

INTRODUCTION

It is not the purpose of this syllabus to convince you that your church needs a prison ministry, but to help you organize and operate a ministry that you know is needed.

When most people think of prison ministry, they envision confrontation with dangerous people, or walking to the electric chair with a condemned killer. However, it is unlikely that you will actually become involved in either of these, or any similar situation in a lifetime of ministry.

As your church becomes involved in this ministry, you will find room for everyone, from your high school group to the senior saints. While some of your people will be involved in witnessing and preaching in jails or prisons, there are many more openings to minister from the outside.

The following list will show you some of the many aspects of prison ministry that are available to you and your church. Your church may select to be involved in one, several, or all of these areas of ministry. If you are not currently involved in a prison ministry, we suggest that you consider these areas before moving into another.

This syllabus is designed to assist you in starting and running your prison ministry, and will detail the following areas of prison ministry:

IN-PRISON CHURCH SERVICES AND BIBLE STUDIES
FRIENDLY VISITOR PROGRAM
PEN PAL PROGRAM
PRE-RELEASE AND AFTERCARE
INMATE EDUCATION PROGRAMS
LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION
JAIL MINISTRY
JUVENILE HOME MINISTRY
MINISTRY TO INMATES' FAMILIES

These ten areas of ministry will keep the largest church busy, and are not far too extensive for the average size church to tackle alone. However, any church can do one or with just two or three volunteers.

Do you have two men who are willing to give three hours one day each week to visit your local jail? Are there any people in your church who are willing to become a pen pal to one other person? Can your bus ministry provide transportation for people to visit relatives in a nearby prison? If your church will do any of these things, you will have a more involved prison ministry than most churches in this country, and you will be on the road to obeying God's command to remember those in prison as if in prison with them.

You may be wondering what the qualifications are for someone to work in the prison ministry. All that is needed is a sincere desire to use your gifts and talents to serve our Lord, without concern of earthly rewards.

Because most of the pioneers in prison ministry, men like Ed Martin and Chuck Colson, are ex-inmates, many people have the impression that you must be an ex-con to work in prison ministry. This is just not true.

In fact, there can be considerable harm done if we build a ministry that glorifies in the evil past of workers, rather than emphasizing the redeeming power of Jesus Christ. While a short testimony from an ex-con who has found Christ is a great icebreaker with inmates, the “look at me, I made it and so can you” message gets real old real soon. Make sure that your workers have a legitimate Bible message ready every time they go in to minister.

In the next section, we will give a detailed review of the various areas of ministry that are open to you, followed by a section that will go into organizational details.

IN-PRISON CHURCH SERVICES AND BIBLE STUDIES

These are the two most sought after areas of ministry. In some prisons, you will find that the security staff does not allow each denomination to have their own services, but arbitrarily establishes a religion known as “Protestant,” and allows only one combined service for all Christians.

Because of this, you will find that you are competing with a variety of denominations for services, and may have difficulty breaking into the rotation.

A Church service in a prison is run somewhat like any local church. However, check with the chaplain or religious activities coordinator before your first service to make sure that you understand the customs of the group. The members of the Christian community in most prisons get along with each other much better than those on the outside, and many consider the service to be “their” church. You are just a visiting preacher.

Because of the interdenominational nature of the group you will be dealing with, and the mixed group of preachers who conduct the services, it is important that you NOT go in emphasizing the doctrinal distinctives of your denomination. There is a wealth of material in the Bible that you can use without having to go into the small number of areas that we do not agree on.

Please do not get the impression that we are suggesting that you adopt an ecumenical position. We are not suggesting that you should adopt the distinctives of a different denomination as your own, only that you refrain from making this the main focus at the facility.

We have had the opportunity to observe the effects of many preachers of differing denominations, and we have seen the effect of emphasizing distinctives in either a positive or negative way. Without

exception, this has resulted in reduced attendance at their services. If you persist, some offended inmates may threaten to disrupt your services, which will usually result in security banning you from the facility.

The majority of the inmates you will be dealing with will be babes in Christ, having been saved since their first arrest. Deal with them as such. Bottle feed the Master's sheep with wholesome milk.

As previously stated, there is considerable competition in the larger prisons for the available slots in some communities. If that is the case in yours, and this is the area of ministry you feel is best for your group, develop some sort of a special attraction to open the doors.

We have a standing offer to all prisons in central Virginia to gill in on short notice whenever they have a cancellation. When these opportunities come up, we make the best of them, bringing singers, ex-professional ball players, etc. If these options are not available, we have one of our preachers who found Christ in prison give a combined testimony and sermon.

The singers that we use are not the ones you see on television. Our high school group goes with us, and a grandmother who also sings in nursing homes is very popular with inmates. We also use a couple who sang in night clubs until being saved, and now they sing for the glory of God. The ex-professional athletes who go with us are not people whose names you would know, just men who played for a couple of years, but they are very popular with the men in prison.

Look at the people in your church and evaluate their potential in this area. You will find many members who are not going to become involved in a regular prison ministry, but who will make occasional visits with you to deliver a program on their special area. The following are a list of some of the programs we have presented over the past few months, utilizing the talents of members of our church. They are presented in the hope that they will inspire you to see the potential in your church:

Several musical specials by the high school singers; karate and gymnastic presentations by other high schoolers; other musical specials using church members; a four night trip through the Holy Land by a man who takes yearly vacations there with tour groups; a soul winning training session by the man who runs our soul winning office; and a barbecue at a youth facility

In addition, we periodically distribute candy bars obtained from a local food bank. At Christmas, we conduct parties at several prisons, distributing Christmas packages at others, as well as at the county jails.

Another ministry that we cooperate with works at the prison where all inmates go following conviction for evaluation and assignment to the prison where they will serve their sentence. This ministry brings in two carloads of people each week, along with sound systems, instruments, and teams of singers.

They also give a package of toiletries to every new inmate, items that are in short supply at that location. The room fills to capacity, and men are turned away by security every week. They come for the soap and razors, but stay for the gospel message. We are constantly running into men in prisons across the state who came down to get their free razor, and found Jesus.

As a result of that initial contact with every inmate in the system, the men in every prison ask for them, and they have more opportunities than they can handle. They evaluated the needs of the men in their local prison, and reached out to meet that need in Christ's name. As a result, they have a door opener that works for them. Develop one that works for you, and you will be successful.

While the chaplain or security staff does have the final say as to which groups will be allowed to conduct services or studies in their prison, the inmates do have some influence on that decision. If you obey the house rules of the prison, so that the security likes you, and deliver a wholesome message that feeds the inmates, you can expect to be allowed to come back.

Always greet the inmates on the way in if possible, shaking hands and thanking them for coming. Hand out whatever literature you may have, such as tracts, devotional guides, magazines, etc., following the accepted custom of the facility. Before bringing anything, make sure that it is okay to do so, and that you have enough to give equally to everyone.

It has been said that first impressions are lasting impressions, and this is often true in prison church groups. Work hard to make a good impression at that first service, and tell the inmates before closing that you would like to come back, and that they should let the chaplain or other responsible authority know that they want you to return.

Bible study classes are an area where there are more opportunities to minister. While the administrator may put the same limits on these as on services, there are less ministries interested in them. These classes usually take place on week day evening for one or two hours, and while attendance will be considerably smaller than for Sunday services, most of the inmates attending will be seriously interested in studying the Bible.

Do not disappoint them, and do not underestimate them. For many men, this time will be the highlight of their week, and they will spend the entire week preparing for your class. Be prepared to cover the announced material in a thorough and informed manner, but also be prepared to admit when you do not know something, and offer to check it out and have the answer the next time you come. Make sure you keep this promise.

While a large percentage of inmates are undereducated, you will find many who are quite intelligent, and many who have more "head knowledge" about the Bible than you do. In one of our studies, we had two men who were pastors on the outside. These men had, and still have, considerable head knowledge about the Bible, but did not live it.

You may not run into a group that includes former pastors, but you can be sure that you will find inmates who spend a lot of time reading their Bible and taking every correspondence course about the Bible that they can find. Some of them will be taking courses from Jack Van Impe, Back to the Bible, Herbert W. Armstrong, Salvation Army, and the Assembly of God, all at the same time.

Some of these newborn Christians will take these courses just to collect graduation certificates that they use to impress other inmates and which they falsely think will impress the parole board. Along the way, they become respected leaders in the community of believers in the prison, and some of them develop some very confused beliefs from the hodgepodge of doctrines that they are studying.

You will have to deal with these people in your Bible study class, and how you do that will determine the success or failure of your program. Some of them will be very cooperative and interested in what you have to teach them others will try to use your class to show off what they know for the other inmates, sometimes confronting you with some of the false doctrines that they have learned or maybe even developed on their own by combining the teachings of several other groups.

As in any school, the teacher must maintain control of the group, but you must be careful not to cause any inmate to lose face if at all possible. We cannot tell you any formula for dealing with this problem, because every case will be different. It is impossible of you to win a confrontational debate with an inmate who is accepted by the inmate Christian community, while a devastating attack against their teachings is usually the only way to deal with the cultists who may show up.

The problem that arises in differentiation between the cult activist and the legitimate confused Christian. It takes many hours of seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance and experience in the field. At times, you will make a mistake and put down an inmate who appears to be a cult member who is trying to disrupt your study. You later discover that he is a believer who has been confused by reading too much material about the Bible without spending enough time reading the Bible to know fact from fiction.

Recently, the author made this very mistake, and I had to confess my mistake and apologize to the man from the pulpit the following week. While it was a humbling experience, it has resulted in a much stronger relationship with that group.

Fortunately, my actions had been tempered with love, and I had allowed the man considerable latitude before cutting him off, and identified the cult whose teaching he was repeating at the time of confrontation. As a result, both this man and the members of the group were able to see that nothing I had said was directed personally against this man, but that my comments were directed at avoiding the spreading of false teaching at our study group. The absence of malice allowed us to recover from this mistake.

Do not consider the Bible study times to be extra preaching sessions. This is an opportunity for you to interact with and get to know the inmates that you are working with. It is also an opportunity for them to find out if you are for real or not. But, most importantly, it is a time for an in-depth Bible study.

It does not matter to them if you have a degree in theology, or if you are the custodian at the local movie house. What matters is that your motives for being there are to serve the Lord, not to earn worldly glory. If your motives are not legitimate, they will soon know, and will get rid of you.

Prepare for the study with the same care that you would give to a class at your church. If you can only get in to a facility on a random basis, you will have to prepare spot lessons. However, if you can get a series of spots, announce a training series, distribute a study guide, and stick to it.

If you are not comfortable in developing your own series of lessons, borrow from one of the many good study guides that are available in most Christian bookstores. However, **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE MATERIAL** and **DO NOT MAKE UNAUTHORIZED COPIES OF OTHER PEOPLE'S WORK.**

Besides being criminal acts, it is a sin to do so, and it will damage your testimony, possibly destroying your ministry.

Purchase sufficient copies of any study guide that you wish to use, obtain written permission from the publisher to make copies, or write your own. A simple Xeroxed sheet outlining your proposed course of the study will be sufficient.

INMATE COUNSELING

Most prisons provide a minimum of secular counseling for inmates. In some cases, attendance at counseling sessions is a requirement that was imposed as part of the person's sentence, and in most cases where the judge did not order counseling, it is considered favorably by the parole board.

Unfortunately, the prison-sponsored counseling programs are often not trusted by the inmates, and most inmates become very efficient at manipulating their counselor, feeding him or her the responses that they feel will do them the most good.

Counseling jobs in prisons are often stepping stones on a job ladder, with employees moving from guard to counselor on their way to some other position. Many inmates do not trust the counselors, and will not open up to them. They feel that anything they say will be held against them

There is a tremendous need for Christian counselors to work with inmates, but this is not an area where you can just barge in and start working. You must also accept the fact that you will not be able to set up an office at the prison and hang out a counselor's shingle.

What you can do is offer to help the chaplain with his heavy workload, providing pastoral counseling to inmates who request it. This is not an easy ministry to get started. In fact, it took Liberty Prison Outreach over one year to get this program into the first prison that would accept it.

We now have permission for an ordained minister to go into certain prisons one day each week to talk to men in the chaplains extra office. In addition, some of our people have been cleared by the Department of Corrections to visit from cell to cell in the state's maximum security prison, because the men are kept in lockdown 23 hours per day and cannot come out to a service or study.

You must be careful in selecting the people who work in this area of ministry, as it is fraught with danger. The danger is not physical, but legal. In counseling inmates, you may find the person confessing his sins to you. If these sins are also crimes, what happens next depends on your legal status.

Most states have a law that allow for a "priest-penitent privilege," but there are certain conditions that must be met for this law to be considered in effect. First, most states require that the person in the "priest" role must be an ordained minister, that the conversation took place in private, that the conversation involved confession and counseling, and some other stipulations. Most also contain a clause that only the one who confessed can invoke this privilege, not the one who heard the confession.

We are not qualified to provide you with legal counsel. However, if you have workers who are interested in counseling, speak to a lawyer about the laws in your state that relate to this.

As part of the general instructions that we give to all of our volunteers, we tell them to avoid getting involved in a person's legal affairs. We are there to provide spiritual counseling, and do not need the details of the person's sin. We usually do not know the charges against a person we are working with, and do not want to know them.

FRIENDLY VISITOR PROGRAM

This is a program that has been in use in California under another name for at least fifteen years, and had a proven record of reducing the recidivism rate of the participants by as much as 34%.

This is an easy program to set up, and involves very little work on the part of the participating church members. They simply "adopt" an inmate as a friend. This new friend writes letters, sends birthday and holiday cards, and visits at least once a month.

The best way to start is to find a few people who are willing to make a commitment to participate in the program as a visitor for at least one year. Call the chaplain of your local prison, tell him what you have in mind and the number of visitors that you have available, and ask him to select a matching number of inmates, people who get no visitors, but would like to.

The visitor should be of the same sex as the inmate, and should send the inmate a letter of introduction, telling him about his likes and dislikes, family information, and other things that friends would write about. After exchanging letters, the inmate must add his new friend to his visitor list at the prison, so that he can get in.

For the first visit, you should plan to spend one or two hours getting acquainted, talking about sports, current events, family, or whatever else comes up. This is a ministry of sharing Christ's love through your actions, not your preaching.

Your role is to become a friend, not a pastor, lawyer or banker. Do not get involved in his case; do not lend him money that you expect to be repaid.

Make sure that you know the rules of the prison governing visitors and what you may bring to give an inmate. In almost all prisons, it is illegal for an inmate to possess any money. There are a number of reasons for this, including the fact that an escaped inmate would need cash, and the belief that an absence of cash on the inside reduces the amount of gambling and extortion that takes place. You may hand your friend some money to buy food from the vending machine in the visiting room, and find yourself under arrest. Be careful to know and follow the rules.

Do not tell your friend what to do about anything. He has enough people giving him orders and doing all of his thinking for him. Rather than making decisions for him, IF he asks for advice, guide him along the path of making his own decision.

Remember that he is counting on you to keep your commitment. Since being arrested, most, if not all of his so-called friends have left him, and his family probably has too. He has become so used to

everybody letting him down, that he has built up a defensive mechanism to protect himself from being hurt any more. Don't let him down again.

Let him know exactly what days you are going to visit, and keep your appointment. If you have a regular time that you visit, such as the third Saturday of every month, tell him, and follow up with a letter telling him that you will not be there that day. Tell him when you will be coming in place of that visit.

As you become friends, resist the temptation to ask about his case, and DO NOT tell him that you know how he feels unless you have served time. While he is in prison, his children may get sick, need operations, family member may die, his children may graduate, get married and have their own children. About one-half of all inmates are divorced by their spouse within the first year of imprisonment. Their lives will go on without them. They may even go out of their way to make believe that he does not exist. One inmate we work with was so proud when his daughter got married recently. It was all he could talk about for weeks before the event. I watched carefully for the wedding announcement in the local papers so that I could bring it to him. After reading it, and finding someone else listed as the girl's father, I decided not to. He never mentioned the wedding again.

If you have not experienced this total helplessness and rejection by your own family, don't damage your relationship saying, "I know how you feel." You do not know, and it will just make you look like another phony "do-gooder".

This ministry can have a good effect on both the inmates and the people participating in it. If you have several people visiting in the same prison, suggest that they carpool for their visits. It will allow them a time of fellowship while traveling, and they can compare notes or ask for advice, to the extent that they can without betraying a trust.

The only problem that has been reported with this type of program is the fact that there are many more inmates looking for a visitor than there are people willing to go out.

PEN PAL PROGRAM

This is an area of ministry that is open for everyone in your church, and makes an ideal group project for your Senior Saints ministry.

All that is involved is exchanging letters with one or more inmates. Many people who get involved have several inmates with whom they correspond regularly, and few more have dozens. One 80 year-old woman did not know who many inmates she wrote to, but she used 500 stamps in six months of writing to her "boys". However, she has never seen any of the men, and probably never will. She does not visit them, but ministers via the mail.

Inmates are very lonely people. All of their so-called friends are gone, as are most, if not all, of their family. After a while, some of them pray for a collection agency to write, just so they know that someone on the outside knows that they exist. Receiving junk mail brightens their day.

In man's world, they are gone and forgotten, and they know it. However, God has neither left them nor forsaken them, and neither should we. They feel mad at the system that has locked them away, and will come out worse for the experience if you not get the Word of Life to them.

You have probably read in the papers at some time about the various scams that inmates have run through the mail, tricking pen pals out of their life savings in some cases. If you follow these guidelines, you need not worry about this happening in your program.

Instruct all of your volunteers very carefully about your guidelines, and insist that they follow them.

There are a number of DO's and DON'T's that must be followed if your program is to run smoothly. Have everyone agree to them up front.

- DON'T give any inmate your address or phone number.
- DO use the mailing address of the church or prison ministry.
- DO write on a regular schedule, possibly every two or three weeks.
- DON'T stop writing without an explanation. You will injure your pen pal and damage the reputation of the ministry.
- DO write carefully. Think about what you are saying in your letter, and prayerfully consider the impact of your words on an inmate. Be careful about using the word "love", especially if writing to an inmate of the opposite sex. Make it clear that you are writing about the love of one Christian for another, NOT ROMANTIC LOVE. If you are married, make sure your pen pal knows it, and make regular reference to your spouse in your letter. Ask your spouse to read both the letters from your pen pal, and the letters you send him.
- DON'T tolerate obscene or abusive language in letters from your pen pal. If his letters start to get offensive, warn him once with Christian love. If he continues, stop writing, and turn offensive letters over to the organization that provided the inmates name.
- DO KEEP Christ in your letters. While you may and should also discuss light family matters, i.e., births, parties, graduations, etc., always bring the Bible into your letter. You may even want to do a Bible study with your pen pal, selecting passages and discussing them just as you would with a friend at home.
- DO include tracts in your letters, but DON'T send anything larger without permission from the prison authorities. Many prisons do not allow inmates to receive materials from anyone except the producer. Books must come from the publisher, not from family members or even a bookstore.
- DON'T send money, stamps or other items of value. All prisons have regulations governing these items, and your pen pal can get in trouble if you take it upon yourself to send items that are contraband. We know of a man who received several hundred dollars' worth of granola as a Christmas present from an uncle. The food was received directly from the manufacturer, but he did not have advance permission to receive it, and had to give it away to people on the outside. Another was brought up on charges because someone sent him a self-addressed stamped envelope.
- DO lift up your pen pal in prayer constantly.
- DON'T get involved in your pen pal's legal affairs, or take sides either way if he is having problems with the staff. Try to guide him to scripture that can help him deal with the problem.
- DO enjoy what you are doing. Be friends and enjoy the fellowship of your long distance friend.

If you and the people in your ministry want to keep the relationships between them and their pen pals on strictly a correspondence basis, we would suggest that you obtain the names on inmates in prison in other states to write to. We have the names of several hundred Virginia inmates who are looking for pen pals, and can help you obtain names from most states.

PRE-RELEASE AND AFTERCARE

Picture if you can, a professional sports team that loses three out of every four games, not just this year, but year after year.

Or picture an aircraft company where three out of every four planes produced crash on takeoff. Or a high school where three out of every four graduates flunk out of college.

Would the fans keep attending the games? Would the airlines keep buying those planes? Would you send your children to that high school?

Of course not!

So, why do we continue to send our criminals to prisons for rehabilitation when three out of every four of the people processed through them commit more crimes after they are “rehabilitated”?

Well over ninety percent of the people in prison today will be released someday. Within four years of their release, three out of every four of them will be back in prison – half for crimes committed during the first three weeks that they were out. The taxpayers spend about \$10,000 per year to keep an inmate in a work camp, about \$16,000 to keep him in a major prison, about \$24,000 to hold a juvenile inmate, and about \$35,000 to keep a man in a maximum security prison. The average works out to \$20,000 per inmate.

With so much money at stake, not to mention the damage that will be done by the commission of the inevitable crime, you would think that the state would go out of its way to make sure that the released inmate has the tools to survive after release.

Unfortunately, they do not.

Let us use “Luis” as an example. A while back, Luis was released from prison and sent back to Lynchburg. A few days later, he called for help.

Luis had been sent to Lynchburg with \$25 in his pocket, no job, and no place to stay, cut loose to fend for himself. Fortunately for him, his parents lived thirteen miles out of town, and they agreed to rent him a room. However, they took all of his money in return.

Luis was doing his best to stay out of trouble, but he was broke and thirteen miles from the area where he would have a chance of finding a job, and from the parole officer he had to report to, with no

transportation except walking. He could not even try hitchhiking, as that would violate his parole and get him sent back to prison.

Picture yourself transported to a town where you have no place to stay, no job, and no “safe” friends to turn to, with \$25 in your pocket to provide food, shelter, and transportation until you not only find a job, but work long enough to collect a paycheck.

The truth is, these people are being asked to do the impossible. A well-educated person, with no criminal record, would have a very hard time trying to accomplish this feat. He may find an employer who would trust him with an advance and a landlord who will wait for the deposit and rent, but what chance does a man straight out of prison have of finding these considerations?

There is not a lot of enthusiasm for this ministry, even among people who have devoted their life to the prison ministry. This is an area of ministry where we are in the public spotlight, and any mistakes or failure will become tomorrow’s front- page headlines.

There are some ministries that operate halfway house for ex-offenders, and some that run pre-release homes for inmates still serving their time, spending the last months in custodial care of the ministry.

If you are interested in this area of ministry, please contact us for further information. We would also suggest that you obtain a copy of the book called More Than A Miracle, The Ministry of Aftercare by Frank Costantino and Jeff Park.

Copies of the book may be obtained from:

Christian Prison Ministries, Inc.
P.O. Box 1587
Orlando, FL. 32802

While we may not agree with their theology, these men have the nuts and bolts of this area of ministry down pat.

While setting up a residential care facility is a major undertaking, it is not the only area of aftercare that is needed. If you remember Luis, he had a place to stay, but needed a job, transportation, warm clothes, and guidance.

In many cases, we find that men we are working with in our Bible studies are getting released, and need help in getting reestablished in town. Because we know them, we can provide a reference to an employer, steer them to a place where we know a job will be available, recommend a cooperative rooming house, supply them with food and clothes, and be a release valve for them when the pressures of life on the outside get to be too great.

You can do the same thing in your town. If there is an inmate that you have been working with who is getting out, talk to the business people in your church about a job. However, do not tell the inmate that you have a job for him, just recommend that he go apply for it. Most ex-offenders soon quit a job that someone else got for them, but will work to keep one that he got on his own.

Develop a resource packet for newly released offenders. Include a city map, a bus schedule, the locations of the parole office, rooming houses, your church location and schedule of services, and any other useful information.

Offer him the right hand of fellowship, and mean it. Offer to bring him to services, and take him out to lunch afterwards. Care about him as a fellow Christian, and allow the Holy Spirit to work through you.

INMATE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

We originally entered this area of ministry as a way of getting into juvenile facilities via the back door. We found that most of these facilities in this area would not allow anyone to come in and conduct services or Bible studies, but they were begging for people to serve as tutors, recreational volunteers and companions.

We decided to provide the needed help by sending in college students as tutor and recreational aides, and they work one on one with the junior high and high school aged children in these homes. While they are helping them with math or reading, the students develop opportunities to witness and disciple.

One girl gave her students reading assignments from the Bible, not as religious activity, but as a reading activity. The facility had no books available for the residents to use for their reading exercises, so she provided New King James New Testaments as their reading book for that semester.

There was no preaching or Bible class, but each student heard the Gospel. As in all preaching and witnessing situations, the rest is up to the Holy Spirit.

This method of evangelism has proved successful in the youth homes, and we are happy with it. It is non-confrontational, and no one ever tries to force their belief on a resident. In fact, our people do not raise the subject. They pray for the children that have been entrusted to their care, and the children invariably raise the questions that provide an opportunity to witness.

Education has become a major area of concern in prisons in recent years, and we are preparing to take advantage of that concern.

An additional area of inmate education that can be of use to you involves literacy training. Illiteracy is a severe problem within the inmate population and contributes to the problems encountered by inmates after they are released. There are several excellent literacy-training programs available for you to choose from, and this may be the key to opening the door to your local prison.

LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION

During the first few weeks he is in jail, a prisoner will spend more time thinking and reading than he did in the past several years. He has nothing but time on his hands with no way of using it.

When you walk into a jail, one of the first things you notice is the amount of reading material lying in the cells. These men are so bored that those who can read will read whatever you give to them.

A major portion of our budget is devoted to obtaining and distributing reading material to inmates. We bring assorted tracts, devotional guides, New Testaments, Bibles, Christian periodicals, commentaries, testimony-type books, and other good reading materials we can find.

We saturate the local jails with this material, and often receive letters from men in prison who would not recognize the fact that we even existed when we visited the jail. They wanted to let us know that they had listened and read the material that we had left, and had accepted Christ.

Through the Old Time Gospel Hour, we receive mail from inmates in every state and several other countries, and we respond to everyone to the best of our ability. This is an area of great need in the prisons. Even used books in good condition are welcomed.

In the resource directory, at the end of this book, you will find a number of suppliers of material where you can obtain some of these items and distribute them to prisons and jails in your area. Even if you do not work in them, you will be doing a tremendous service to the cause of Christ.

On several occasions, we have found that a shipment of books to the chaplain's office had changed his attitude toward us. It showed him that we care about men who have been entrusted to him, and that we were not just looking for a place to preach.

LOCAL JAIL MINISTRY

Jail ministry is the front line in the battle for an inmate's soul.

This ministry requires dedicated men who are willing to sacrifice the time needed to make a weekly trip to an unfriendly environment when he could be at home with his or her family. For AT LEAST the first month in a new jail, he will be tested by the men in the jails.

If he survives, he will have a tremendous ministry for the Lord, and will have the opportunity to lead society's worst failures to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Many churches have made fitful starts at a jail ministry and fallen by the wayside because they did not understand the degree of commitment required and the amount of both work and emotional pain involved.

If this is a ministry for you, your first step is to make sure that you have at least two men who are willing to hang in for the long haul. Unless you have a separate jail in your community for women, this is NOT an area of ministry for women, as you will be invading the cell area in most cases. These cellblocks are usually composed of several individual cells containing a bed and toilet, and a common area with a table and shower. There is no privacy in these areas and everything is done in open view.

When you have the two men who want to do this work, contact the jail, and talk to the head jailer about getting in. If you can work with them on the time, and there is no assigned chaplain, you should be able to get in.

In most of the jails that we work, we are searched and turned loose in the confinement area, free to go from block to block. As we approach a block, we walk up to the bars and introduce ourselves; distributing whatever literature we have with us and renewing old acquaintances.

We always have a short message ready, about ten minutes, afterward, we respond to the needs of the cellblock. After visiting for about thirty minutes, depending upon the available time, we close with prayer and an invitation, and move on to the next block, again adjusting our activities to the needs of the block.

At each block, we spend time in friendly chatter with the men, discussing whatever appears appropriate. This may be the card game they are playing, whatever is on the television, or last night's ball game. Some may ask, "What are you?", trying to get a denominational name as an answer so that they can pick an argument based upon that. We like to get them off guard by responding that we are "rock and roll Christians". Before they can recover from their shock at the answer, we explain that this means we are standing on the Rock of Ages, and our name is on the roll up yonder. This gently cuts off the arguer, and allows us to move on with our work.

We call this the front lines because this is where you get the opportunity to deal face to face with everyone arrested in the community. You can meet them at their lowest point, before they have had the chance to tend to their emotional wounds and build up walls to keep your message out. An active ministry in even a small jail can expect to see souls saved almost every trip.

An aggressive prayer ministry is important to this work. Get into the habit of following the crime news in your local paper, and begin praying for the souls of the criminals at the time of the crime. When people are identified and/or arrested, start to pray for them by name, praying that the Holy Spirit will make them receptive to the Gospel.

The power of prayer in these cases will amaze you. The case that stands out in my mind involves a contract killer. We read of his arrest in another state, and knew that he would soon be coming to one of our jails. We began praying for him by name, and a few days later read that he had waived extradition, and would soon be transferred.

On Monday of Thanksgiving week, we read that he was now in our jail, one that I would be in Wednesday evening. We intensified our effort, spending hours in prayer for his soul between Monday and Wednesday.

Because of the holiday, I was to work that jail alone that night, a facility with eight cellblocks and three solitary cells. This man was in the first block, standing at the bars playing cards with a trustee and others in the block when I arrived.

The other men knew me, but I introduced myself anyway. As soon as I did, he quit the game and asked to talk to me. I spent the entire evening with him, and he asked Christ into his life as his personal Lord

and Savior that night. The Holy Spirit had already done His work, preparing his soul for the gospel, changing him from a contract killer to a babe in Christ.

There have been many others that we have prayed for, many accepting Christ, and others rejecting Him.

As in all areas of ministry, it is important to remember that God still wants to hear us pray, especially for others, and that He still delights in answering prayers.

JUVENILE HOME MINISTRY

Many prison ministries overlook this area of service, even though the Census Bureau has clearly shown that a very high proportion of inmates were juvenile offenders or those who came from troubled homes.

By juvenile home, we are not referring only to your local juvenile detention center, but also to group homes where kids are sent, either by the court, social service, or their family. These are kids who have not committed any serious crimes, and many are there only because their family has troubles. You will often find the teenage children of female offenders in these homes.

Most of these kids have not done anything too bad yet, but they are still headed that way if the church does not help them.

What you can and cannot do in these facilities is usually left up to the director. We have four such homes in Lynchburg, and each one has a different set of rules. At three of the four, church services and Bible studies are not allowed, while the fourth permits them.

However, all four facilities not only allow, but also plead with the community for volunteers to serve as tutors, recreation aids and companions. Our college-age volunteers go into these facilities in these roles, utilizing a lifestyle type of evangelism.

It takes time to develop these facilities, but they are definitely worth the effort. You may never know until you reach heaven the effect that this ministry had on those young lives.

We also work our local juvenile detention center. This is where children are sent who are charged with crimes and are awaiting trial, or have been convicted and are awaiting transfer. The program that worked for us involves a weekly recreation period.

We take two or three carloads of young people in, and play ball with the residents for about an hour, perhaps a little longer. After that, everyone sits down to cool off, and one or more of our young people give a testimony about how Christ has changed their life. There may also be a short period of music, followed by a short message and prayer.

An invitation is given, but the residents are encouraged to respond by going to one of our workers after the program is over. This atmosphere allows them to talk to our people in response to the invitation. This time often becomes a mini-counseling session.

Youth facilities are often less restrictive than those for adults, and we can get involved in more activity oriented programs. We have brought in high school singers and drama groups, had magic shows, and karate and acrobatic demonstrations. We go in and play softball and throw picnics and Christmas parties. At every activity, we take timeout for our young people to share testimonies and for a presentation of the Gospel.

The most important thing to remember when dealing with juvenile groups is that, in spite of their crimes and tough guy exterior, these are children who are in trouble, and they need to see the love of Christ in you. If you have a group of young workers who have that love, you will not fail.

MINISTRY TO INMATE'S FAMILIES

Your church may already have some of the mechanics of this ministry in place. The needs of an inmate's family are not unlike those of any other family in some respects.

The breadwinner has been removed from the picture, and finding food, clothing and shelter have become very critical considerations.

However, the spouse and children left behind have other, often hidden needs. The children look at their situation and assume that there must a reason that he is being punished, why he wears thrift shop specials while everyone else has new clothes, why he got underwear for Christmas instead of toys.

God must not love him, or He would not allow these bad things to happen to him.

It becomes painful to go to school. Everyone knows his father is in jail, so he stops going. He decides that if he is going to be punished anyway, he may as well do something to be punished for, and starts his own life of crime.

Sound far-fetched to you? Less than one-half of one percent of the population of this country is in prison today. However, almost half of all inmates come from a family where a member of their immediate family was in prison while they were growing up.

Over one-half of all inmates are divorced during the first year that they are in prison. This is often done for financial reasons, with the welfare office telling the wife that she can get more benefits if she gets a divorce.

Your church can do much to help.

Reach out to these families; they will not come to you. They are not hard to find, just talk to the men in prison and jail, or follow the crime news. Set up a visitation department within your prison ministry for the purpose of looking in on these families.

If their children get involved in the youth group, talk to the pastor about subsidizing them, allowing them to participate in trips and activities, even if they do not have the ability to pay. If your church has a school, offer to scholarship them, either as continuing students or as new admissions.

If there are young children involved, try to find some older couples that can act as foster grandparents to them. Solicit support from both the church and local business to provide these children with the same types of clothes and Christmas gifts that the other children in the area are receiving, but always have these items come through the parents.

A much-needed area of ministry involves transportation to visit the parent in prison. If your church has a bus ministry, why not run a bus one or two Saturdays each month to nearby prisons? At first, you may only have one or two families going, but as soon as word gets out, you will soon be running full buses. It will not be long before these same people will be on your bus to come to Sunday school.

The key to a ministry to the families of inmates is compassion. You not only need a compassionate person to run it, but it must reflect the true attitude of the leadership of the church. The pastor must share your compassion for these people, and reflect this in his preaching and teaching. The budget committee must reflect it in their allocations. The youth director must reflect it in his dealing with the children.

If your church has a heart for people who are hurting, this can be a very rewarding ministry.

GETTING STARTED

Before you can get started ministering, you need to do a basic survey to determine the needs in your area. What are others currently doing to meet the need in your community? What resources are available to you to meet these needs?

Let's look at the last item first, as that will determine just how big an area you can work, and what type of services you can provide.

The first question to be asked is, "Who are you, and just how much support do you have?" Are you the pastor, a staff member, a deacon, or someone else with authority? Or, are you a committed layperson with a burden for people in need? How much time do you have to give to this ministry each week? How many other people in your church desire to be a part of this ministry? What resources are available to this ministry?

If you are an official of your church, and this ministry is being started as an official outreach of the church, you will have the best chance of success. If you are a concerned church member, talk to your pastor, and obtain the support of the church for your ministry.

It is very important to establish exactly what degree of support you have from the church. Is it just their blessing? Is the pastor encouraging members to become involved from the pulpit? Is the church providing financial support? Are you and the others who become involved covered by the liability insurance policy of the church?

You may not consider it important at this point to deal with organizational structure and responsibility, but when you get into trouble, it is too late to start planning. If you are not operating under the corporate

umbrella of either your church or a non-profit ministry corporation, you may be held personally liable for anything that may go wrong, and your personal property can be attached by a court.

The Bible tells us that Satan is the god of this world, and our experiences tell us that prisons are his strongholds. In over twenty years of prison ministry, there has never been a lawsuit against anyone involved in our ministry, but it is always a possibility that we must be prepared for.

We suggest that your church review this matter with its insurance company and/or lawyer, and determine the best course of action for both your outreach to inmates and the church, so that you may follow God's command to minister to those hurting people, without fear of reprisal.

Michael Seltzer has prepared an excellent book titled Securing Your Organization's Future, which will aid you in both determining what your organizational structure should be, and in raising money to support your ministry. This book is available from:

The Foundation Center
79 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10003

Having determined your organizational structure, your next step is to evaluate the resources available to you. What are your spiritual gifts and skills? How much money do you have available for this ministry? What other resources do you have to work with?

Prison ministry is a team effort, and your team will be only as strong as its weakest link. This may surprise you, but that weakest link may be strongest, most spiritual member of your team, if that person has been placed in the wrong position. As the person responsible for starting this ministry, you must make some hard decisions regarding your volunteers.

Personnel management in volunteer groups is often a lot harder than managing paid workers, but it is just as important. You must evaluate the personnel needs of your ministry, develop job descriptions, and recruit volunteers to fill those jobs. Do not accept just any warm body to fill a slot. Make sure that they are qualified.

At the end of this syllabus, we have a volunteer application form. Every volunteer should complete one of these forms, and you must review each application as if you were hiring that person to a \$50,000 per year position. Review the qualifications that they are qualified to fill. If you would not hire them to do the job for pay, do not allow them to fill the position just because they will work for free. Find them something to do that they are qualified to do.

You may wish to review a book by Larry Gilbert called *Team Ministry: A Guide To Spiritual Gifts And Lay Involvement*. Mr. Gilbert is the Director of:

The Church Growth Institute
PO Box 4404
Lynchburg, VA 24502

He has prepared a program designed to aid you in determining what your spiritual gifts are, and how to use them to further the work of the church.

Brother Gilbert has presented his program in prison for us, with excellent results. If you contact him at the above address, he will be happy to send you a Team Ministry Resource Packet that describes his program. We believe you will find his material very useful in assessing the members of your team, and how they can be of most value to the team.

Now, let's assume that you are organized, you have the support of the church, the pastor has been touting the prison ministry from the pulpit, and you have recruited a small band of volunteers who will work on a regular basis. Consider the following group: two or three men who can share the Gospel with small groups and/or preach; several college students who would like to work with teens; a school teacher who is willing to help where needed; and an offer from the Senior Saints to help you with your mail, stamp tracts and make cookies.

With this small group, you would have the makings of an outstanding prison ministry. The two or three men could start a ministry in your local jail and/or prison, and, as they became experienced they could split into teams of one of them and one new worker to expand their coverage. The college students and the school teacher can develop tutoring and recreation programs in the local juvenile detention facility, and the seniors can help keep your office and tract room in order, answer the mail that you will soon be receiving, be pen pals, be foster grandparents at the youth detention centers, and bake cookies for special events at the jail and youth center.

Of course, these suggested uses assume that these needs exist in your community. It is now time for the last step, evaluating the needs in your area. The first step in this evaluation is defining the geographical area that you will service. To a large degree, this area will be limited by your budget, and you must decide how much you are willing to spend on a weekly basis to travel to and from prison.

Take a large wall map of your state, and mark your home base on it. Now mark off the locations of the state and federal prisons, using a color code to designate what type of facility it is. Use one color for youth facilities, another for work camps, another for medium security, another for maximum, and yet another for female facilities. A listing of all state prisons should be available from the Department of Corrections, located in your state capital, or at your local library.

Your next step is to check your phone book for the locations of your local jail and detention homes, which should be listed in the local government section. Make a listing of the address and phone number of these facilities.

Knowing the type of service that you have to offer, and the type of facilities that you wish to work in, you are ready to start contacting the proper authorities for permission to come in. Just call the main phone number and tell the person who answers whom you are, and that you would like to talk to the person in charge of religious activities at their facility.

Do not be surprised to be told that there is no need for your services. Be flexible and persistent. Some facilities have more church groups wanting to do a Sunday service than they have Sundays, but need someone for a weeknight Bible Study.

If you are told that there are already too many groups working at the facility, ask for the names of the other Christian groups so that you can find out what they are really doing, and possibly work with them. Regardless of what happens, do not argue with or question the motives of the officials you are dealing with. They have the absolute power to allow you in, or keep you out.

Keep checking, and you will find an area of need that you can fill. While the area you find may not be what you would pick as your first choice, give it your best effort, striving to be a success. Your effort will impress the secular leaders of the system, and your faithfulness in these tasks will lead God to open up greater tasks for you.

If you go into the prison or jail with an open and flexible mind, willing to change your plans to meet their needs, the doors will open. After that, it is up to you to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in aiding the Master's sheep.

RESOURCES

There are many sources of information and materials available to you for use in your prison ministry, some available just for the asking. The following list is just some of the Christian organizations that are willing to help you with such items as tracts, devotional guides, New Testaments, and other items. Some ask for a small donation, others for just postage, some for whatever you can afford, and still others for free.

When asking for materials, please keep in mind that there is no such thing as a free lunch. While you may not be charged for the materials received, somewhere there is a Christian who gave the funds that paid for them. You are being put in the position of steward of our Lord's resources. Use them wisely.

BIBLE STUDY COURSES

The following organizations provide BIBLE STUDY COURSES for inmates usually dealing directly with the inmate:

Prison Mission Association
PO Box 2300
Port Orchard, WA 98366

Hope Aglow Ministries
P.O. Box 3057
Lynchburg, VA 24503

Mr. Larry Benton, P.S. Ministries, Campus Crusade for Christ,
Arrowhead Springs, San Bernardino, CA. 92414

Back to the Bible Correspondence School, P.O. Box 233,
Lincoln, NE 68501

Scripture Press Ministry, Miss Helen Gorges, P.O. Box 513,
Glen Ellyn, IL 60138

Moody Correspondence School, 820 N. La Salle St.,
Chicago, IL 60610

BIBLES/NEW TESTAMENTS:

Scripture Press Ministry (SEE ABOVE)

International Prison Ministry, P.O. Box 63, Dallas, TX 75221

Bible Alliance, Inc. P.O. Box 621 Brandenton, FL 34206
(NKJ New Testament and tapes, Sent to chaplains only)

Free Forever Prison Ministry, Inc. P.O. Box 1073,
New Haven, CT 06504 (Spanish only)

TRACTS:

The following list of suppliers has come to us from many sources. We cannot vouch for the quality of any of them. We advise that you check a sample of the tracts before ordering.

World Missionary Press, Inc., P.O. Box 120, New Paris, IN 46553

Faith Prayer and Tract League, 2624 Elmridge Drive N.W.,
Grand Rapid, MI 49504

Last Days Ministries, P.O. Box 40, Lindale, TX 75711

Osterhus Publishing House, 4500 W. Broadway,
Minneapolis, MN 55422

The Reapers, P.O. Box 791901, Dallas, TX 75379

Bible Tracts, Inc., Box 588, Normal, IL 61761

World Wide Keswick, P.O. Box 1770, Largo, FL 33540

Mid-Atlantic Tract Mission, Inc., P.O. Box 434, St. Charles, MO 63302

Gospel Tract Society, Inc., P.O. Box 1118, Independence, MO 64051

Your personal library is going to be one of your greatest resources. Examine it carefully and make sure that you have the tools needed to do the job. Besides the usual items, i.e., Bible, Concordance, Bible Dictionary, Bible Atlas, Commentaries, etc., do you have subscriptions to good Christian periodicals and devotional guides? Do you have a copy of Walter Martin's Kingdom of the Cults? Are there a number of books on current topics by reputable Christian leaders?

If you do not have a good personal library, start now and invest in one. You'll need it.

May God Bless Your Ministry.

Prison Mission Association Volunteer Application

Name: _____ **Phone:** () _____

Home Address: _____

Birthdate: _____ **Hair Color:** _____ **Height:** _____

Driver's License Number: _____

Employed By: _____

Work Address: _____

Type of Work/Job Title: _____

List Types of Ministry Experience: _____

Vocational Training/Licenses: _____

Educational Level Completed: _____ **Degrees:** _____

Military Service: _____ **Discharge Type:** _____

Character Reference: _____ **Phone:** () _____

Marital Status: _____ **Spouse's Name** _____

Names And Ages Of Children At Home: _____

Are You A U.S. Citizen?: _____ **If Not, Explain:** _____

Are You Physically Disabled?:_____ **Explain:**_____

Do You Have Reliable Transportation?:_____

What Church Do You Attend?:_____

Have You Ever Been Arrested Or Convicted Of A Crime?_____

Explain:_____

Are You Currently Under Correctional Supervision?_____

Do You Have Any Friends Or Relatives Currently In Prison?_____

List Names, Prison, And Relationship:_____

_____ **Describe**

Describe Your Personal Salvation Experience (Use Other Side If Needed):

Why Do You Wish To Volunteer Your Time And Efforts To This Ministry,

And What Do You Wish To Do?:_____

VOLUNTEERS PLEDGE OF SERVICE

1. I have read and agree with the Doctrinal Statement of Prison Mission Association.
2. I will read and obey the rules and regulations of both Prison Mission Association and any prison or jail I am assigned to.
3. I will carry out my assignment in a Christian fashion at all times.

SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** _____

PRISON MINISTRY DO'S AND DON'T'S

The following is a list of DO's and DON'T's for people who work in jail and prison ministry, based upon our experience and watching other ministries. It is not meant to be an inclusive list, but is just a guideline that we provide to our workers.

DO'S:

1. Be prepared. You cannot talk to men for God until you have talked to God for men. Know what you plan to do, and have your material ready.
2. Be on time, both going in and coming out. The inmates will expect you to be on time arriving, and the administration will expect you to be on time going out.
3. Always pray with the inmates.
4. If at all possible, always work through the chaplain.
5. Dress appropriately. Do not overdress for Bible studies or cell block evangelism. We usually do not wear ties and jackets except at Sunday services. Women need to be especially careful to dress in a modest manner.
6. Know and follow the rules of the institution.
7. Develop the trust and confidence of the staff and administration as well as the inmates.
8. Be yourself.
9. Be an understanding friend and a good listener.
10. Be honest.
11. Be consistent and dependable.
12. Be cautious. Some inmates will try to con you or manipulate you.
13. Be willing to learn.
14. Speak in a clear, simple manner. Do not use big words or theological terms without explaining them. Do not speak down to the inmates.
15. Use wisdom about counseling, especially with members of the opposite sex.
16. Make sure that you have permission to distribute Bibles and Christian literature before doing so.
17. Work at remembering the names of inmates, both for follow-up visits and for prayer.
18. Encourage the inmates to study the Bible and to enroll in correspondence courses.
19. Share Christ with the staff as well as the inmates. Always bring enough tracts for them as well.

20. When in doubt, ask. You will never get in trouble for asking a dumb question, only for making dumb mistakes because you did not ask first.
21. Talk to the inmates about your family, your hobbies, special interests, and how you became interested in prison ministry.
22. Share how you became a Christian, and your relationship with Christ.
23. Ask about their relationship with Christ, and their beliefs. Be sure to pay attention to their answers.
24. Be careful about using the word “love”. Specify that you are talking about the love of one Christian for another, NOT ROMANTIC LOVE.
25. Honor your commitments.
26. Remember that inmates are human beings first, and prisoners second. They have personal needs, frustrations, and weaknesses just like yourself. God loves them just as much as He loves you.
27. Be supportive of the chaplain and respectful to the administration.
28. When confidential information is shared with you, keep it confidential.
29. Use discretion and caution in being a go-between for inmates and family and friends. You may find yourself in an illegal position without knowing it. If asked to take out information or material for others, check on the policy of the institution first.

DON'T's:

1. Do not give out your personal address or telephone number. Use the prison ministry address. Inmates usually cannot make phone calls, other than collect calls, or calls charged to a third number.
2. Do not do errands for inmates.
3. Do not make promises that you cannot or will not keep.
4. Do not become involved in an ego trip. If your purpose in this work is to receive earthly glory, or to get stories to share at the country club, get out. You will only hurt the work.
5. Do not send money or expensive gifts to inmates.
6. Do not bring anything to an inmate or out from an inmate without checking with the authorities first.
7. Do not bring in contraband.
8. Do not criticize or embarrass anyone just because they are in prison.
9. Do not ask about an inmate's crime.
10. Do not go in as a prison expert or reformer. We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ, period.
11. Do not write letters of recommendation for an inmate unless you have personally known him for a reasonable period of time, and can personally attest to the things you are saying.
12. Do not say that you understand how a prisoner feels, unless you have been in prison yourself.
13. Do not act shocked or surprised by anything an inmate says or does.
14. Do not argue with the inmates.
15. Do not call inmates boys or girls.

16. Do not give unasked for advice or try to tell an inmate how he should do something.
17. **DO NOT GET INVOLVED IN LEGAL MATTERS!**
18. Do not go in discouraged. The inmates do not need to hear about all of your problems, except if you use the total experience as an example of how God has helped you deal with the problem.
19. Do not talk about unnecessary controversial subjects. If they get into something about another preacher or denomination and some problem related to them, get back on track by reminding them that God will hold that person accountable for his actions, but that He will also hold them responsible for theirs as well.
20. Do not criticize the administration. You may feel that it will make you more popular with the inmates if you knock those in charge for doing a poor job, but it will harm your ministry. Some points that you should consider:
 - a. It is the administration that allows you access to “their” prison;
 - b. If you talk poorly about the administration and officers in front of the inmates, they will wonder what you say about them when meeting with security;
 - c. God tells us that we are subject to, and must respect civil authority. They are God’s anointed leaders of that facility.
21. Do not offer something to one inmate that you are not willing and able to give to every inmate in the facility.

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