

IN THIS ISSUE:



Activity,  
p.3



Angel Tree,  
p.4-5



Recipe,  
p.7

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

by Joanna Breault

**H**er 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



Photo by Prison Fellowship

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

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.

Wearing a prison jumpsuit and handcuffs, Vanessa realized that this wasn’t something she could “handle.” Nothing could change the fact that she was about to be separated from her three daughters—ages 20, 16, and 14—and her husband for a long time.

Several months after her arrest, Vanessa called home and learned the

phone was disconnected. She called the office, and that phone was disconnected too. She realized at that moment that bankruptcy and foreclosure were unavoidable.

“The dominoes were starting to fall faster,” she says. “I remember going back to my cell and just praying, *Lord, if you really are kind and loving and compassionate, just help me stop breathing. End this now.*”

But it wasn’t God’s plan for Vanessa to die. Three days later, a young woman came to her cell and asked if they could pray together.

“All she did was she just prayed,” Vanessa remembers. “And in that prayer, something happened, and I had hope. I was like, ‘Lord, I don’t know how this story’s going to end. I

*Continued on page 2*

## 5 Tips for Successful Reentry

by Dillon Shaw

**D**illon 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



chonticha wat: 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.

*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

subscriptions, but you can ask your chaplain or religious coordinator to order a free bulk shipment by emailing us at [insidejournal@pfm.org](mailto:insidejournal@pfm.org). These newspapers are quarterly, arriving in prisons in March, June, September, and December.

### 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

### 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 ■

### 'I'll Surrender It' Continued from page 1

don't know how this mess is going to get cleaned up, but I trust you with all that I am."

Vanessa was incarcerated in 2008. By 2009, her business was bankrupt, her home and office had been sold, her mother and husband had passed away, and her oldest daughter was in prison. Life was not easy at all—but now Vanessa had a hope that could not be shaken.

"I'm not here to tell that serving Jesus, trusting Him with all that you are, will exempt you from going through

trials and tribulations," she says. "It just means you know what's on the other side, and you are comforted knowing that He will see all things through to the good."

### Handling things differently

Vanessa's first job in prison was taking trash to the dumpster. After that, she cleaned bathrooms and did laundry. Her new roles were nothing like running a business—but this time, she put God first in her work. Many women came to talk to her about the Bible and what it means to have a relationship with Jesus. Vanessa took joy in her

daily tasks because they were opportunities to bring God glory and love other people.

When Vanessa first heard about Angel Tree® Christmas—which ministers to children by delivering a gift, the Gospel message, and a personal message of love on behalf of their mom or dad behind bars—she said, "no thank you—we don't need charity." But when she learned that Angel Tree is not a toy drive but a way to connect children with their parent in prison and with a loving local church, she went for it.

Through Angel Tree, Vanessa gained a partner

in the spiritual training of her children—the youth pastor at the church that brought them gifts. Vanessa kept in close touch with him while she was incarcerated, and the insight she shared about her girls helped him and the church love them well.

Vanessa was released in 2012. Her first job out of prison was as a housekeeper at a hotel. She prayed that God would bless the hotel for giving her a job. She was soon promoted to desk clerk. She continued to pray for the company and to honor God at work, faithfully giving 10 percent of her earnings to her church—something she had

not done before. Vanessa was eventually promoted to head of corporate sales for the hotel chain.

Today, Vanessa is a director at Prison Fellowship. She uses her gifts and experience to help bring the Gospel to hundreds of thousands of incarcerated people. And instead of trying to solve all her problems herself, she relies on Jesus to "handle it" every day.

"The only thing you need is Jesus," Vanessa says. "And when we stop trying to figure out how to solve it all ourselves, and we just set it as an offering at the feet of Jesus, that's when it changes." ■



# 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



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  
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





# Angel Tree Christmas: The Benefits Triangle

by Stacia Ray

**A**ngel 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:

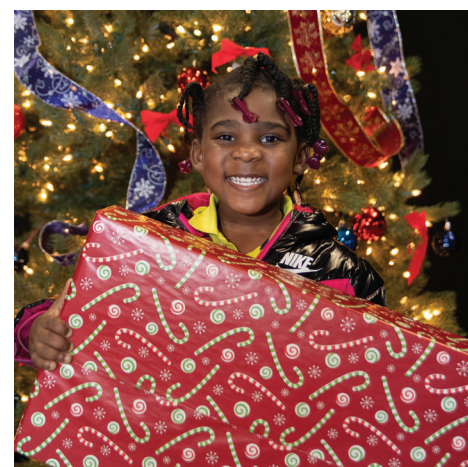


**1. It benefits the child by giving them connection to their incarcerated parent.**

“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](http://wheaton.edu)).

To learn more, visit [prisoninstitute.com/colson-scholarship](http://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](mailto: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).



© Copyright 2022 Prison Fellowship®  
Angel Tree® is a registered trademark of Prison Fellowship®

2022 ANGEL TREE CALENDAR

JUNE

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

JULY

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

AUGUST

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

SEPTEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

OCTOBER

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

NOVEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

DECEMBER

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

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

We need 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](https://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.



clu: Getty Images

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:



chas53: Getty Images

## 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 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

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



© 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 Bopape, Joanna Breault, John Cherico, Stacia Ray, Rose Shannon, Dillon Shaw**

Designer:  
**A. Raquel**  
A member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and the American Correctional Association.

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