

# Mentor Children of Prisoners

Children of the incarcerated have committed no crime, but the penalty they pay for their parents' crimes is steep. In many cases, they forfeit virtually everything that matters to them: their home, their friends, their safety, their public status, and personal self-image. Most damaging, however, is the loss of their parent, who may have been a law-breaker but was still the child's primary source of comfort and affection.

Angel Tree Mentoring equips churches to match vulnerable children with caring, Christian mentors who will point them toward Jesus and help them overcome the loss of a parent. This is a ministry that takes an investment of time, but offers numerous benefits to mentees as well as mentors.

The goal of Angel Tree Mentoring is for children of prisoners to come into a consistent relationship with a caring Christian adult who is connected to a Christ-centered church. This relationship needs to be long term – at least a year – and it needs to be built on trust and respect, not seen as simply a project to be completed.

Research confirms the positive impact of healthy relationships in the life of a prisoner's child.

- Relationships greater than 12 months have significant positive impacts.
- Relationships lasting 3 to 6 months had no measurable impacts.
- Relationships lasting less than 3 months have significant negative impacts.

A mentor is a friend, encourager, confidant, coach, guide, nurturer, listener, adviser, trainer, advocate, cheerleader, comforter, and role model. Being a mentor will require a time commitment of one to three hours a week. It will also take some forethought and planning.

Purposeful, well-planned activities are important for building relationships. Some activities you and your mentee may enjoy are:

- Going out to eat, taking walks, visiting the zoo
- Sports, hiking, fishing, flying kites, outdoor grilling
- Attending a class together or doing volunteer work
- Woodworking, photography, handcrafts
- Attending a festival, live musical, or play
- Cooking, planting a garden, or fixing bikes

As a mentor, your role is simply to be faithful, open, understanding, and accepting; God's role is to change the life of the young mentee. It will take time and you will need to slowly build trust. But the rewards will be well worth your investment in the life of your mentee.

If you are interested in becoming involved in Angel Tree Mentoring, call 1-800-55-ANGEL for assistance.

