will point out a similar thing has happened to them and try to establish a commonality.
- You have trouble resisting inmate requests – Inmates will ask for certain things, some of which may be acceptable and others which may be illegal, to see what you will allow them to do. Inmates will break minor rules to see how you react.

- You are overly impressed by inmate actions or words - The inmate will suddenly offer favors, do extra work, and be excessively nice and/or overly complimentary.
- You are manipulated by comments such as - *“You’re the only one who understands.” “You’re the best teacher, preacher, counselor, etc, they have ever had.” “You’re the only one who can help.”*

VI. Manipulation

Manipulation Definition: *To manage or control artfully or by shrewd use of influence, often in an unfair way; “to con”.*

Why do inmates manipulate?

They live in a deprived environment and many will use any means to make their stay as comfortable as possible. Many inmates view people as a means to whatever it is they want, as objects to be used and not respected in their own right. Thus, they see themselves as powerful if they are successful manipulators. That was their lifestyle before prison and remains their lifestyle today. It can become a game and a means of entertainment. Most of us have or do manipulate at times.

The following may help to recognize such behavior and to avoid it

- Realize that some inmates will take advantage of you if you let them.
- Do not do anything you would be ashamed to share with your peers.
- Keep everything out in the open.
- If an inmate’s actions are questionable, ask for advice and assistance.
- Know the policies and procedures you are required to follow.
- Learn to be assertive and use the word “No” appropriately.

- Be aware of verbal and non-verbal messages you send out, particularly body language.
- Confront manipulative behavior; take action as issues arise.
- Verify information before you take action.
- Know your personal and volunteer goals.
- Understand your value system.
- Be firm, fair and consistent.
- Understand your strengths and weaknesses.
- Realize that inmates view themselves as victims.
- When an inmate is told “maybe”, this often is taken as a promise.

VII. Other Security Matters for Prison Mentors

As a volunteer, you will be exposed to the potential for emergency situations. During your orientation, training and certification at the jail, prison or detention facility you will receive specific instructions about how to act in situations including but not limited to:

- Fight between inmates;
- Altercation between inmates and guards or staff;
- Major disturbance including riot (in jail / penitentiary setting);
- Loss of power;
- Coming face-to-face with a hostile inmate;
- Fire;
- Hostage situation; and
- Contact with blood and body fluids.

Appendices

The following story gives a mild glimpse of life in prison and causes us to remember that Christian inmates face moral dilemmas daily. Relationships that we would consider as simple to navigate become complicated. Getting it wrong can have serious consequences.

PRAY FOR ME!

by Patrick Z. Clark*

I step out of the cell to look down at the ironing area to see if it was open for use. It was. I grab my pants and shirt and go to the ironing area, which is an iron and a table next to the officer's station. The officer is sitting there, yet I neither acknowledge him nor speak. Although many inmates and correctional officers socialize, I have limited communication with the officers. I iron my pants and then the shirt. The officer and I are only three feet apart, yet there is no conversation. The officer makes a comment about the forecast predicting snow. I say nothing and continue to iron without looking up at the officer.

“Almost done,” I thought, as I continued to iron while I thought about various things. The officer begins to straighten up on his chair and blurts out, “Pray for me!”

I look up at the officer.

“Pray for me,” he says again. The officer continues, “I know you, but you don't remember me.”

I am looking at this officer and my mind is racing. I try to imagine how the cop would know me. “Did he work on one of the task forces that busted me?” I thought. “Is he trying to play mind games with me because I don't know any cops, or do I kick it with officers outside of what's necessary?”

The officer continues, and says, “I worked this unit two years ago. I was 290 pounds then. I’m about 170 pounds now, but I remember you from the last time I was here. You’re Patrick Clark, and you’re a good Christian brother. I remember you and how you carried yourself when I worked this unit. Are you still a Christian?”

“Definitely,” I responded.

“I’ve been working in the hole (lockup) the past two years.”

“You said you were 290 pounds before.”

“Yeah,” the officer said.

“Were you trying to lose all that weight, or what happened?” While I asked the question I thought, is he gay? Does he have AIDS? Or is he on drugs?

The officer responded saying, “I went through a divorce that almost destroyed me. I couldn’t eat or sleep and I’m still having some problems. Will you pray for me?”

“Yes, I’ll pray for you,” I say.

“Thank you,” says the officer.

How could this guy let a woman tear him down so badly? I thought, as I unplugged the iron and gathered my clothes to leave.

“You know, I never saw it coming,” said the officer. “I thought everything was going great in our marriage when I was with my wife one day and she told me she wanted a divorce. I was shattered. Within a month, she was gone and I felt as if my life would end. I couldn’t eat or sleep, and at times I couldn’t even breathe. I just wanted to die. I would cry all night long and barely sleep.”

I just listened and felt sorry for the officer that he could be so traumatized.

“Okay, Mr. Clark, thank you for time and don’t forget to pray for me,” said the officer.

“Okay, I will,” I say departing.

Three days later the commissary line is not that long, and I am in and out within 20 minutes. After returning to the unit to put the commissary away, I head to the law library. On the way out the door, the officer who is now known as Officer J-- calls me over and asked me if I had any Hershey chocolate bars in my locker, because he was very hungry and didn’t bring any dinner. Of course the officer knew I had the Hershey bars because he probably searched my locker.

Is he playing a game, or is he just seriously desiring the Hershey because he could call the kitchen to get whatever he wants? Maybe he’s trying to set me up and claim that I asked him for drugs? All of these things are racing through my mind. Within seconds, I decide that it’s an innocent situation.

“Sure, I have some chocolate! Just a minute.” So I go back to my cell and get a big Hershey bar and place it in my pocket and head back toward the door, and the officers’ station. Although no one’s around, cameras are filming, so I decide to take the Hershey bar out of my pocket and place it inside my legal folder because I can then place the legal folder on the ledge of the officer’s station and drop the Hershey bar down to the counter top which is eight inches lower than the ledge. I arrive at the officers’ station and, according to plan, place the folder on the ledge while dropping the Hershey bar over the ledge and then reaching over the ledge to grab the daily call-outs as if this was my purpose for approaching the officers’ station. Call-outs are daily printouts of the next day’s scheduled appointments for inmates to

different functions like medical visits, education classes, etc. I scan the call-outs, looking at nothing in particular as Officer Jenkins grabs the Hershey bar, and says, "Thank you."

I flip the pages of the call out and then leave.

Another week passes, and I fill a box of study material that is being prepared to mail out. I head to the recreation yard, and on my way out the door, I see Mr. Jenkins at the officer's station, and stop for a chat.

"How are you doing?" Mr. Jenkins asked me. "I've been doing a lot better this past two weeks," he continues.

"That's good," I respond.

"Hey, you want this chicken breast or these boxes of cereal?" asked Mr. Jenkins.

"No, thank you." I replied. "Take care Mr. Jenkins," I said as I leave to go to the rec yard.

The next day I go to the commissary and buy extra doughnuts and Hershey's, knowing Mr. Jenkins may want to invite himself to one. As believed, Mr. Jenkins asked about doughnuts and I drop him one off along the same casual approach.

After dinner the next day, I come to the unit and Mr. Jenkins asks me if I need stamps to mail out that box on the floor in my cell. I tell him that I do. He lets me know he will get me some.

"How will you get them?" I ask.

"Let's just say that some people have too many in their lockers when officially you are only allowed to have three books of stamps at any given time." I laugh as I turn to leave.

The next day, it's a busy day, and I return from church and while checking for some hate mail (mail from the courts), Mr. Jenkins informs me to check my locker's top shelf. I go to my locker to find three books of stamps, 20 stamps in each book. Later I pass Mr. Jenkins and tell him thank you. The next day I mail out the box which takes almost all of the stamps. Two weeks later I am in my cell discussing biblical points with my cell mate when Mr. Jenkins comes by and enters the cell. He fans through a few magazines and I greet him and ask him if he wants me and my cellmate to step out while he conducts his daily searches.

"No, I'm just passing by," responds Mr. Jenkins.

I continue my biblical discussion, waiting for Mr. Jenkins to leave. Mr. Jenkins is young and humble and green about his actions. After several minutes, it bothers me that Mr. Jenkins is still just chilling.

"Mr. Jenkins, you are my friend, and I don't have any problems with that, but, you can't hang out in my cell," I say.

"Okay," Mr. Jenkins responds as he shuffles the magazine back into the middle of the locker and prepares to leave.

Feeling bad about having to share the unwritten rules of prison with Mr. Jenkins, I wanted to make sure he understood why I said what I said. I tell him we are in a very serious place where harm could come to me by him hanging out in my cell longer than official business.

"You could leave here with me and my cellmate in here and go to another cell and find something they are not supposed to have. Someone else could see you leave here and say, "Hey, he was in Patrick's cell for fifteen minutes then he went and busted that guy. Many would label me a snitch and harm could come to me."

"I understand," said Mr. Jenkins.

“Other than that you are my friend, but I have to live here and these unwritten rules I must abide by or harm could come my way. This is a very harsh place.”

“I understand, and you’re right,” said Mr. Jenkins as he began to leave.

“Hey!” I called, and Jenkins turned around and said, “Yeah?”

“Pray for me,” I said.

We both smiled and Jenkins said, “You got that.”

*Patrick Clark is an ex-offender residing in Austin, TX. Given a life sentence and sent to a maximum security Federal prison, he came to Christ after a lengthy period of soul searching. His anger turned to love. He began to build bridges with his family and accepted responsibility as a father, even from a distance. Soon he found himself studying the law and the loopholes that caused the excessive sentence despite having a deal for a 12-year sentence as a result of working with the prosecutors on his case. Through his work, Pat’s sentence was reduced to 20 years.

Pat became a leader in the church behind bars. For three years prior to his release, Pat was mentored by a man, Alan B-- who drove monthly from Fort Worth to the Federal prison in Austin, a 400-mile roundtrip. Alan and his wife drew close both to Pat and his family, and facilitated his work in the church behind bars. While still in prison, Pat was helped with a job search and with locating church friends in Austin with whom he could fellowship upon release. Alan and his wife were there for Pat as he transitioned from prison to life on the outside.

Pat now works for the City of Austin and ministers to at-risk youth. This story is from a book about his experiences that he is publishing to complement the testimony he gives regularly in local churches.

Forms

Statement of Faith - If your mentor team includes members from different denominations, it may be best to agree on a common statement of faith.

Accountability Agreement - Your ministry team may want an accountability agreement such as you see here, prepared for the team ministering at The Next Door women's pre-release facility in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Mentoring and Discipleship Ministry Statement of Faith

We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as inspired by God and inerrant in the original writings and that they are the supreme and final authority in faith and life.

We believe in one God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, infinite in being and perfection. He exists eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are of one substance and equal in power and glory.

We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary and is true God and true man.

We believe that man was created in the image of God; that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also that spiritual death which is separation from God; and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood alone.

We believe in the bodily resurrection of our crucified Lord, His ascension into heaven and His presence there for us as High Priest and Advocate.

We believe in that "blessed hope" — the personal and victorious return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We believe that all who receive by repentance and faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit, and become children of God.

We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved and the everlasting punishment of the lost.

We believe the believer, having turned to God in penitent faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is accountable to God for living a life separated from sin and characterized by the fruit of the Spirit. It is his responsibility to contribute by Word and deed to the universal spread of the Gospel.

Mentor / Mentee Accountability Agreement

1. I understand that as a mentor / mentee I join a team that seeks to emphasize common areas of the Christian faith pertaining to salvation and spiritual growth rather than issues that may cause division and confusion. The mentoring ministry at The Next Door (TND) is inter-denominational. We are Christians first and will: in the essentials pursue unity, in the non-essentials, seek liberty, and in all things practice love.
2. As mentor, I agree to abide by the rules governing the engagement of certified volunteers in State facilities, the specific TND rules, and also the guidelines set forth by the mentoring ministry leadership team.
3. As a mentee, I agree to abide by State rules governing incarcerated persons, the specific TND policies and procedures, and the guidelines set forward by the mentoring ministry leadership team.
4. We recognize there is real possibility for lapses in judgment or misinterpretation of policies. We recognize that strong friendships may develop such that we might overlook or wrongly interpret rules, or act in ways that on the “outside” would be normally accepted behaviors. As such I will be mutually accountable and:
 - a. Will not ask my mentoring partner to violate any rules and regulations;
 - b. Will challenge my mentoring partner if I have any concern that her requests or actions may violate rules and regulations;
 - c. Understand there is no harm in asking if I have any doubts as to the best course of action to take;
 - d. Will resolve any questions about TND rules and regulations through the ministry team coordinator and/or the TND staff.
5. I will notify my ministry team coordinator or the TND staff of changes in my schedule that would prevent me from participating in our periodic mentoring team meetings.
6. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that if at any time I am unwilling or unable to follow the Community Mentoring Ministry team guidelines that I will resign / withdraw from this mentoring effort.

7. A set of general rules about which we will be cautious include:
 - a. Mentors will bring only essential items into the facility – official ID, car keys, pen / pencil, and only materials needed for the mentoring session.
 - b. Personal effects are to be left in locked vehicles, stowed away from view.
 - c. No knives, firearms, pepper spray or item that can be used as a weapon shall be carried into TND or be received by a mentee. No firearms may be brought onto the premises even if locked in car.
 - d. Cell phones shall not be brought into the facility.
 - e. No musical instrument, camera, recorder, digital data transfer material or any other form of communications device may be brought into TND or be received by a mentee without permission.
 - f. Chewing gum, mints and candy are not permitted.
 - g. Money may not be exchanged or added to a mentee's account.
 - h. Mentor dress is casual.
 - i. Mentors / mentees cannot pass anything to-from each other apart from the materials needed to facilitate the mentoring class on the meeting date. Any exchange of items must be handled through TND staff with permission.
 - j. If a mentor must carry medication, limit the amount to what would be needed within the mentoring session. Under no circumstances are any medications or drugs to be provided to any resident at any time.
 - k. Mentors aren't allowed anywhere else in the facility but where they are brought for the program.
 - l. If at any time a TND staff person issues an order all mentors and mentees must comply immediately.
 - m. Mentors and mentees will hold shared information in confidence, and not gossip or talk about other mentees or mentors behind their backs.
 - n. Mentors do not give / and mentees will not request:
 - i. Legal advice
 - ii. Gifts in person or through the mail
 - iii. Personal information such as home address, phone numbers, etc.
 - iv. Anything from the outside
 - o. A mentor may not send or carry messages, written or verbal, to a mentee's friends or family. **AS A RULE, THERE ARE TO BE NO DUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MENTEE FAMILIES.**

- p. A mentor may not bring anything out that she did not have with her when she first entered. That includes books, cards, or letters. Books are to be transmitted through TND staff and letters are to be mailed.
 - q. No mentee may receive books, cards or letters brought in to the facility. All must be handled through their appropriate channels. Papers germane to the lessons may be left with a mentee but extreme judgment and caution is to be exercised. If there are questions, ask. If in any doubt, pass items through the TND staff.
 - r. Churches will establish mail boxes for mentors to facilitate the smooth and timely transmission of letters and cards to / from mentees.
 - s. No mentor shall enter into any business arrangement with a mentee.
 - t. A mentor will not perform any personal services for mentees or members of their families. Prior to release it may be incumbent to work with a mentee on finding a church or receiving assistance with finding work on the outside. Before making any contacts along these lines there must be discussion with the TND's staff office and the mentor ministry team leaders.
8. A mentor will not become involved in a mentee's case by contacting parole or probation officials, State officials, or anyone else without the expressed permission of the TND staff.
9. Mentees are responsible for advising mentors of all TND visitation policies.
10. We know that every possible situation we may encounter is not written herein. Therefore we will make every attempt to uphold the spirit as well as the letter of this agreement. Failure to comply could cause one or the other of us to be dismissed from the program and even jeopardize the entire program. We will seek to honor God in all we do for the benefit of each other and for future classes of mentors and mentees.

Mentor: Signature

Mentee: Signature

Mentor: Printed Name

Mentee: Printed Name

Date

Date

For additional information contact:

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Information concerning volunteer compliance was copied liberally from the Tennessee Department of Corrections Volunteer Services Training Manual (August 2008), a public document, and Prison Prevention Ministries (Chattanooga, TN) Volunteer Training and Orientation Manual, October 2012, with permission.