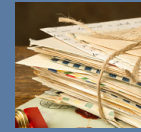


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# This Man Found Hope in the Hole

by E. Greene & G. Pope

**J**on Kelly was a disrespectful, troubled teen growing up in a rough Philadelphia neighborhood with a single mother and a little sister. Multiple schools—including a disciplinary school he says was “like prison, but you get to go home”—couldn’t keep him out of trouble. He dropped out by ninth grade.

“I was always high every day ... always in fights, always getting shot at or shooting at somebody,” Jon says. “I for sure did not think I would make it past 16.”

Jon started peddling crack when he was just 12 years old. In his teens, he decided he would make more money robbing drug dealers. “I thought it was a good thing,” he says. After all, “I wasn’t bothering law-abiding citizens.”

Plus, Jon knew that no drug dealer would report him to the police and risk getting arrested. Even so, the plan was risky. One night, Jon and his friends went to a dealer’s home and robbed him. Things got out of hand, and in the process, someone in the group shot and killed their victim.



Photo by Luis Contreras

By age 12, Jon was already dealing drugs. By ninth grade, he was an addict, a dropout, and a criminal. It took an arrest and time in segregation to turn his life around.

Jon remembers the day he was arrested. It was a Friday—March 15, 2002—and he had just turned 19 two months before. He was arrested for his role in the murder and brought to jail, but it was overcrowded. The

only place with room for Jon was in segregation.

A couple of corrections officers would talk to him from time to time. That first week in jail, Jon was so bored that he asked if either of the men could bring him something to read.

The officers handed him a copy of the New Testament—a portion of the Bible. On the cover were the words, “There’s hope for you. Jesus cares.”

“I read God’s Word for the first time,” Jon says, “and I haven’t been the same since.”

## New freedom from fear

Jon had not yet gone to court when he surrendered his life to Jesus. His lawyer didn’t believe he was serious about his newfound faith, dismissing it as “jailhouse religion.” Even so, Jon knew what he had to do.

“I would like to plead guilty. And whatever the judge wants to do to me, he can do.”

“Part of being a Christian is repenting and taking ownership of your sins,” Jon told his lawyer. “I would like to plead guilty. And whatever the judge wants to do to me, he can do.”

Jon pled guilty to third-degree murder, a crime that usually carries a sentence of 20 to 40 years in prison.

*Continued on page 2*

## Start the New Year Strong—With ConBody’s Cell Workout

by E.G. Andrews

**T**here’s a street corner in lower Manhattan where Coss Marte, then a teenager, launched his career selling drugs—before the law and some serious health issues caught up with him. By 23, he was in prison. He was out of shape, and if something didn’t change, he would likely die of a heart attack before his seven-year sentence was up.

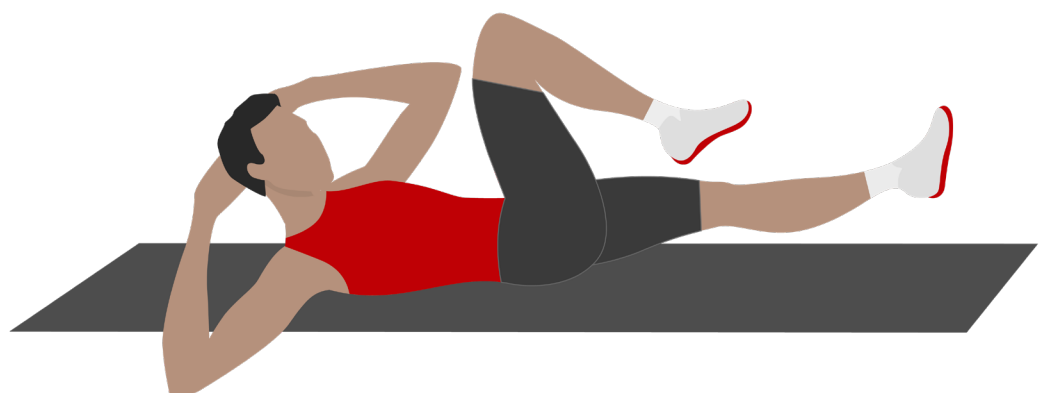
“That was a real wake-up call,” says Marte. He remembers running laps around the prison yard and exercising in his 9-by-6 cell, with nothing but the walls and floor for equipment. He lost 70 pounds in six months.

Before his release, he helped at least 20 fellow prisoners lose more than 1,000 pounds total.

After being released from prison, Marte launched ConBody, a prison-style workout program led entirely by formerly incarcerated people. The first studio opened in 2015 on the same corner where Marte used to sell drugs. Today, ConBody also offers a variety of online workout videos with several different trainers. Marte hopes incarcerated men and women can participate in prisons where computer tablets are available.

Meanwhile, here are a few Marte-approved core exercises that you can accomplish right in your cell (just make sure to drink plenty of water!).

### EXERCISE 1



#### Bicycle Crunch:

Lie on your back and bring your knees up to form a 90-degree angle. Keep your hands by your temples, crunch up, and twist across the body while kicking your legs in a bicycle motion. (For example, if you crunch up and to the right, you should draw your right knee in.)

Source: ConBody

*Continued on page 2*

# Letters to the Editor

Chad, Florida

I haven't been saved for that long. ... A good friend of mine showed me his study Bible, Bible dictionary, and Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, and wow, a lot of things started coming to light! Well, he got transferred the other day and took his books and Bible with him. For the past five days, I've been praying for a new study Bible ... And then all of a sudden, someone brings me the new Inside Journal, and shows me your address and where you're giving a free Bible study and Bible! So I said to myself, 'My prayers might be answered!' All I want to do is study! Please light my path!

Dear Chad:  
Whenever life gets tough, turning to prayer and Scripture can be so comforting. There are 66 books of the Bible, and if you're not sure where to start, Proverbs, Psalms, and Genesis in the Old Testament and Romans, Ephesians, and the Gospel of John in the New Testament are good suggestions. These books contain great verses to light your path.

Matthew, Pennsylvania

I served four and a half years, and was blessed with many wonderful correspondence courses, and learned, and searched [for] the Lord. I was baptized in 2016, and all was wonderful. I was blessed with parole in November of 2017. And, seven months later, I am writing you from prison as a parole violator. The reason is because I left the Lord behind when I was released. I traded the Bible for my own book, and got the same result [as



before]. I am determined not to allow this to happen again.

Dear Matthew:  
It's good that you are recognizing the patterns in your thoughts and behaviors that are taking you places you don't want to go. There are some helpful articles in this Inside Journal edition that talk about how to put on your "new self" in Jesus. We pray that you continue to focus on God moving forward.

Lincoln, Florida

Before coming across this paper, I've never heard of Inside Journal ... I've been in and out of prison for the past 35 years due to my addiction and to be honest I was at my wit's end, but then I read your paper about all the addicts getting another chance and so

it makes me wonder. I've got a Bible and I've been reading, and I have accepted Jesus and for some reason I feel he is the one who guided me to writing you after reading the articles from Ocean Lehaul, Craig DeRoche, and Robbie Robinson (Spring 2018). I guess there's something inside of me that hopes there's Hope.

Dear Lincoln:  
Addiction can be a difficult battle, but don't give up. Whenever you feel tempted, pray. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure" (NLT). Knowing you need His help is the first step. ■

## Subscription Info

At Inside Journal® (IJ), we receive many letters each week from prisoners asking for subscriptions to our newspaper. We are grateful for the interest and support of our readers—however, because of limitations on our staff and budget, IJ is only available in bulk shipments to your chaplain, programming coordinator, or a volunteer who visits your facility. Chaplains, to set up these shipments for free, please contact our editorial staff at P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790 or [insidejournal@pfm.org](mailto:insidejournal@pfm.org).

## Hope in the Hole

Continued from page 1

Standing in the court before the victim's family, Jon asked for forgiveness. Then he apologized to the judge for wasting the court's time and taxpayers' money.

"I don't believe that God allowed me to leave prison so that I could kick up my feet and enjoy life."

He didn't ask for mercy or blame someone else. Instead, Jon told the judge that he would respect his sentence—no matter what it was.

"It didn't matter that [the victim] was supposedly a drug dealer," Jon explains. "At the end of the day, he was a young man who didn't deserve to die."

Miraculously, the judge sentenced Jon to 6 to 15 years in prison, with five years of probation for robbery.

### Reentry and renewal

In prison, he made the most of his time by taking classes and earning his GED. He decided to approach reentry with the same mentality.

When Jon was released on parole, he stepped out into a world that can be overwhelming for many former prisoners. He needed a place to live, a job, and a community of friends who would support him.

Jon moved back in with his mother. She no longer lived in the rough neighborhoods of Jon's childhood. Instead, Jon was welcomed into a safe community.

He found a local church, where he met a new circle of friends who cared about

him. He even managed to find a job as a painter his first week out, thanks to a man who had volunteered at Jon's correctional facility.

Looking back, Jon sees how God directed his life during that time.

"I don't believe that God allowed me to leave prison so that I could kick up my feet and enjoy life," Jon says, recognizing how blessed he is to be given this second chance. "There's a lot of men who have done less than what I've done and are still in prison."

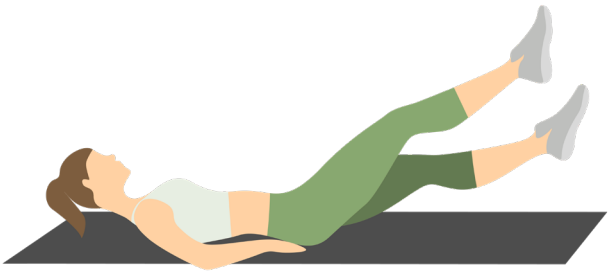
Today, Jon is making the most of his life after release. He received his bachelor's degree from Moody Bible Institute and now serves as the pastor of Chicago West Bible Church, a church he helped start two years ago. He is married with two children and devotes some of his time to prison ministry and advocating for a more restorative approach to prison.

"It's been an amazing journey, and I praise God for that," Jon says. ■

## ConBody Workout

Continued from page 1

### EXERCISE 2

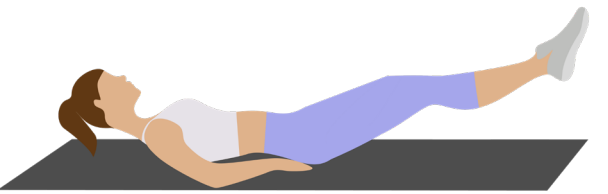


#### Flutter Kick:

Lie on your back with your arms by your sides and the palms of your hands down. Extend your legs completely out, with knees slightly bent. Lift your heels about six inches off the floor. Make small, rapid, up-and-down scissor-like motions with your legs.

Source: ConBody

### EXERCISE 3

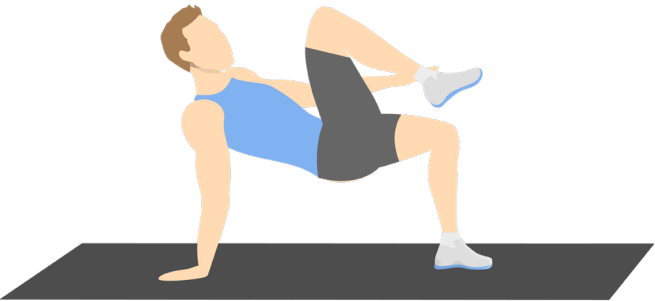


#### Hello Dolly/Scissor Kick:

Lie back and keep your legs together. Extend your legs out and point your toes toward the ceiling. Slide your hands, palms down, under your tailbone. Keep your head back and your chin tucked. Using your core strength, lift your feet six inches off the floor. Separate your legs horizontally as far as you can, and begin a horizontal scissor kick, back and forth.

Source: ConBody

### EXERCISE 4



#### Crab Toe Touch:

Sit on the floor with knees bent and feet together. Place your hands behind you. Lift your hips off the floor, kick your right leg up, and touch your right foot with your left hand. Then place your right foot on the floor, kick your left leg up, and touch your left foot with your right hand. Keep alternating legs quickly, keeping your core engaged and your neck relaxed.

Source: ConBody

As much as Marte loves helping people build a better body, he's even more excited about building better futures. On the outside, many of his clients have never met someone who has been in prison. But, Marte says, "As soon as they meet us, it changes their whole perspective."

As communities welcome returning prisoners, Marte is doing his part to bridge the gap between the community and the formerly incarcerated,

and to spread awareness for second chances. He encourages those behind bars to do what they can to stay motivated and grow stronger—working out, taking classes, getting counseling, and learning a skill.

"You're going to come out struggling," says Marte. "It's going to be difficult, and you're going to be judged. But work hard. Build your character. You're going to survive, and that's real success." ■

“Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.” – Lamentations 3:23 (NLT)

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HOLIDAYS		MY IMPORTANT DATES	
January 1 – New Year’s Day	June 16 – Father’s Day	<hr/>	
January 21 – Martin Luther King Day	July 4 – Independence Day	<hr/>	
February 14 – Valentine’s Day	August – <i>Don’t forget to submit your</i>	<hr/>	
February 18 – Presidents Day	<i>Angel Tree prisoner participation form!</i>	<hr/>	
April 21 – Easter	September 2 – Labor Day	<hr/>	
May 12 – Mother’s Day	November 11 – Veterans Day	<hr/>	
May 27 – Memorial Day	November 28 – Thanksgiving Day	<hr/>	
June – <i>Ask your chaplain for an Angel</i>	December 25 – Christmas Day	<hr/>	
<i>Tree prisoner participation form.</i>			

# Could You Forgive Your Worst Enemy?

by Stan Guthrie

During World War II, when Jewish people were being rounded up throughout Nazi-occupied Europe, Corrie ten Boom, her father Casper, and her sister Betsie were imprisoned for hiding Jews in their home. Casper and Betsie both died in detention, but Corrie eventually was released due to a clerical error. After the war was over, Corrie started visiting churches to share about how Jesus helped her through her imprisonment.

In her book *The Hiding Place*, she told about an encounter at one church that stunned her. She had finished speaking, and as the church was emptying, a German man came up to her and thrust out his hand. She recognized him; during the war, he had been a cruel Nazi officer. “How grateful I am for your message, *Fraulein*,” he said. “To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!”

Painful memories came racing back. Corrie could

not bring herself to raise her arm to shake the man’s hand. She was too angry. Bitter thoughts of vengeance filled her mind.

Corrie had shared the message of Christ’s forgiveness to many people in war-torn Europe, so shouldn’t she practice what she preached? She prayed silently, asking Jesus to forgive her, and to help her forgive the man. Then she tried to smile and raise her hand, but again, her right arm hung lifelessly at her side. So, she said another silent and honest prayer: *Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give Your forgiveness.*

Suddenly, her arm began moving. “As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened,” Corrie remembered. “From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand, a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.”

Corrie knew that because God had forgiven her, she needed to forgive others—

even people who had hurt her and her loved ones. But she also realized that forgiving this man would be impossible without God’s help. So, she prayed to Him and received the power to forgive.

## A powerful balance

God can do the same for us if we ask. He can free us from our pain and anger, and begin replacing our old, unforgiving ways with a new purpose in Him.

God’s forgiveness doesn’t cancel earthly accountability, however. Being restored through Jesus doesn’t mean our past never happened. The courts will still give out punishments for crimes we committed, and our actions can still have consequences on our marriages, parent-child relationships, long-term health, and other areas of our life. But thankfully, God promises to walk with us even through those consequences, and to strengthen us by His grace. We all struggle with bad attitudes, thoughts, and habits, yet God is near each of us. He wants us to give our struggles to Him. He will replace our old, unhealthy things with good things, including the power to change.

To be free from your old ways, the Bible says in Colossians and Ephesians that you are to “put on the new self” as a child of God. The Apostle Paul, who was in prison for sharing his Christian faith, says in Ephesians 4:1, “I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling” (NLT).

## ARE YOU FUELED BY ANGER?

Do you control your anger, or does it control you? Psalm 37:8 says, “Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper—it only leads to harm.” Colossians 3:13 adds, “Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” Could you forgive someone who wronged you?

If you don’t know how to let go of your anger, start with this simple prayer:

*“Lord, you are a God of forgiveness. If You can forgive sinners who don’t deserve mercy, surely You can bring me the strength I need to let go of my anger and forgive my own enemies. Please soften any hardness in my heart and release any resentment. Amen.”*

To discover how God can free you from your anger, sign up for a free correspondence Bible study through one of our trusted partner organizations by writing to “No More Anger,” c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790. To request a large-print Inside Journal® Life Recovery Bible in English or Spanish, write to: Tyndale House Publishers, Attn: Inside Journal Bible, 351 Executive Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188 with your name, prison ID number, institution name, and address. \*PA readers: do not mail your request; ask your chaplain directly.

The Bible says this worthy life is humble, gentle, and patient about the faults of other people.

“Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life,” Paul says in Ephesians 4, “which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.”

As Christians, by the power of God’s Spirit living inside us, we are to let go of the bad things from our old life and let Jesus Christ renew our attitudes. That’s what Corrie ten Boom did, and what you can do, too.

## Time for a fresh start

With the New Year right around the corner, this is a great time to make a fresh start with God. You can be reinvented from the inside out—not by your own efforts to improve, but by His power. When you are reborn and renewed in Jesus, the old, beat-up, and bruised you is gone. God makes you *new*.

So, if you just can’t seem to break a bad habit or let go of anger, don’t try to reinvent yourself. Remember Corrie ten Boom, stop trying to use your power, and ask God to give you His power to change and to “put on the new self” every day. ■



ramzihachicho/Gettyimages

Is it harder to forgive others, or to ask for forgiveness yourself? Whether you relate to Corrie or to the officer, it’s important to release your anger, forgive others, and ask to be forgiven.

# What ‘The Professor’ Learned in Prison

by E.G. Andrews

Grayson Boucher, better known as The Professor, is a streetball legend of And1 Mixtape Tour and YouTube fame who has long wowed fans with his skills. He has played ball in at least 40 countries and has more than 2 million online followers. But he had never been to a prison—until recently.

The Professor teamed up with Prison Fellowship to go behind bars in Nebraska and play basketball for a day. Many men lined up to join him on the prison yard, and even more stood courtside, in awe of the moves that have made the streetballer famous.

“When you get someone coming from [another state]

who doesn’t even know you, it inspires you,” said Timothy.

Basketball tricks and tasteful trash-talk are The Professor’s signature moves. But his real purpose was to encourage,

motivate, and swap life stories with the guys off the court. He spent time getting to know the men in the gym, in their cells, and in the chow hall (yes, he ate the food).



Photo by Chad Prince

Popular streetballer Grayson Boucher gives Nebraska prisoners inspiration—and some lighthearted taunting.

Throughout the day, he shared about his own faith journey and met participants of the Prison Fellowship Academy®, a program that takes people in prison through a complete life-transformation process. The Professor came away with a new perspective on the prison system and the people living inside its walls.

“I live in California; it’s sunny every day, and a lot of things are a blessing,” The Professor said. “But faith would be different if I made some bad choices and ended up in here, right? That would be suffocating. But to have peace of God here [in prison] is different than having peace of God at the beach. You know what I mean? So, it’s inspiring for me.” ■



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Editorial Manager: A.R. Quinn  
Managing Editor: S.L. Ray

Writers: E.G. Andrews,  
E. Greene, Stan Guthrie, G. Pope

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