

God's Ministry



Sample book covers



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How Churches Can Engage in Prison Ministry



Purpose: A Prison Ministry Resource Guide for Church Involvement

This Resource Guide is to inspire, encourage, instruct, and equip those that have a desire to follow the Lord's leading to engage in prison ministry. It is the desire that every correctional resident in the North American Division will have an opportunity to get to know Jesus Christ and be saved through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This will be accomplished as compassionate and caring individuals provide transformational services to the correctional residents and their families.

To reach all correctional residents with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, we need more laborers in this part of God's vineyard. Providing in-facility programs and services along with reentry support for returning citizens and their families and written and literary correspondence will allow greater exposure to the gospel.

Correctional residents are pleading for someone who cares and is willing to take the time to share the love of Christ with them whether through in-service religious programming or through correspondence of the Letter Writing Ministry. However, to implement the services of this resource guide, the specific guidelines put forth in this document should be followed to provide effective ministry to those who have been ostracized.

Prison Ministry Defined: Prison ministry is a commission from God to share the message of salvation to correctional residents. The transforming power of the gospel will lead to a life of respect and dignity as they transition from custody to the community. The goal is to meet the holistic needs of the residents and their families.

The Lord is in need of you. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Jesus said that “Inasmuch as you did it to one the least of these my brethren you did it to me.” **Matthew 25:40**

Why is there a need for Prison Ministry?

- The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. (2.3 million correctional residents confined to correctional institutions).
- The imprisonment of a remarkable creation of God in a confined space undermines the intended dignity of that creation.
- Incarceration imposes limited opportunities and freedom to practice their faith which prohibits free flowing access to the message of salvation.
- Hearts have been reached and lives have been transformed through caring, compassion and faithfulness of prison ministry volunteers.
- The involvement of the church is essential in helping men/women reintegrate into society.
- Offers unconditional love and acceptance in a Christian setting.
- Fosters Christian growth in the community.
- Promotes participation in small groups.

Many of our correctional residents, especially males, have dropped out of school by the tenth grade and may have difficulties with reading and comprehension. These may result in poor interpersonal skills, both verbal and nonverbal. Those who are called to prison ministry are equipped with these skill sets:

Patience	Responsibility
Dependability/consistency	Empathy
Motivation	Communication
Conflict Resolution & Anger Management	Active Listening

The SDA Church has been actively engaging in ministry to those who are in the custody of our prisons and their families sharing the good news of a soon coming Savior. This is being done through

Face to Face interaction	Literature distribution
Angel Tree	Family ministry
Reentry	Letter writing
Prayer warriors	Worship services

Prayer Warriors: individuals who specialize in praying for the correctional residents, their families and those involved in prison ministry.

Angel Tree: a year-round Prison Fellowship program for the children of the correctional residents. This includes summer camps and gifts on behalf of the parents.

Reentry: this service provides assistance for our returning citizens such as transportation to appointments, housing, employment, and more.

Face to Face interaction: Bible Study, worship service attendance, and video conferencing between the inmates and their families in order to deliver the message inside the prisons.

Literature distribution: sharing the gospel through Bibles, books, magazines, DVD and pamphlets through various forms of literature.

Family ministry: ministering and sharing the gospel to the families of the incarcerated

Letter writing: Offer words of encouragement and engaging in soul-winning through letters to inmates

Worship services: Prison Ministry is a commitment to God to share Jesus with those who are correctional residents, their families and those who work in the prisons. Many prisons offer regular worship services, often led by volunteers which include prayers, hymns, sermons, and scripture readings

Every Church either has a returning citizen or a church member who is a current correctional resident or knows someone who is or was.

Prison Ministry is an ongoing evangelistic meeting inside and outside the prison in which every church member can take part.

Various churches have also implemented the following:

- Teaching Parenting
- Survival Skill Classes
- Creating Job Data Banks
- Sponsoring Job Fairs
- Collaborate with other organizations who are engaged in prison ministry.
- Transitional Housing
- Van Ministry
- Support Groups for spouses/fiancés of the correctional residents
- LAMBS/Daddy Cares Ministry
- Financial and Literature Support Groups
- Clothing and Toiletry Ministries
- Job Readiness and Interview Preparation Classes
- GED Classes
- AA & NA Classes

Research indicates that approximately twenty-five percent (25%) of returning citizens will suffer from mental health disorder and another 65% of the United States Prison Population has an active substance use disorder. At least 96.5 % of the correctional residents with a substance use disorder will return to society. Creating help programs, making referrals and collaborating with other community organizations with specialized programs and resources to assist this clientele is an essential ministry that presents an open door for church involvement.

Many correctional residents lack financial management skills. This is due to poor planning, lack of budget skills, living beyond their means, which on many occasions resulted in acquiring financial means in an inappropriate manner. Teaching a management class can be life changing and could be a deterrent to recidivism.

Numerous correctional residents have not only lost their livelihoods, but their families have been displaced and some have lost families. Hence poverty becomes a byproduct of this loss. Therefore, due to displacement, ministry to families of correctional residents provides a tremendous opportunity for ministry for the church. Suffice it to say, when the residents are discharged, they usually have lost their Driver's License, Social Security Card, VA (Veteran Administration) Card, cars, houses, technical items, etc. creates an inroad for ministry to this marginalized community.

Why should you minister to murderers, sadistic killers, rapists, child molesters, drug dealers, robbers, etc?

Because:

- You are a channel for communicating God's grace to the incarcerated.
Titus 2:11
- You are called to fish for people.
- **Matthew 4:19**
- As ambassadors of Christ, you are called to seek the lost; they are also God's children. **Luke 19:10**
- You are a vessel of the Holy Spirit drawing others to Christ.
John 16:13
- As co-laborers of Christ you are an essential tool in regeneration.
- **John 3:3**
- It is an act of ministering to Jesus Matt. **25:36, 4**
- It provides an opportunity to carry out the great commission.
Mark 16:15
- "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."
Luke 19:10

Testimony

“I was placed in the AR prison system for selling meth. I was crushed and very depressed. The thought of being away from my family, especially around the holidays, was a lot to bear. The first month of intake, you are in a single man cell in complete solitude. The only reading material allowed is a Bible. As I started reading, something drove me to focus on the New Testament. Being Christmas, it felt right to have a better understanding of Jesus. It ended up being the best Christmas I have ever had because I spent it with Jesus, just me and Him.

It was the first time in my life that I could hear God speaking to my heart, and I’ve had Him there ever since.”



Frequently Asked Questions

- How does my church start a prison ministry?
- What expenses should my church expect when having a prison ministry?
- What resources or support are available for my church to launch a prison ministry team?
- How many team members are necessary to begin a prison ministry?
- Who makes the best candidates for a prison ministry team?
- Can my church be involved in a prison ministry without physically entering the prison?
- In what ways can my church support the families of incarcerated individuals?
- What type of training is needed for members of my church and who offers it?