

JUST FOR MENTORS

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



APRIL 2018

Dear Mentor,

Most prisoners identify themselves as Protestant or Catholic when they became incarcerated, but the number of them who actually practice their faith or attend church services is far lower.

Where I was incarcerated, fifty people attending a church service would be a high number, even though there were 1,200 prisoners! There are many reasons for this, but one of the big causes is that other religions are drawing an increasing number of individuals into their fold. Islam, Buddhism, Wicca and Satanism are attractive alternatives to Christianity throughout the prison system.

We have seen an increasing number of new students proclaiming these alternative faiths. As Crossroads mentors, we may want to avoid these challenges, thinking we do not have enough knowledge or worrying that we might say the wrong thing. But isn't that where God may want us in these situations—outside of our comfort zones?

With his permission, I want to share a message I received from Todd, a Crossroads mentor in Minnesota. We asked if he would mentor a young, self-proclaimed Satan worshiper who expressed wounds surrounding his relationship with his mother and the death of a close friend but wanted to continue into the Tier 2 program. Todd wrote, in part:

I can quickly think of a couple of reasons not to:

- *Shouldn't I maximize my time with those responding to the Gospel and growing in their faith?*
- *Should I cast pearls before swine?*
- *Isn't preaching Christ to a Satan worshiper spiritually dangerous?*

But the flip side is also clear. Does God not love him? Didn't Christ die for him? Is it ever too late to reach him before he dies and stands before the throne? Isn't the Bible and Christian history full of amazing conversions of "the least likely" people? Not justifying his choice, but could it be that his pain over his "Christian" mom's actions and the death of his best friend greatly contributed to his rejection of Christ? Wouldn't he have to agree that Satan hasn't done anything good for him since age fourteen?

We, as the Church, have a unique and wonderful opportunity through Crossroads to serve people who have been discarded and are struggling to find who they are. We serve men and women who may or may not know that they have a longing for God. They may or may not know in their heart that there is one true God, who is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But isn't it awesome that we can have a part in God's work in the transformation of "the least likely" of these?

Todd concluded his message by writing, "So I will sign on for the work and I have my men's group backing me up with prayer."

Tier 2 students are waiting for mentors!

Several Tier 2 students are currently waiting to be paired with a mentor. If you are a Tier 1 mentor, would you consider walking alongside a student one-on-one through Tier 2? It's an opportunity to get to know a student and offer them consistent encouragement and love. If you are already a Tier 2 mentor, would you consider mentoring an additional student?

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In your journey as a Crossroads mentor, you might encounter students of different faiths. You might encounter students with completely different backgrounds than yours. You might encounter students who have experienced more pain than you can imagine. Will you answer the call to walk alongside them and encourage them on their journey?

Honored to serve alongside you,



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

Douglas Cupery
Church Mobilization Director

P.S. If your student raises concerns or asks questions that you don't know how to answer, we recommend that you reach out to your pastor or church small group leader for help.

Suggestions *from* Mentors *for* Mentors

We have received many suggestions about better ways to serve students from mentors who have been inspired by reading *Just for Mentors*. We have included a number of these suggestions in our new training handbook. Here are just a few:

Some of your students might not be Christians. People of all faiths and backgrounds decide to study the Bible through Crossroads to learn more about Christianity. Some students' responses to questions asking them what they believe or what they think may differ from your beliefs. Do your best to acknowledge their perspective and then share the answer to the questions based on your understanding of the Bible and your experience with Jesus and His impact on your life. If you are stuck and are not sure what to write, please do not hesitate to ask for help!

You should review your lesson packet as soon as possible after you have received it. This suggestion is great! Mail takes quite a long time to get from students to Crossroads and then to you—generally about two weeks. It will take at least another week to get back to the student after you have mailed it. Please review and send the lesson as soon as you can—within four days, if possible—so the student isn't waiting too long for their lesson.

When making corrections, remember to do so in a loving way—not as if you were a teacher grading a test. Please do not use letter grades, check marks or stars, correct students' spelling or grammar or write the total number of errors on lessons or Roadmaps. We know it is important to let students know when they have missed a concept and provide helpful feedback, but we want to make sure that the focus is on helping students learn more about God's Word and ensuring that they feel encouraged to continue even if they are struggling.

It's a good idea to print or type letters to your students instead of writing in cursive. Many students did not learn cursive in school, so they have trouble reading it. Multiple mentors mentioned this, and students have too!

You will find many more mentoring tips in the new handbook we will be sending to every Crossroads mentor in April along with the answer key and a sample lesson from our new course, *Who Are You?* The packet will also include a special gift for you!

If you have any suggestions, we'd love to hear them. Simply email mentor@cpministries.org or call the mentor support team at (800) 668-2450.