What Happened When ‘I’ll Handle It’ Became ‘I’ll Surrender It’

by Joanna Breault

Her whole life, Vanessa Franklin believed there were two kinds of people: problem makers and problem solvers—and she was definitely a problem solver. Capable and confident, she took over her family home improvement business when her father passed away in 2006. She didn’t know a lot about the details of running a company, but her attitude was “I’ll handle it.”

Vanessa was raised by Christian parents in a suburb of Oklahoma City. As a kid, she saw how her father tried to put God first in his business. Every Monday, he gathered the employees for prayer and Bible reading.

When she started running the company, Vanessa decided this tradition was unprofessional. She identified as a Christian, but her faith didn’t impact her daily life. “There’s a difference between calling yourself a Christian and having an intimate relationship with Jesus,” Vanessa says.

Under Vanessa’s leadership, the weekly Bible studies stopped.

Too messy to handle

Soon after Vanessa took over the business, Oklahoma had terrible winter storms that made work impossible. Then the Great Recession (the global financial crisis of 2007 to 2009) hit, and the business suffered even more. Vanessa was spending people’s deposits instead of saving them—something she didn’t realize was illegal. When customers wanted to get out of their contracts, she could not refund them. Vanessa was arrested for fraud and sentenced to seven years in prison.

What Happened When ‘I’ll Handle It’ Became ‘I’ll Surrender It’

by Joanna Breault

Vanessa tried to handle everything on her own. But when her way didn’t work, she finally learned to surrender to God’s way.

ITIONAL INSPIRATION AND INFORMATION

VOLUME 5, NO. 3 SUMMER 2022

FOR WOMEN

WHERE JOURNAL

INSIDE JOURNAL

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 organizations. Once you’re out, pursue those relationships.

2. Develop positive relationships.

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

Continued on page 6

Continued on page 2
Brittany in Idaho

I received my first copy of Prison Fellowship’s Inside Journal for Women from our chaplain today and dived in immediately! I am still fairly new in my walk with Jesus Christ, and the inspiration I found from your publication helped strengthen my belief in salvation and His love for me. I am interested in your mention of a correspondence Bible study and have written to request information on it and sign up. I am excited to learn more and continue on this walk!

Dear Brittany:
As a new Christian, it can take time to develop new habits to strengthen your faith, like daily quiet time with God, daily prayer, and daily devotionals (see page 6 for one you can tear out and read each day). Keep digging into the Word through things like the correspondence Bible study you mentioned. If you don’t already have an Inside Journal Life Recovery Bible and its new companion workbook, see the ad on this page for how to receive a free copy of each. And keep an eye open for the fall edition of Inside Journal for more opportunities for free Bible studies and college courses. We’ll be praying for you on your journey with Jesus.

Kayla in Pennsylvania

The jail I’m presently incarcerated in rarely offers the opportunity for a preacher to come see us. ... I was wondering if there is any way to receive a copy [of Inside Journal] personally. ... I find the newspaper very inspiring, and the quizzes and such are a nice distraction.

Dear Kayla:
We’re so glad you’re enjoying Inside Journal! Inside Journal is 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.

Carolina in Pennsylvania

I am the mother of four beautiful angels. ... I was in a really toxic relationship that ended with me getting caught up in a very bad situation. Unfortunately, the kids suffer the most through all this. My mom is now a single parent [to them] and could use all the help she could get. ... [Angel Tree would] help make things easier for my mother and make this Christmas special for my babies.

Dear Carolina:
Leaving toxic relationships takes courage. So does parenting. And Angel Tree is a great way to stay connected to your children. To learn more about Angel Tree, see the articles on pages 4–5.

Sincerely,
The Editorial Staff
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 my previous meetings, Ryan was ranting and raving over being incarcerated. Claiming innocence even though a jury found him guilty. Now he's awaiting sentencing.

The emptiness that consumes him.

Ryan is waiting 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 feeling 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:

- Angel/Tree
- Fellowship
- Forgiveness
- Grace
- Jesus
- Summer
- Camping
- Nature
- Outdoors
- Truth
- Community
- Sun
- Patience
- Restore
- Thirst
- Bible
- Sinner
- Reputation
- Pride
- Bible
- Sun
- Community
- Thirst
- Bible
- Sinner
- Reputation
- Pride

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C A V H H C F C Y E Q A S R J U R E J L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L R F G M Y E M A A W N P U B D T E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A L E Z K N D M L O M H I E N T I W Y S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K T E S N F N C O U P T S A O H B W U</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E L G F T X F C L O N I H P C J C L S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S M R B W O N E O A D W N E R E T G E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O O A G U X R X K M S A C Y T O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T U C V V H K E G M G P R H L S V S I V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N N E O N A E V E Y G E O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K T N E M O N V O E T V R J P P G A N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R A S N M U G H U I D E R G M O W G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A I U A G O L E A T W P U N M G N S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O N A N V O Y N J L C D R A E M W C A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S M D C N T I P F I T T O E T S S W G Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R U F T E R S C W O N B I R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I J M H U C I T R Y S Y K E S R E E D M G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H C M W W P W J D D O K E U G W H O M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L N D E P O V Y V T F X N H C Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E L I O N R P I J F I R E O O J R L X E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Angel Tree Christmas: The Benefits Triangle

by Stacia 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 Christmas time. 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® 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.

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).

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

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.
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).

---

**2022 ANGEL TREE CALENDAR**

**JUNE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**JULY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AUGUST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SEPTEMBER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OCTOBER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOVEMBER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DECEMBER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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**

- **June/July**
- **July 4**
- **July/Aug./Sept.**
- **September 5**
- **November 11**
- **November 24**
- **December**
- **December 25**
3. Seek spiritual habit like this can bring encouragement and focus to each day! 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 accountability relationship leads us away from crime. So pursue the godly relationships that will help you walk in the right path and stay out of prison.

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 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 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.

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.

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 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.

Not all ingredients will be available at all facilities. Be sure to comply with your facility’s rules and regulations whenever cooking.

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.
by Emily 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

Second Chance Month unlocks Futures

Led by Prison Fellowship every April, 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.

“Nothing can keep Beasley from helping others—not even a felony. 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 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, I realized 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 wall of stone that had enclosed my heart! In that moment, I realized that God had forgiven me. Without a doubt, He forgave the liar, thief, drug addict, and murderer that I was … and turned me into a musician.

[Cut to:] After 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.

Word Search Answer Key (from p.3)


Extra Challenge Words:
1. balloon
2. mountain
3. lake
4. tents
5. fire
6. camper
7. person

© 2022 by Prison Fellowship INSIDE JOURNAL® is published four times a year by Prison Fellowship, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790. prisonfellowship.org 703.478.0100

Editorial Manager: M.M. White
Editor in Chief: Stacia Ray

Writers:
Emily Andrews, Cherise Boppas, Joanna Breault, John Cherico, Stacia Ray, Rose Shannon, Dillon Shaw

Designer: A. Raquel
A member of the

Inside Journal® is a registered trademark of Prison Fellowship®.