

# Praying for Prisoners' Families

According to recent studies, the family is one of this country's most valuable weapons in fighting crime. Prisoners who receive visitors, maintain family ties, and are released to a stable home environment are more likely to succeed in leading productive, crime-free lives.

Families provide an incentive for prisoners to grow, learn, and change. It's not always easy, but parents in prison can contribute positively to a child's upbringing through letter writing, phone calls, and family visits. This is why it is important to pray for the families of the incarcerated and help them remain connected if possible.

When you caringly ask a mother how her child is coping with her father's incarceration and offer to pray for the family, this is as much a ministry as sending children to summer camp or providing Christmas gifts. In fact, prayer ministry can be even greater.

Will you make time to boldly bring the needs of prisoners' families before the throne of God? Author Richard Foster calls intercession both a "sacred obligation" and a "precious privilege." In *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, he writes: "If we truly love people, we will desire for them far more than it is within our power to give them, and this will lead us to prayer. Intercession is a way of loving others."

If your church is involved in outreach to families of the incarcerated, ask the volunteers to send you prayer requests for the families. Even when you don't know specific needs to pray for, you can call on God to provide resources for a variety of general needs. Below is a list of common prayer needs of prisoners' families.

## Prayer Needs of Prisoners' Families

**Pray for spiritual needs of prisoners' families**, that they would:

- Know that God loves them unconditionally and experience the abiding presence of God
- Become involved in a local church with solid Bible teaching
- Receive support and encouragement from caring Christians
- Become strong in their faith and trust God to guide them

**Pray for the emotional needs of prisoners' children**, that they will:

- Experience God's comfort and presence in their loneliness
- Feel secure and loved by their caregivers
- Deal with their anger, hurts, and losses in healthy, appropriate ways
- Not feel guilty about their parents' crimes or incarceration

**Pray for the needs of children's caregivers**, that they would:

- Have wisdom and strength for raising the children of the incarcerated
- Provide a loving and nurturing environment for the children
- Allow the children to participate in Angel Tree programs available to them
- Want the children to attend church and learn about God

**Pray for relationships within the families**, that they will:

- Be able to maintain an appropriate level of contact with the one who is incarcerated

- Learn how to be more effective in the way they communicate with each other
- Experience reconciliation in strained or broken relationships
- Begin taking positive steps toward strengthening and rebuilding the family

**Pray for protection of prisoners' children and families**, that they would:

- No longer experience chaos, violence, and trauma in their homes
- Shun drugs and alcohol and seek to live healthy, sober lives
- Be protected from gossip, prejudice, stereotyping, and harassment
- Be able to live in safety, peace, and stability no matter what goes on around them

**Pray for the physical needs of prisoners' families**, that they would:

- Have adequate housing and be able to keep their homes in good repair
- Have nutritious food to eat and adequate clothing
- Be able to obtain the appropriate medical care they need
- Have assistance available from a variety of community resources

**Pray for the financial needs of prisoners' families**, that they would:

- Be able to recover from loss of income when a wage-earner is sent to prison
- Have employment that pays enough to meet their financial needs
- Have opportunity to enhance their educational and vocational skills
- Be able to manage their financial resources with wisdom

**Pray for churches in communities across the nation**, that they will:

- Sense God's calling to become Angel Tree churches
- See the need to evangelize and disciple the children in their neighborhoods
- Open their arms to men and women returning from prison and their families
- Become involved in mentoring prisoners and ex-prisoners and their children