

Tutoring GED Candidates

Volunteer Opportunity

In 1996, as a new Prison Fellowship area director for the Mid-Atlantic states, I had the privilege of walking alongside my predecessor for two weeks prior to his much-deserved retirement to Florida. He and I spent the bulk of our time traversing the territory and meeting volunteers, chaplains, wardens, and top corrections officials. In our travels, I met a volunteer at the Maryland House of Corrections (MHC) named Colleen. Colleen was a retired teacher with a stately appearance and a warm demeanor.

Colleen immediately introduced me to her star student. She went on to explain what she and her student were working on and how much wonderful progress he had been making toward improving his reading comprehension skills.

That was one of those treasured moments when God opened my eyes to the possibilities of what a faithful servant of Christ can do in any environment – transform lives for the Kingdom. From that moment on, I was always dogged by the question – What if? What if we were able to get faithful Christians to be available to God in every nook and cranny of the prisons? **What if?**

Community Experience

A great article once appeared in The Crimson, the campus newspaper of Harvard University. It was called “*When Worlds Collide: Tutoring in Prisons*,” and it explored how helping inmates attain basic competencies can open the door to rich relationships and opportunities to share about life.

According to a 2007 study by the National Center for Education Statistics, three percent of inmates are completely illiterate, and one out of every six can’t read well enough to follow basic instructions.

How can these men and women hope to study the Bible, or access resources like housing and jobs, unless someone shows up to teach them?

Now imagine with me the impact of an army of God’s people flooding correctional facilities all across this country to serve in areas we’ve rarely considered, like literacy or GED programs. If Christian men and women offer basic educational skills to inmates, they’ll reach people who may never cross the chapel threshold. Volunteers sharing their gifts and talents in the area of reading, writing and math, one-on-one, will demonstrate the love of Christ and equip inmates to succeed.

Corrections

A conversation with the warden, chief of security, or education program coordinator at a correctional facility may net fruitful opportunities for volunteers who feel equipped to tutor inmates.

- Explore need with corrections staff
- Outline benefits for DOC:
 - ▶ Community participation
 - ▶ Dollar savings
 - ▶ Enhanced inmate achievement
- Recruit/train tutors:
 - ▶ Current/retired educators
 - ▶ Review dos & don’ts
 - ▶ Review prison culture

