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From Wasted Time to No Time to Waste

by Kate Campbell

Brent used to spend a lot of time getting “wasted.”

He took his first sip of alcohol as a teenager and immediately fell in love. Casual enjoyment quickly grew into an addiction, and his life of partying began to feel like a life without purpose.

“My life consisted of existing and partying and working, and that was about it,” says Brent. “I felt unfulfilled. I had a hole in my heart.” Though Brent had learned about God as a kid, he never had a relationship with Jesus. “I just didn’t know the truth at the time.”

Brent grew up in a strict home. His father was in the military and had a strong sense of discipline. When his younger brother, Todd,

Photo by Adam Fieldson Photography



After years of addiction, pain, loss, and grieving, Brent wound up in prison and at the end of his rope. Then a vivid dream and a powerful program changed his life.

enlisted in the military, Brent decided to try and get his life straight and joined the military too. In this new career, Brent began to feel a sense of purpose. “I felt fulfilled ... like I was doing something worthwhile,” Brent says. “But still [there] was that void in my heart.”

In 2009, his brother Todd was killed while

serving in Iraq. This tragic loss deeply affected Brent—his brother had always been his close friend. “He loved me when I didn’t love myself,” recalls Brent.

A dark time

Brent turned to alcohol as a source of comfort and began to spiral back into his addictive behavior. “My

drinking got really, really out of control,” he says. “I didn’t know you could feel pain like that. And so I was just trying to numb the pain.”

He was discharged from the military, and he would often disappear for weeks at a time so people wouldn’t see how much he was struggling. “I didn’t want my family to see what I had going on,”

Brent says. “People would ... knock on the door trying to get a hold of me, [but] I didn’t want them to see the condition I was in.”

Eventually, Brent was arrested for committing a violent crime while intoxicated. Brent was offered a deal to serve 74 months in prison if he pled guilty, but he wasn’t quite ready to own up to his crime. So he went to trial instead. He was sentenced to 180 months in prison—more than double the original sentence he was offered.

When Brent went to prison at St. Cloud Correctional Facility in Minnesota, he was angry and bitter. Remembering what he learned about God as a kid, Brent turned to the Bible to seek comfort, but he struggled to understand what he was reading. He

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5 Tips for Successful Reentry

by Dillon Shaw

Dillon Shaw served 13 years in prison before being released on parole. He shared with Prison Fellowship his five tips to a successful reentry. If you’re getting out soon—or even if you’re not but just want to help others who are—these tips may help ensure a smooth transition. And

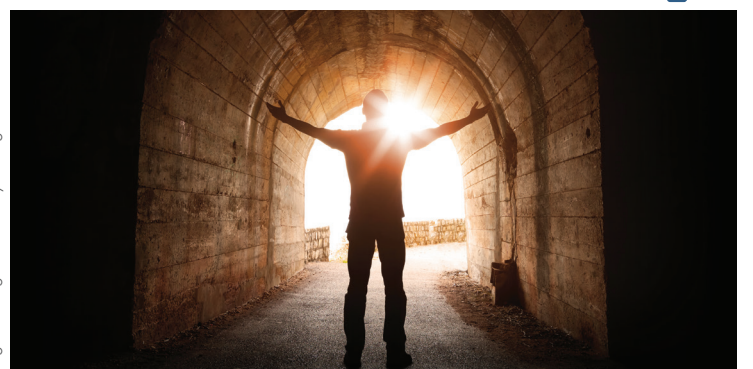
remember: After you’re released, the goal isn’t to just survive—it’s to *thrive*.

1. Take initiative.

Start before you get out. You can’t expect things to magically change as soon as you’re released, so you need to take responsibility for pursuing connections with reentry resources beforehand. If you see Prison Fellowship

or other Christian programs in the facility, go ask to talk to volunteers, talk to personnel. Ask them if there are ways you can be involved in programming, to begin preparing. Ask volunteers if you can connect with their churches. Ask the chaplain if there are local churches you can write to. Ask the chaplain to connect you to ministries or

eugenesergeev: Getty Images



organizations. Once you’re out, pursue those relationships. Go to churches, visit churches, ask if you can talk to their leadership. Take responsibility to find support.

2. Develop positive relationships.

Don’t expect people to come to you and lead you in those relationships. We need

Continued on page 6

NEED A BIBLE?

Get a free Inside Journal
Life Recovery Bible!

NOW WITH A
WORKBOOK!

WRITE TO:

Tyndale House Publishers
Attn: Inside Journal Bible
351 Executive Drive
Carol Stream, IL 60188

Include this information to make sure your Bible
or Workbook gets delivered:

- ✓ Your complete name and prison ID number
- ✓ Your facility name
- ✓ Your facility address for prisoner parcel delivery
- ✓ Whether you want English or Spanish*

*Bibles and Workbooks are available in English or Spanish. You can order a Bible and Workbook together, or separately. Limit one order per person.



Letters to the Editor



Ekely: Getty Images

Glen in Florida
(NOTE: This is an excerpt from a longer letter detailing Glen's case and his ordeal with the courts.)

I have no clue why the Inside Journal came to me. It just showed up one day out of nowhere addressed to me, so I'm just taking that as a sign. ... My life fell apart [after I took a plea deal], and I thought I wasn't going to make it, but throughout this whole thing, God had had His hand on my shoulder, refusing to let me fall completely.

You can spend your whole life running around looking for what you want, but eventually you're going to bump into what you need. I was devastated when the judge denied my [current motion], and I just knew my chance to get out [early] was over, but then out of nowhere, he was going through papers and came across the motion I filed almost two years earlier and one that I had

completely forgotten about. And that's when I knew I still wasn't alone in this. It's only been three weeks since I've gotten back from court, so I still haven't found out what the judge finally decided, but I do know it will be better than what I received from the start. ... I want people to know just because you feel like you are all alone doesn't mean you actually are. A lot of people are looking for that big miracle in order for them to believe, so it's harder for them to see the small blessings that are actually changing their lives.

Dear Glen:

What an inspiring story! Thank you for sharing! Whether you get out soon or not, stay positive and keep sharing your stories of God's hope.

James in Arizona

Thank you so much for your zeal in our Lord Jesus Christ. What

you do for inmates is inspiring, and I know I'm not the only one who is grateful. At our last church service here, we were all given a copy of the Inside Journal. I have thoroughly enjoyed reading it. I especially liked the "6 Habits of a Lifetime Learner" and the "Recipe Corner." I will be implementing these habits into my life and slowly start to make them my habits. ... Knowing how much I enjoyed this issue of Inside Journal, I would love to keep receiving them. I am not sure if you send them out for free or if it's a charged subscription, but I would love to be put on the mailing list.

Dear James:

We're so glad you enjoyed Inside Journal! It's not available in individual subscriptions, but you can ask your chaplain or religious coordinator to order a free bulk shipment by emailing us at insidejournal@pfm.org. These newspapers are quarterly, arriving in prisons in March, June, September, and December.

**Sincerely,
The Editorial Staff** ■

No Time to Waste Continued from page 1

continued in his anger and bitterness, until one night, he cried out to God.

Brent remembers saying, God, you better do something. You better do something because I'm holding on by a thin thread. That night, Brent had a vivid dream about his life 10 years in the future, where he saw relationships restored with his family and experienced forgiveness from the people he had hurt. When he woke up, Brent felt a peace. He knew that God had brought him healing from

the pain and anger that had been consuming him.

"I needed every day [in prison] ... God ... refined me in there."

Time to grow

One of Brent's friends in prison told him about a program at a prison nearby called Prison Fellowship Academy®. Using targeted curriculum and restorative community, the Academy helps participants replace criminal thinking and behaviors with new purpose.

The next day, Brent was on a bus, headed to the nearby prison to join the Academy. Although Brent's release date was further away than that of many Academy participants, Brent was accepted into the program, where he discovered biblical truths that transformed his life. He also experienced deep brotherhood with other incarcerated men who mentored him and helped him work through his anger and violent behavior.

Brent spent 10 years in prison—and he believes that none of it was wasted time. "I needed

every day," says Brent. "God just stripped me down and refined me in there." Through his time in prison, Brent feels God molded him into the man He intended him to be: a man of integrity.

When Brent was released, he moved in with his sister and worked as an electrician, a skill he had learned while incarcerated. One day, he got a call from Marlin, a man he had met in prison through the Academy. Marlin asked Brent to come work with him at FreedomWorks, a Christian sober living program in Minneapolis. Now Brent serves

as the reentry and aftercare coordinator at FreedomWorks, helping other men who have experienced addiction and incarceration to find their freedom.

Brent knows that God used his time in prison to prepare him for this opportunity to serve others like him. "It's not wasted time," explains Brent. "It's all for a purpose. Once you've accepted Christ, He's going to use it all. He's going to teach you things, and He's going to [pull] you through those painful things so you can help the next person." ■

Emptying Yourself Creates Room To Be Filled With Hope

by Chaplain
John Cherico

Humans are sinners. People often seek destructive paths or find pleasure in corrupt activities. But Jesus, Who knows all our sins big and small, was tortured and brutally murdered as a ransom for those sins, even though we didn't deserve to have that ransom to be paid.

When we ask God to forgive our sins, He forgives them, no questions asked. We should be thanking Him every second of every day. We should be willing to give up our selfish ways out of sheer gratitude. But so many people keep filling their lives with destructive things and then wondering why their way isn't working.

If God looked at whatever we desired in our life and said that He wants us to lay it down or wants to take it from us, would we be willing to give it up? Could we empty ourselves for the sake of the One who emptied His life on the cross?

Filling up with hope

Today was my third meeting with a man behind bars named Ryan. Today I sensed that he's finally ready to learn the truth about himself. In our previous meetings, Ryan was ranting and raving over being incarcerated. Claiming innocence even though a jury found him guilty. Now he's awaiting sentencing.

Ryan is highly educated, with a sharp mind and an extensive vocabulary. But in this third meeting, something has changed. Ryan now seems broken, and in a good way—a way only God can bring about. No longer hiding behind his intellect, he senses his lostness. Ryan cries over his confusion. He's



ConstantinosZ: Getty Images

crushed by the guilt that consumes him.

Ryan is awaiting sentencing for a heinous crime. Nevertheless, he is standing on the threshold of grace. Some might say he doesn't deserve to be forgiven. Then again, who does? This is what makes God's grace so amazing. Ryan is worried that God won't forgive him. But 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Making room for grace

Ryan is ready to embrace the truth, but he says it seems too easy. I ask him, "Did Jesus live an easy life and experience an easy death?" I assure him that Jesus came to pay the price for our sins, and this wasn't easy. I tell him that no matter how hard we try, we can't fix, change, or save ourselves. I tell Ryan that putting his faith in Jesus alone, is the only way to get out from under his guilt and shame. I quote John 3:17, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."

I then ask Ryan if he really wants to surrender his life to Christ. Without hesitation he says, "Yes." I press him again about his decision: "What changed your mind?" Ryan says, "I have no one else to turn to, nowhere else to go. I need God now, more than ever."

There it is! The emptiness that only God can fill. The healing of mind and soul that only the Lord can deliver.

Next comes the prayer that Ryan prays, that lifts him from his knees and into the loving embrace of a forgiving God. This event triggers a celebration in heaven. In Luke 15:10 Jesus said, "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

John Cherico is a chaplain in the Minneapolis, Minnesota, area who shares the Gospel with men and women behind bars. ■

WHAT TREASURES DO YOU SEEK?

Ask yourself: What's the first thing you do or think each morning and the last thing you do or think each night? Whatever your answer is, that's likely what you're prioritizing in your life.

So many people spend their days fooling themselves into thinking their earthly "treasure" (pleasurable activity, money, reputation, pride) will bring them true fulfillment. But after the initial good feeling wears off, they're just left wanting more. The feeling of lack or longing just keeps growing.

1 John 2:16–17 says, "For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever."

Jesus adds in Matthew 6:19–20, "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal." If you're tired of chasing after temporary pleasures that leave you wanting more, maybe it's time you empty yourself of what you think will fulfill you and allow God to fill you with His heavenly love.

Not sure where to begin? Start with this simple prayer:

"Dear Jesus, please empty me of my own desires and replace them with the desires of Your heart. I surrender my life to You. Please show me how to be filled with Your love. Amen."

Want to learn more about Jesus or have other comments? Write to us at "EMPTIED," c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790. Need a free Bible or accompanying study guide/workbook? See our ad on page 2.

ACTIVITY: Summertime Word Search

Find the following words:
(Words hidden left-to-right, diagonal, and downward)

- AngelTree
- Fellowship
- Forgiveness
- Grace
- Jesus
- Summer
- Camping
- Outdoors
- Nature
- Community
- Sun
- Patience
- Restore
- Thrive
- Renew
- Truth
- God
- Savior
- Bible
- Peace

Extra Challenge:

Find 7 bonus words of the pictures below. Answers on page 8.

N A T U R E O U S V P Z T E N T S Q R P
C A V H H C F V C B O A S R J U H E Y J
L R J F G M Y E M A W N P U U B D D T E
A L E Z K N D M L O M H I E N T I W V S
K T L S N F N C O L G P T S A O H B W U
E L G F T X Z F C L O N I H P C J C L S
S M R B W O N E O A D W B N R E E T G E
O O A G U X R X S R M J S A G I R Y I D
T U C V V H K E G M G P R H L S V S I V
N N E O N A K E V E G I E P I L E E O I
K T N E M O N V O G E T V R J P O I A N
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A I U A G C U L E A T W P U N S M G N S
O N A N V O Y N J L C D R A E E M W C A
S M D C N I F P I X T T O E T S S W G V
R U F I D W O B K T W R G O N I B S I R
I J M H U C I R Y S Y K E S R E E D M G
H C Q M W G P W J Z D O K E U S W N O M
L N D D E R D O F B Y V T F X N R H C Y
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Aşkın Dursun KAMBEROĞLU: Getty Images

Angel Tree Christmas: The Benefits Triangle

by S.L. Ray

Angel Tree® Christmas gives incarcerated parents a way to provide a Christmas gift and a personal message, delivered by caring volunteers, as a reminder of their love for their child even when they can't be together at Christmastime. In addition, every family is also given access to a free, easy-to-read copy of the Bible. And churches that serve with Prison Fellowship Angel Tree™ often continue to minister to families year-round. Last year, Angel Tree served hundreds of thousands of children of all different ages and backgrounds throughout the year.

Angel Tree Christmas helps so many people in so many ways. But here are three major benefits:

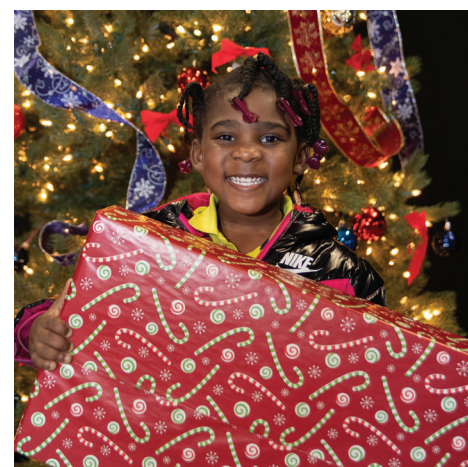


1. It benefits the child by giving them connection to their incarcerated parent.

“When I read the personal message from their mom, it was as if their whole holiday was complete. They felt their mom didn’t forget them.” —Grandparent/caregiver of Angel Tree child

“I had a great relationship with my father because he was very involved when he was in prison, and Angel Tree was a big part of that. ... It was so awesome to have something that was your own, and it was always beautifully wrapped. We would always save the wrapping and the bows. It normalized things—I felt like every other kid with presents under the tree.” —Angel Tree child

“Especially during the holidays—just to know that your dad is thinking about you and set aside time to think about you—it’s so special. And it’s so personalized. That’s what makes it different. Angel Tree really connects you.” —Angel Tree child



2. It benefits the parent by giving them connection to their child and to the outside world.

“Any family support is great because it gets you through the day. It makes it easier to know that people are rooting for you on the outside.” —Parent of Angel Tree child

“I’d just gotten locked up [when I first participated in Angel Tree], and I really didn’t have money to give my daughter anything. But when she got the gift, she was like, ‘Daddy, you got me something??’ Oh my goodness, it made me feel good because she was happy that I was thinking about her and trying to get her something in prison. That was probably the best Christmas I had in prison.” —Parent of Angel Tree child

“[The connection with my kids] is extremely important to me. It’s like a first priority. Anything that can still let my family know that I’m there. You know, maybe not physically, but even a message or a card or anything or how they explain the gift ... that’s a first priority.” —Parent of Angel Tree child



3. It benefits the incarcerated community by inspiring participants who share their feelings of hope and purpose with their fellow prisoners.

“The program also brings men into the chapel and exposes them to Christian love in a time of great trial and pain in their lives. Even men who live lives full of hate can’t help but to be touched by this compassion.” —Parent of Angel Tree child

“A penitentiary can be a very dark place, but the Angel Tree program provides an uplifting experience for [prisoners to] know that their children will be reminded of their love. The [Angel Tree parents] themselves are reminded of why they need to work hard to reenter society and stay out of prison, with their families.” —Chaplain at participating Angel Tree prison

“I have been locked up over six years. I was arrested a little over a month after my son, now 6, was born. Even though I have never been there physically, I’ve fought to stay a part of his life, letting him know I love him and plan on being in his life every day upon my release. During my time here I’ve made it a point to change my life for the better with the goal of being the best man and father I can be.” —Angel Tree parent ■

To learn more about how you can participate in Angel Tree, see next page or ask your chaplain for an application.

Photos by Prison Fellowship



BEING RELEASED SOON?

Check out the Colson Scholarship started by Charles Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship. The Colson Scholarship is available to eligible returning citizens who want to attend Wheaton College in Illinois (wheaton.edu).

To learn more, visit prisoninstitute.com/colson-scholarship. Or to get more tips and tools for a successful release, ask your chaplain to email us at insidejournal@pfm.org to order our free Inside Journal Reentry specialty edition.

Who is eligible? Applicants must:

- Be a Christian
- Be a U.S. citizen
- Have a felony record (Note: Felonies must NOT include sexual offenses, arson, or repeat violent offenses)
- Be out of jail or prison for at least one full year by April 1 of the application year
- Be established in a local church
- Be accepted into Wheaton College undergraduate or graduate school

THIS YEAR, GIVE YOUR CHILDREN A PRICELESS GIFT:

A present and a personalized message from you, their parent who loves them!

Through Prison Fellowship Angel Tree™ your child can receive a gift, a Bible, and a personal note from you this Christmas—all at no cost to you! And throughout the year, your child can also participate in Angel Tree® camping or sports camps. Call Prison Fellowship at 800.55.ANGEL (26453) to learn more.

- ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:
- 1. You must be the parent, stepparent, or mother/father figure.
 - 2. There must not be a court order restricting your contact with the child(ren) or their caregiver(s).
 - 3. Your child(ren) must live in the United States.
 - 4. Your child(ren) must be 18 years old or younger.
 - 5. The form must be filled out completely and legibly and then signed.



ASK YOUR CHAPLAIN OR PROGRAM COORDINATOR FOR AN APPLICATION TODAY!

Forms must be postmarked by Oct. 1. Ask your chaplain about your facility’s deadline to submit completed forms.

Contact your child(ren)’s caregiver to gather the most current information for your application.

IMPORTANT: If your information is incomplete or inaccurate, if local volunteers are unable to locate your child(ren)’s caregiver, or if the caregiver refuses to participate, we may not be able to deliver gifts to your child(ren).



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2022 ANGEL TREE CALENDAR

JUNE

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
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DECEMBER

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HOLIDAYS

June/July – Begin filling out your Angel Tree form

July 4 – Independence Day

July/Aug./Sept. – Submit your Angel Tree form

September 5 – Labor Day

November 11 – Veterans Day

November 24 – Thanksgiving Day

December – Angel Tree gifts are delivered

December 25 – Christmas Day

IMPORTANT DATES

DAILY DEVOTIONAL TEAR-OUT

by Rose Shannon

Tear out this daily devotional and then start each morning and/or end each night saying it and praying over it. You'll be amazed how a healthy spiritual habit like this can bring encouragement and focus to each day!

Sometimes our daily lives can feel overwhelming. With each new responsibility or task, our minds can become blurred with crippling expectations. When we feel this pressure, connecting with Jesus can seem like just another “to-do list” item piled onto our already impossible load.

IN MATTHEW 11:28–30, JESUS SAYS,

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear and the burden I give you is light.”

“Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart ...”

Picture the place you feel the most comfort. Maybe it is in the hug of a loved one or sitting in your favorite chair. Now read the verses again and imagine Jesus in that place with you.

When Jesus speaks, He speaks peace. He does not use His voice to make our lives more chaotic or stressful. He tells us that He longs to give us rest, to lighten our burdens, to be gentle and easy with us.

In the words of author John Mark Comer, Jesus “offers [us] a whole new way to bear the weight of our humanity: with ease. At his side. Like two oxen in a field, tied shoulder to shoulder. With Jesus doing all of the heavy lifting. ... Slow, unhurried, present to the moment, full of love and joy and peace.”

A relationship with God means simply accepting this invitation to find deep rest by His side. We don't need to be perfect before meeting with God. We don't need to “earn” God's rest because His rest is completely free.

If you are tired, Jesus is welcoming you to join Him in your comfy chair or warm hug. All you have to do is answer the call and settle in.

5 Tips for Reentry

Continued from page 1

to take responsibility to develop those positive social relationships, because you know, and I know, that certain kinds of relationships lead us back to crime, and certain relationships lead us away from crime. So pursue the godly relationships that will help you walk in the right path and stay out of prison.

3. Seek accountability.

Specifically ask for and receive accountability. This is probably one of

the key factors in my successful reentry, from far before I got out of prison. God brought mentors into my life whom I would ask regularly, “Please tell me when you think I’m doing something wrong. Please tell me when you see something in me, because I might not see it.” Because that’s something we all deal with: blind spots. So ask for accountability, ask people to tell you the truth and be ruthlessly honest. And be ruthlessly honest with yourself. Hold yourself to the highest expectation.

4. Have the right attitude.

You also need to cultivate the right attitude, and this once again starts before you even get out of prison. Cultivate, or build, an attitude of service. Be a servant. Don’t seek to be served; seek to serve. That’s what Jesus said in Mark 10:45. So you and I need to guard against pride and entitlement. If I’m seeking to be a servant, I’m not going to expect people to give me whatever I want. I’m going to offer what I have to them.



5. Be realistic and flexible.

Rarely does success happen according to your plan when you get out. And if you hold too tightly, you might miss God’s plan. So be realistic and be flexible. Don’t expect things to happen exactly as you want and don’t expect everything to unfold and be dropped into your hands. Expect difficulty, expect

opposition, and expect that you’re going to have to push through obstacles to reintegrate successfully back into society.

With the right relationships, the right attitudes, and the right mentality, you can have success in your reentry. It may not happen overnight, and it may take a lot of humility and effort, but it’ll be worth it. ■

FINDING A CAREER

For help finding employment after your release, start with job search websites like indeed.com and 70millionjobs.com. Also visit prisonfellowship.org/resources and scroll down to the section called “Preparing for Reentry.” There, you will find a lot of resources, including tools for job searching and writing a resume, tips for family, books to check out, a national directory for reentry, and more. Be sure to follow all your release conditions and parole rules. If you can’t get access to a computer or cell phone, most county libraries have computers the public can use.

OBJECT LESSON: Who’s Writing Your Story?

by Cherise Bopape

Have you ever gotten instructions that were confusing? Ever read about a topic that left you scratching your head? Some concepts are just more difficult to understand than others.

When it comes to learning about abstract ideas like trust and faith, “object lessons” can be very helpful.

What is an object lesson? It’s a teaching method that uses physical objects to help people understand principles or morals. This involves the use of practical items to illustrate a topic in a relatable way.

OBJECT: A novel

LESSON: Trust Jesus with your life story.

If possible, visit your facility’s library and choose a novel you haven’t yet read. Examine it. Think about what attracted you to this book. Maybe you selected it because its cover or title was appealing. Perhaps you’ve read other books by the same author, and you’ve enjoyed them.

But what must occur for you to know if it really is a good book or not? You’ll need to look beyond its surface and dig deeper. Open the novel, and then look at its inner parts. Glance at the copyright page, title page, table of contents, and several chapters. Once you begin reading, you’ll notice how the cover and exterior details become less important, because what you really want is inside the book: a good story with someone to root for.

Authors of compelling stories know exactly how to tell a good tale. They may allow their characters to go through nail-biting scenes, endure painful revelations, or get stuck in frightening places. But their characters’ pains serve a greater purpose. Even though conflicts happen, authors have their characters evolve with each plot twist. Characters grow or even undergo complete life transformations.

When you examine your life and the struggles that landed you in prison, you may realize you’ve chosen a path based on the wrong reasons. Like choosing a book from a library shelf, you may look at outward appearances and do what seems attractive on the surface. Maybe you’ve tried writing your own story, but it just keeps twisting. Instead of experiencing growth, you feel stuck or uncertain. You don’t like the story you’ve created or don’t see a greater purpose.

If this sounds like you, perhaps you’re ready for a life transformation. You’ve written chapters in your life that went the wrong direction, but Jesus is the ultimate Author who can turn them around. Will you allow Him to write your story?

OBJECT LESSON: This month, whenever you see a book, think of how you might be passing judgment based on outward appearances. Then, remember that Jesus considers the inner person. He not only sees your heart (1 Samuel 16:7), but He also can forgive your dark past. He knows your potential. You can trust Him with your life story, because He loves you. ■



WHAT DOES TRANSFORMATION LOOK LIKE?

When God transforms your life, He equips you with everything you’ll need to make a positive, lasting effect on your environment. Plus, something happens inside of you. According to Romans 12:2, you become a new person. You begin to think differently and start to have a better understanding of God’s will for your life.

Behind bars, you may notice this in the following practical ways:

- You can expect gradual changes in your desires, habits, and the company you keep.
- Instead of responding to dire situations with anxiety, you may have a little more peace.
- You have a desire to serve those around you instead of continuing cycles of crime.
- Explosive kneejerk reactions become thoughtful, kinder responses.
- Prejudices subside. Hatred changes to acceptance. Acceptance turns into love.

RECIPE CORNER:



Monster Mac-N-Cheese

Recipe taken from Arizona State Prison Complex’s “Tonto’s Cookbook,” L. Anderson, Managing Editor/Writer

INGREDIENTS:

- 2- to 3-oz. single-serve mac-n-cheese packet/cup
- Packet ramen noodles (any flavor)
- Sausage roll, snack sausages, beef sticks, or bacon bits
- 2-oz. cheddar squeeze cheese packet
- 1 sleeve saltine/soda crackers
- 1 teaspoon garlic

DIRECTIONS:

In a large cup, heat 20 ounces of water until it boils. Then, in large bowl, add ramen noodles and macaroni noodles (but not the seasoning or cheese packets). Add the hot water to the bowl of noodles, and then microwave three minutes. Set aside the noodles so they can soak up the water. Cut sausage/bacon into bite-size pieces. Place in second bowl and microwave until hot. Once noodles are cooked/hydrated, drain any excess water. Add squeeze cheese, mac-n-cheese cheese packet, garlic, and chopped sausage (ramen seasoning is never used for this recipe). Mix all ingredients together while still hot. Serve with crackers on the side. Makes 3–4 servings. ■

NEWS + NOTES

by E.G. Andrews

Prison Fellowship Honors Award Recipient

Nothing can keep Sheena Beasley from helping others—not even a felony. Prison Fellowship presented the 2021 Charles Colson Advocate of Hope Award to Beasley at a special event in Greensboro, North Carolina. Beasley is the founder and director of the Almond Connection (TAC), a nonprofit reentry organization in Guilford County. TAC connects people who have gone through the justice system to job training, employment, housing, healthcare, education, and more. Beasley also volunteers with Prison Fellowship as a Justice Ambassador to advocate

for justice that restores. Although Beasley was never incarcerated for her felony, she has faced barriers to employment due to her criminal record. She knows the impact that a second chance can make. “I want to let men and women know that they are loved and cared about, and they deserve another chance,” says Beasley. “They can be productive and self-sufficient citizens.”

Celebrating Holy Week Behind Bars

This Easter weekend, thousands of men and women on prison yards in multiple states celebrated Jesus’ Resurrection through dozens of Prison Fellowship Hope Events. In Missouri’s first-ever Hope Event, Chillicothe Correctional Center

celebrated Easter on the yard with Dove award-nominated singer/songwriter Jaye Thomas and his band. And Christine McDonald, who was once incarcerated at Chillicothe herself, shared her story of hope and transformation through Jesus. Prison Fellowship also celebrated Easter with the women at Whitworth Women’s Facility in Hartwell, Georgia, where rap/hip-hop artist JustCordell and singer/songwriter Tori Parris reunited to inspire the residents and staff. The event ended with Rick Cox, pastor of Elberton Christian Church, sharing a powerful Easter message.

Second Chance Month Unlocks Futures

Led by Prison Fellowship every April,

“We believe the approximately 70 million Americans with criminal records—that’s one in three people—are more than their worst choices and affirm their God-given dignity and potential in life.”
JAMES ACKERMAN, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF PRISON FELLOWSHIP

Second Chance® Month is a nationwide campaign to unlock second chances for 70 million Americans with a criminal record. This year, more than 650 partners joined Prison Fellowship in advocating for second chances, and several states declared their support for Second Chance Month. Social media campaigns, prayer groups, Twitter chats, and other activities nationwide raised awareness and amplified stories of overcoming hardship and finding hope. Prayer leaders in several cities, including Oklahoma City, joined forces for a Road to Second Chances prayer walk, gathering community members to lift up people with a criminal record.

This past April, all month long, Prison Fellowship and these Second Chance Month partners highlighted the ways churches and faith communities can unlock second chances, the impact of hiring those with a past criminal record, the need to uplift children affected by their parents’ incarceration, and the impact of second chances on public safety. Second Chance Month reminds communities that people are more than their past mistakes, and that every person is created in God’s image with dignity and potential. Prison Fellowship aims to continue this momentum beyond April and throughout the year. ■

FROM THE INSIDE OUT: Transformation

by Andrew in Colorado

During the 13th year of my prison term, a sentence of 72 years, I found myself lost, alone, and without any direction. Having completely rejected religion for my entire life, having persecuted Christian prisoners who tried to convert me, and having ignored the void in my soul, still I received from God a blessing that changed my life forever. I asked God to give me something to love,

something to believe, and something to light the dark abyss in which I found myself. I asked Him to give me a way to live my wasted life, in a way that would be positive, constructive, and free of hate; I asked Him to forgive me my sins. In this moment of immense pain, looking toward the sky, walking among hundreds of prisoners who were laughing, shouting, and going crazy, there in the midst of the chaotic world of the penitentiary, I heard a marvelous

sound. A prisoner was playing the guitar, and in that moment, I felt a powerful connection. I felt as if the vibration of the guitar strings sent waves of sound through my body, shattering the walls of stone that had enclosed my heart! In that moment, I realized that God had forgiven me. Without a question,

without a doubt, He forgave the liar, thief, drug addict, and murderer that I was ... and turned me into a musician. [Cut to]: 16 years later, entering my 30th year of imprisonment, I am one of the prisoners charged with teaching music to other prisoners! Hopefully one day I will be freed from prison, but

for the moment, I am saved, joyful, and free on the inside. ■



skynesher: Getty Images

WORD SEARCH ANSWER KEY (from p.3)

N A T U R E O U S V P Z T E N T S Q R P
C A V H H C F V C B O A S R J U H E Y J
L R J F G M Y E M A W N P U B D D T E
A L E Z K N D M L O M H I E N T I W V S
K T L S N F N C O L G P T S A O H B W U
E L G F T X Z F C L O N I H P C J C L S
S M R B W O N E O A D W B N R E E T G E
O O A G U X R X S R M J S A G I R Y I D
T U C V V H K E G M G P R H L S V S I V
N N E O N A K E V E G I E P I L E E O I
K T N E M O N V O G E T V R J P O I A N
R A S N M M U G H U I D J E R G M O W G
A I U A G C U L E A T W P U N S M G N S
O N A N V O Y N J L C D R A E E M W C A
S M D C N I F P I X T T O E T S S W G V
R U F I D W O B K T W R G O N I B S I R
I J M H U C I R Y S Y K E S R E E D M G
H C Q M W G P W J Z D O K E U S W N O M
L N D D E R D O F B Y V T F X N R H C Y
E L I O N R P I J F I R E O O J R L X E

Extra Challenge Words:

1. balloon 2. mountain 3. lake 4. tents 5. fire 6. camper 7. person



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