

## Life In Prison Ministry

### Why Is Prison Ministry Different Than Institutional Programs?

Many prisons have educational programs with the intent to re-educate prisoners in order to accomplish two major purposes. First, they want to prevent repeat offenders. Each time a prisoner goes to jail, it gets easier and more familiar which make the consequences for crime bearable. The second goal for institutional programs is to help prisoners adapt and fit back into society and to have them be productive and reformed individuals.

One program uses dogs to teach prisoners how to care for others. As they say, having a pet will fill that void the inmates were trying to fill with drugs, violence, and alcohol. Another program uses education and help groups to encourage prisoners to deal with their issues by talking to one another rather than getting angry. But what happens if the dog dies, or the group is no longer there?

Unlike institutional programs, prison ministry does not, or should not serve as a way to get out of prison earlier. It should never offer any other tools than a pillow for praying knees, and it should promise nothing but persecution and war on personal sin. It should not give steps to fit into society better, but rather a changed life from the inside, out. It should not present itself as a means to better humanity, but it should do all things for the Glory of God, no matter what.



Prison ministry works on a volunteer basis. There are no program costs, nor are there any incentives to go outside of complete reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. Prisoners need to be taught and disciplined in complete Christian doctrine. They need to learn to submit to the authority of God, and in doing so recognize that authorities they are under are appointed by God.

There can be no comparison between prison ministry and man-made programs. Although man made programs can accomplish their goals of re-educating a prisoner, and they can even do so effectively so that the prisoner never ends up in jail again, and does become a productive part of society; there is one thing that institutional programs can never offer inmates -- complete forgiveness of sins and a promise of eternity with Christ in heaven. There is no comparison.

One focuses on man, the other focuses on God. God uses faithful volunteers in prison ministries to point hardened and broken men and women to Jesus Christ. God works amazing miracles

within the lives of inmates, so much so that they will never again fit into society, but rather they will serve in humility and love all people for the sake of their savior, Christ Jesus.

Compare the fruits of the program. What institutional program graduate became a missionary and risked his life to save people's souls? On the other hand, how many men and women have had their lives touched by the testimonies of former drug addicts who become pastors and evangelists?

How does this happen?

Prisoners, better than anyone, know all about Justice. They know all about the old saying, "If you do the crime, you do the time!" What prisoners learn is that God too has a Justice system, but God's justice scale is much higher than ours. God sees lying lips as an abomination, and says that every idle word will be taken into account. God will judge the actions, intents, even the thoughts of men.

God will punish murderers, rapists, and thieves. Those behind bars learn that human punishment is not nearly comparable to God's punishment which is a lake of fire. And they understand their guilt even more when they learn that the cowardly, sexually immoral, and all liars will have their part in that lake of fire.

When a man realizes to the core of his being that he stands guilty before a Holy and Good judge who will let NO criminals go free, he is truly without hope, but then comes the good news.

Two thousand years ago, God made a way so that the criminal could go free from his day in court. To show His mercy and love, God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ and lived the only perfect, sinless life. Jesus went to the cross willingly to pay for the sins of the whole world, yours, mine, and those in prison. He completely died, was buried, and on the third day, rose again. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.



Coming to this realization in the heart, an man is broken and undone before the loving kindness of God. When he realizes his crimes and realizes that Jesus took the punishment that he deserves on that cross, he is changed. No longer will that former criminal live for himself, but he will repent of his crimes against God, not do them any more and trust in that sin payment on the cross as his only hope in life and in death.

Jesus said he is not coming to those who are well, but those who are sick. He is a friend to the broken hearted, and he is the gentle shepherd. Promises eternal life to all who repent and trust

in Him with all of their might. He promises to keep those who turn from their sin and cleanse their hearts and consciences, giving the power to overcome this wicked world.

Those in prison know their crimes, and so often they are the most serious about following Jesus, because they have been forgiven much. What fruit comes from this? Murderers are no longer murders, but become peace makers. Thieves are no longer thieves, but become givers. Drug addicts no longer desire the hit, but become passionate for seeking God.

May God bless each and every bible-believing prison ministry volunteer who sacrifices their time and money to share and love men and women behind bars. Their work is beyond anything that the outside world can compare to and they surely will reap eternal rewards.

Posted by "D"

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