

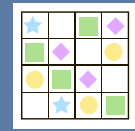
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Teen Mom, Tender Connections, Transformed Life

by Joanna Breault

Johnna wasn't ready for motherhood at age 17 when she gave birth to her son Noah.* But by the time her daughter Ava* was born two years later, Johnna was finding her groove. She loved having a boy and a girl. But she didn't love the extra pounds the pregnancies put on.

Johnna's neighbor told her about something that could help her lose weight: crystal meth. Johnna was willing to try anything. Sure enough, the meth diet plan worked. But what she didn't plan for was a fast spiral into addiction.

Eventually, she was busted for committing identity theft to pay for drugs. Her house was full of police officers



photo by Prison Fellowship

After praying to God to free her from her situation, Johnna eventually was freed—both from prison and from addiction—and she began mentoring other addicts.

with guns drawn. They made Noah and his little sister lie on the kitchen floor while Johnna was handcuffed.

Sentenced to 13 years in a California

prison, Johnna felt like her heart would break. Her young children didn't understand why their mommy had to leave home. She remembers praying, "God, if You help

me get out of this, I want to be able to go and help other people like me with addiction problems."

One day, a chaplain told her about a program called Angel Tree® Christmas that would allow her children to receive a gift, the Gospel, and a personal message in her name through volunteers. Johnna had grown up in church, but her relationship with God had grown cold. Still, she knew faith was important, so she filled out the application.

"A child wants to know that their parent is thinking about them regardless of where they are," she says.

"[Angel Tree was] a way for my mom to feel like she was still connected to me and my sister," remembers Noah. "She still wanted to be

part of the family—and I loved her for that."

A life-changing experience

The children lived with their grandparents, and the family's participation in Angel Tree wasn't just at Christmastime. Thanks to sponsorship by Prison Fellowship Angel Tree™, Noah started attending Christian summer camp for free through Angel Tree camping.

Johnna served five and a half years in prison. For part of her sentence, she lived far from home, and visits were rarer than she liked. But Johnna was grateful to have parents who were willing to lovingly care for her children.

"My mother was very involved with the school

Continued on page 2

5 Steps for Finding the Right Friends

by Dillon Shaw

While serving time, we need reliable companions, good influences, and people who bring out the best in us. Here are some tips on finding—and keeping—good friends.

1. Examine your motives.

Before you look for friends, first look at your own desires and behaviors. Ask

yourself why you made the choices that led you to prison. Did I hang around the wrong people because I felt worthless or needed their approval? Did I choose a certain group because they had the drugs or alcohol that offered me a sense of escape or fulfillment? Figuring out why we are drawn to specific people is an essential step in finding healthy friendships.



photo by Prison Fellowship

When I was first in prison, I tried skipping this step, and I ended up being attracted to the wrong crowd. We need to make sure that our reason for wanting to be around

certain people is to develop connections that are good and healthy for everyone, not to just get what we want or to find our self-worth in others' opinions of us.

2. Consider what you can offer and what others can offer you.

There's an old saying, "To have friends, one must show himself friendly." Proverbs 18:24 puts it this way: "There are 'friends' who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother." You should do your best to be a good friend to the people you

Continued on page 4

NEED A BIBLE?

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

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- ✓ 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.



Transformed Life Continued from page 1

and the church,” Johnna says. “My parents were great, and I feel like my children flourished during that time because they were with them.”

On Johnna’s release day, her mother brought the kids for a visit, and Johnna scooped 8-year-

old Ava up in her arms. “Mommy’s going home,” she told her.

“Really?” Ava asked.

“Like home home?”

“Yeah,” Johnna replied. “I’m going with you.” Reunited at last, the family enjoyed a meal at Denny’s and then drove home to adjust to living together again.



Photo by Prison Fellowship

Ashley in Virginia

When I was out in the day room the other day, I saw your newsletter, and this was the first time that I have seen them. I’m writing this letter to see if I could get your newsletters in the mail, if not I completely understand. I just think that what you folks do is amazing, and I want to pass along any information that you give to my friends and family.

Dear Ashley:

We’re so glad you have enjoyed Inside Journal! This quarterly newspaper is not available in individual subscriptions, but you can ask your chaplain or religious coordinator to order a free bulk shipment by emailing insidejournal@pfm.org. If your facility already receives Inside Journal, be on the lookout

for new editions every March, June, September, and December. For those who have access to the internet, past editions can be found on our website at prisonfellowship.org/resources/inside-journal-archives.

Caitlyn in Virginia

I grew up as a Christian singing in the church choir and never missing a Sunday in church. I “lost” God around the age of 17 when I was volunteering with a Fire/EMS department. I couldn’t understand why God would let people die in car accidents, commit suicide, or have heart attacks. ... Keep praying, my grandma always told me. I kept praying even working Fire/EMS, but prayers never seemed to be answered. I “lost” faith. ... All this time in jail made

me realize God has a plan. ... I went from firefighter to felon, but I can shape my future from here.

Dear Ashley:

We don’t have room to include the full letter you wrote us, but please know we read each word and were very inspired. Your story reminds us of the lyrics “I once was lost but now I’m found, was blind but now I see” from the old hymn “Amazing Grace.” You’re absolutely right that God has a plan, and sometimes that plan includes having the opportunity to find Him again. Keep moving forward in your relationship with Jesus, and trust that even when you are in the midst of stormy seas, He is with you, guiding you like a lighthouse.

Sincerely,
The Editorial Staff ■

The full circle of second chances

Life after release wasn’t perfectly smooth. At times, the children struggled with the ways Johnna did things differently than their grandparents.

“There were some bumps in the road, but I know that they were glad I was home,” Johnna says.

Johnna became involved with Angel Tree on the outside. “I felt like it was important to give back,” Johnna says.

Volunteering with Angel Tree is now a family affair. Johnna has been out of prison for 11 years, but she and her husband never miss a chance to help with

Angel Tree at the annual party put on by a local community organization.

Due to her criminal record, Johnna struggled to find and keep work when she was released. She held one position for over a year. But when her record came to light, her employment was terminated.

“The job situation was very difficult because I feel like I’d done my time, I came home, give me a chance. I’ve shown you that I’m a very hard worker,” Johnna says. “And there’s a lot of closed-minded people out there that just don’t want to give you a second chance.”

Eventually, Johnna

decided to work in substance abuse treatment—a field where she says people are more understanding of a criminal past. Fulfilling the promise she made to God many years ago, she counsels families in the admissions department of a treatment center in Malibu, California. Johnna says it is both draining and rewarding.

“I am able to tell my story daily ... to addicts or their family and say, ‘I know your son is here right now, your daughter’s here right now, but it doesn’t have to be like this. Let me tell you what I went through and how I’m on the other side.’”

*Names changed for privacy. ■



Ekely: Getty Images

Do You Need Your Vision Checked?

by A.R. Quinn

Here’s a question for you: Is it hard to read the words on this page? If you are straining to tell the difference between a C and a G, you might be due for an eye exam.

Many people notice changes in their near vision—the vision you use for reading or looking at a tablet—around age 40. (This not-so-fun part of aging is called presbyopia.) It tends to get worse in the years that follow, leaving most older adults reaching for reading glasses.

In the last few decades, age-related vision problems have become more common behind bars. Between 1996 and 2016, the number of incarcerated people aged 55 and above increased 280%. The need for vision care has gone up too.

Even gradual vision loss can reduce the quality of your life. You might find it hard to read food labels, study for a class, or enjoy a letter from a loved one. Poor vision can also make you feel isolated, depressed, embarrassed, or angry. Sight problems are even more frustrating if you have a hard time scheduling an eye exam, finding books in large print, or getting your eyeglass prescription filled.

A vision for life

It’s not just your physical eyesight that impacts your quality of life. Each of us also has a vision of ourselves and our place in the world, and that vision affects everything else. But just as our close-up vision gets worse with age, our vision of ourselves also easily becomes distorted.

Everyone’s vision of themselves is shaped by the experiences and influences they collect during their lifetime. A man who has suffered repeated rejections might



MarioGuti/Getty Images

see himself as unworthy of love. A man who has been called a low-life and a dead-beat might see himself as incapable of achieving great things.

When lies like these cloud your vision, the consequences are devastating. Jesus once explained to His followers, “Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!” (Matthew 6:23, NLT)

A prescription for clarity

When did you last examine your view of life? If it’s been a while—or if you’ve never stopped to think about it—now might be a good time.

Here are some questions to ask yourself for a spiritual vision check:

- Do I have a hard time seeing the purpose and value of my life?
- Do I struggle to distinguish between choices that will harm me and choices that will help me?
- Do I turn a blind eye to facts or advice that contradicts my views?
- Do I always focus on obstacles and setbacks instead of finding hope for the future?

A new lens on life

But there’s Good News: Even if your vision seems foggy right now, it doesn’t have to stay that way. God offers a prescription to get you to 20/20 clarity.

Jesus once told a crowd of people, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.” (John 8:12, NLT)

When you open your heart to a relationship with God through Jesus, light will come into your life. The more you turn toward His light, the better you will see. You can let go of lies that blur your vision, and you can begin to see your life through the crystal clarity of truths like these:

- God created you in His image. (Genesis 1:27)
- God intends your life to be full of meaning and purpose. (Ephesians 1:11)
- God loves you so much it’s hard to even imagine it. (Ephesian 3:18-19)
- When you lean on God’s wisdom, He helps you make choices that lead to life. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

If that sounds appealing to you, take a look at the sidebar on this page, where you can learn more about how to restore your spiritual vision. ■

READER RECIPES

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

Pad Thai

Submitted by John in Florida

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 packet of ramen noodles
- 2 heaping spoonfuls of peanut butter
- 1 bag of cheddar popcorn
- 1 piece of chicken from the chow hall, shredded
- Optional: soy sauce, peanuts, vegetables



nata_vkusidey/Getty Images

DIRECTIONS:

Cook the ramen noodles according to their package directions. Drain the water. Mix in peanut butter, popcorn, and chicken. Add a splash of very hot water. Stir it all together (including any optional ingredients). Microwave for one minute and 30 seconds and enjoy! ■

IS YOUR VISION BLURRY?

Do you feel like your life is a mess? Is your self-esteem not so great? You were made by the perfect and powerful Creator of the entire universe. You were created in His image. And He has a purpose for your life.

Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” (On the flipside, be careful not to think too highly of yourself. You were created in God’s image, but be clear, you are not God. As it says in Romans 12:3, “Don’t think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.”)

See your value clearly by seeing yourself the way God sees you. God thinks the world of you. It might not always feel that way, especially when your life isn’t going smoothly. But one of the best signs that God thinks the world of you is that He sent His one and only Son Jesus to die as a payment for your sins, so that you may have eternal life if you believe in Him.

If you want to renew your focus, ask Jesus into your heart and accept His free gift of eternal salvation.

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

“Dear Jesus, please help me to see more clearly. I surrender my life to You. I want to see myself how You see me. Amen.”

To learn more about Jesus or to sign up for a free correspondence Bible study through one of our trusted partner organizations, write to us at “CLEAR VISION,” c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790. For a free Bible or accompanying study guide/workbook, see our ad on page 2.

FLOODLIGHT: A Video Program of Hope and Inspiration

What started as a short-term fix in response to the pandemic is growing to provide the best video content possible with you in mind.

Prison Fellowship's Floodlight® is a free video service created especially for men and women in prison and currently used in almost every state. It provides videos through partnerships with top content providers and through original Prison Fellowship® productions. Every month, Floodlight viewers can see new inspirational stories from returning citizens, hear words of encouragement from believers on the outside, enjoy music and drama, learn and practice leadership skills with the Global Leadership Summit faculty, or come together for an original Floodlight special program. Viewers can also find thoughtful and practical Bible teaching.

Programs are available in Spanish and English. Here is a program guide of this fall's lineup*:

“We are using your Floodlight program with great success. I can tell you that you are changing lives and making a huge impact with this program. You can now reach all 2,000 [prisoners] within their cells. That is massively powerful.” —Prison Chaplain, Midwest

*Content may vary. To learn how your facility can participate, ask your chaplain to email floodlight@pfm.org.

SEPTEMBER	
Women’s Roundtable Discussion <i>Original Documentary • Prison Fellowship</i> Hear from formerly incarcerated women on the specific challenges faced as a woman and a mother in prison.	The Holy Ghost Series <i>Bible Teaching • Rock City Church</i> The presence of God is powerful when people come together in worship.
Three Questions Every Follower Asks <i>Leadership • James Maxwell-Global Leadership Summit</i> Teaches Community and Restoration in relationships by showing that as followers of Jesus, we should become leaders by “adding value” to others.	Purpose Driven Life <i>Life Skills • Rick Warren-Purpose Driven Life</i> Helps us understand God’s incredible plan for our lives. It enables us to see the big picture of what life is all about and begin to live the life God created us to live.

OCTOBER	
Please Excuse the Mess <i>Bible Teaching • Rich Wilkerson-Vous Church</i> Our life is always under construction. God is working to bring out the potential in all of us.	Therapy & Theology <i>Relationships • Proverbs 31</i> Using these words—connection, affection, protection, and reflection—to improve relationships.
I Have a New Name: Sermon on Identity <i>Inspirational Story • Hosanna Wong Ministries</i> Spoken word artist Hosanna Wong shares her firsthand experiences with loss, hope, and redemption, and her innermost desires to see lives healed and restored by the power of Jesus.	True Hope <i>Gospel Short Stories • Bible Media Group</i> This Lumo Project production brings the original Jesus narrative to the screen using the Gospel text as its script, word for word, to understand the story of Jesus. ■

5 Tips for Finding Friends

Continued from page 1

hang around. And at the same time, you should make sure you’re being treated well by others. If you look back on your life leading up to prison, were the people you called friends treating you like a true friend would? Were you treating others like a true friend? Make a list of the qualities that are necessary for a good friend or friendship and live out these qualities.

Remain humble and teachable, with more listening and less talking.

3. Pay attention to your friends’ habits.

Perhaps you’ve figured out that the loudest, most arrogant, or toughest person is probably not the healthiest friend. The people who have bad habits like lying, doing drugs, or putting others down aren’t going to be good influences on you. A healthy friend will usually have healthy habits, like regular sleep routines, consistent exercise, and prosocial (caring and cooperative) patterns of interaction. Ask yourself, does this person have a good rapport with staff and C.O.s as well as other prisoners? Does this person help others, whether it’s holding a door, assisting

someone with GED homework, or helping someone move their property when they first arrive in a new unit? Those are the kinds of habits you should make note of when choosing friends.

4. Take the initiative to start conversations.

After identifying a possible friend who seems to be honest, consistent, purposeful, and healthy, introduce yourself to them in one of the common areas. Start a conversation and be confident and comfortable. Tell them it seems like they really have their life together. They will most likely appreciate your comment, and they will probably be the kind of person

who is open to helping others walk in the right direction. If there is no clear next step with this person at the end of your conversation, ask them if they would be willing to help you understand how you can change and grow like they have. Remain humble and teachable, with more listening and less talking.

5. Prioritize healthy relationships.

Research suggests that the average person can only maintain around 15 quality friendships. You may know hundreds of people by face or name, and even perhaps know a few details about them, but quality friendships require you to use your limited resources:

time and emotional energy. If you invest your time and energy into the healthiest relationships because you’ve made them a priority, you won’t waste time or energy on relationships that could end up influencing you in the wrong direction.

Who you serve your time with affects how well you serve your time. Be a good friend to others, and then find others who would be a good friend to you. Avoid toxic friendships and seek out healthy friendships. Sounds simple enough, but of course, being incarcerated can be complicated. Keep working on it! And if you’re being released anytime soon, these same tips will apply to finding friendships on the outside. ■

DAILY DEVOTIONAL TEAR-OUT

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 by how a healthy spiritual habit like this can bring encouragement and focus to each day!

But God

by Stacia Ray

Kintsugi, which means “golden repair,” is a Japanese art form. It is rumored to have started when a 15th century military ruler in Japan sent out a broken tea bowl for repairs, and it came back held together with ugly metal staples. This man then asked artists to find a way to make the brokenness beautiful. The solution: to use a special resin mixed with gold, silver, or platinum, which would then highlight instead of hide the damage. This kintsugi art form celebrates the brokenness, making the object more rare, precious, and valuable.

As flawed sinners, when our lives are broken, we try to fix things ourselves. And we often end up with the ugly metal staples or even just a handful of shattered useless pieces. But God uses His grace to mend our cracks and to turn us into a useful piece of art—one that is more beautiful and unique than before.

The Bible says in Genesis 50:20, when talking about the bad influences in this world: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good.” And Romans 8:28 goes on to say, “We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”

BUT GOD.

We struggle with pain and darkness. But God brings us to a place of healing and light. We look at our shattered pieces as worthless. But God mends them together in a kintsugi work of art, more useful and valuable than ever before.

An incarcerated man named Christopher experienced this kintsugi in his own life:

“I have lost everything. My family wants nothing to do with me because of where I am and what I’ve done. My wife left, taking everything, including our two kids. I’ve lost all my personal possessions. I spent 20 hours a day in a cell with nothing to do but sleep or read. I have hit rock bottom.”

BUT GOD.

“Yes, I miss my kids very badly. But God is using my situation to make me part of His [situation]. Prison is the best thing that could’ve happened to me.”

BUT GOD.

“I realize that God loves me enough to put me in here, to get me on the right path, and to spend some good quality time with me. This time is hard. But God’s got this!”

Think about your day. Think of the things that seem broken. Picture your life like the broken bowl and imagine God pouring His liquid gold into the cracks. Then offer Him this prayer:

“Lord, take my bad and turn it into good. My plans can fail me, but Your plans can free me. Today, I offer You all my broken pieces. Repair them with Your precious gold, turning me into a rare and valuable work of art. Then show me how I can use this new artwork to reflect Your beauty onto others. Amen.”



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FEATURING OUR FOUNDER:

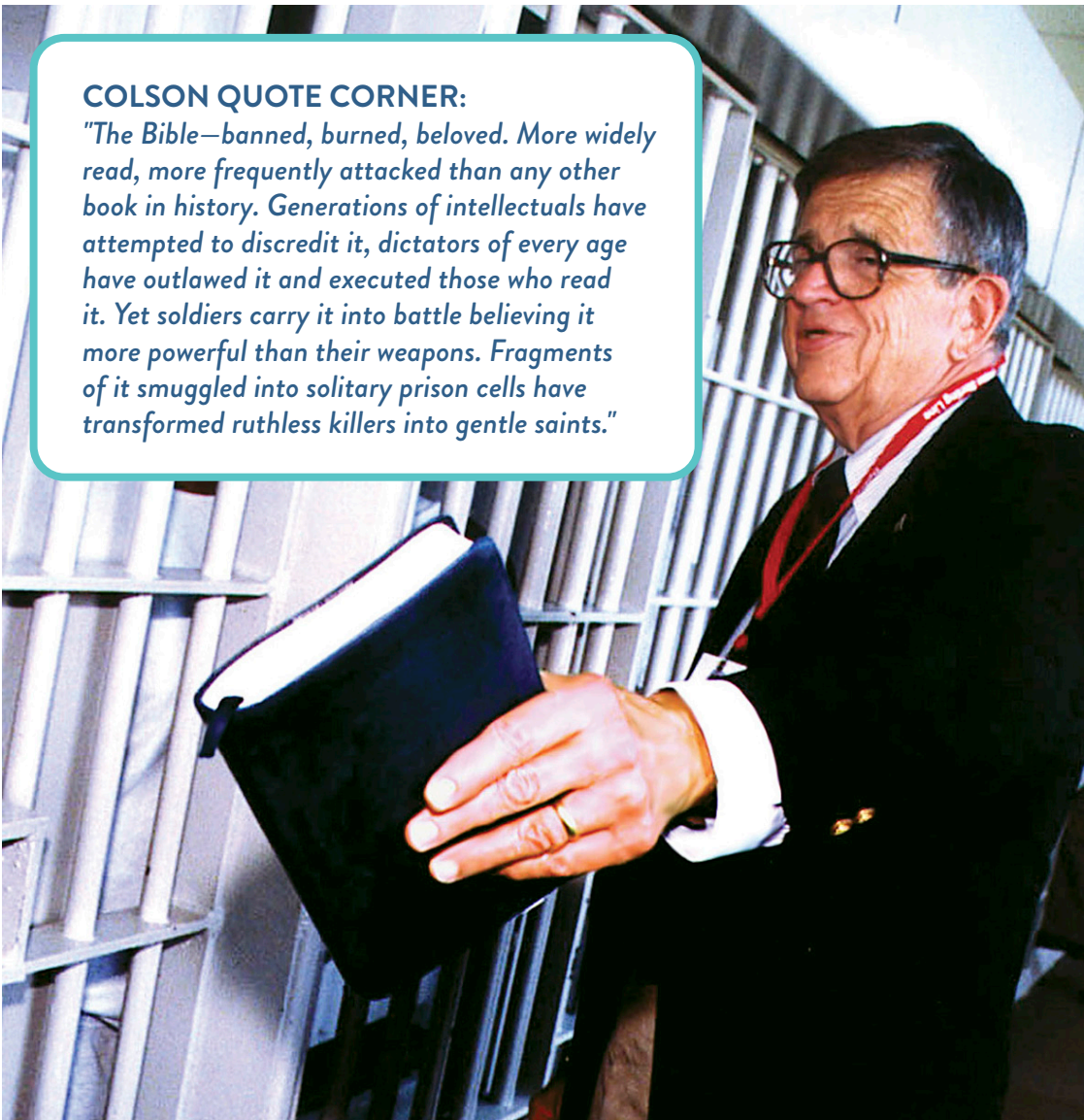
Charles “Chuck” Colson was an American attorney and political advisor who served as special counsel to President Richard Nixon from 1969–1970. Chuck, who had become a Christian shortly before the Watergate scandal broke, voluntarily pled guilty in 1974 to obstruction of justice. He served seven months in Alabama’s Maxwell Prison. He was the first member of the Nixon administration to be incarcerated for Watergate-related charges. In his best-selling memoir, *Born Again*, Chuck wrote, “I found myself increasingly drawn to the idea that God had put me in prison for a purpose and that I should do something for those I had left behind.”

Colson emerged from prison with a new mission: mobilizing the Christian church to minister to prisoners. In 1976, he founded Prison Fellowship, which is now the nation’s largest Christian nonprofit serving prisoners, former prisoners, and their families, and a leading advocate for criminal justice reform. Chuck passed away in 2012 at age 80, but his ministry continues to grow, with Prison Fellowship programming in all 50 states and Prison Fellowship International programming in more than 113 countries. ■

COLSON QUOTE CORNER:

“The Bible—banned, burned, beloved. More widely read, more frequently attacked than any other book in history. Generations of intellectuals have attempted to discredit it, dictators of every age have outlawed it and executed those who read it. Yet soldiers carry it into battle believing it more powerful than their weapons. Fragments of it smuggled into solitary prison cells have transformed ruthless killers into gentle saints.”

photo by Prison Fellowship



POETRY CHALLENGE

by Stacia Ray

You don't have to be a great writer to write something great. Often, all it takes is a pencil and some quiet time alone with your feelings. Sure, being creative helps. So does reading the works of other authors and practicing your own writing. But you don't need to be good at grammar or have a degree in writing to say something impactful. And one way to start your journey as a writer is through poems. Poetry can be very empowering and healing. Give it a try and see for yourself!

Here are seven tips for writing poetry.

1. Write for you and not for others.

A poem doesn't need to be shared with others or submitted to Inside Journal; it can be powerful and healing just to pour your words onto paper, whether you tear them up and never read them again or whether you edit and reread them later.

2. Jot down every thought.

Get in the habit of stream-of-consciousness writing: Write down whatever comes into your head. Weird thoughts, random words, frustrations about your day, dreams about your future—write it all down. Think of this less like a journal about your day and more like a no-rules place to pour out whatever pops into your mind, whether it makes sense or not. “Dumping” all your thoughts can help get your creativity flowing.

3. Figure out the mood.

In poetry, there is usually one central attitude or feeling; for example: cheery, romantic, funny, gloomy, reflective, or hopeful. Make word choices based on what emotion you want the reader to feel while reading your poem.

You don't need to be good at grammar or have a degree in writing to say something impactful.

4. Use imagery.

The key here is “show, don't tell.” Share a story or explain a feeling, but in a way that uses a lot of descriptions (where a reader can almost see, touch, or feel what the writer is saying). This sentence is an example of telling: “Life behind bars can be really hard sometimes.” But this sentence shares the same idea using imagery: “Black and blue pain explodes, spreading from the inside of my skin into the outer corners of my cell.”

5. Find a good rhythm.

This doesn't mean it has to rhyme. It certainly can, but some of the most powerful poems don't. It just means a strong poem should have some sort of rhythm



Rabia Kupeli/Getty Images

(sometimes called a cadence), almost like a song. That's one thing that separates a poem from any other writing piece. Try reading your poem out loud to feel the rhythm. Again, rhyming isn't important, but it should have some sort of flow.

6. Consider using a sound device.

A few common sound devices used in poetry are repetition (repeating the same words or phrases for emphasis), alliteration (using the same consonant sounds at the beginning of words, like in “whisper words of wisdom,” or even like in “fishing for phones”), assonance (similar vowel sounds, like in “low moaning roar”), onomatopoeia (words that represent their sounds, like in “buzz, whirl, hiss, bang”).

7. Choose your line length.

Unlike other styles of writing, poems use lines (sometimes called verses) and stanzas (groups of lines/verses). As the writer, you decide how long to make each line based on things like syllables, numbers of words, rhythms or rhyming patterns, etc. You can also decide whether each line should be the same length or not, depending on what feel you're going for.

See next page for actual poems. ■

ACTIVITY: Sudoku

Fall is back-to-school time. But you don't have to go back to school or be young to keep your mind sharp. One great way to stimulate your brain is Sudoku. To complete this puzzle activity, you enter numbers in squares so that every number appears only once in each horizontal line, vertical line, and square. Studies show Sudoku improves memory function, decreases your chances of getting Alzheimer's, and strengthens your logic and math skills. And you can learn Sudoku at almost any age. If you don't love numbers, try the “Image Sudoku” below the numbers Sudoku—or mail it to your kids (or make your own using drawings/icons you think your kids would like). See answers on page 8. ■

Sudoku

EASY

2		5			9			4
						3		7
7			8	5	6		1	
4	5		7					
		9				1		
					2		8	5
	2		4	1	8			6
6		8						
1			2			7		8

MEDIUM

		6		9		2		
			7		2			
	9		5		8		7	
9				3				6
7	5						1	9
1				4				5
	1		3		9		8	
			2		1			
		9		8		1		

HARD

			8					
7	8	9		1				6
					6	1		
		7					5	
5		8	7		9	3		4
	4					2		
		3	2					
8				7		4	3	9
					1			

Marek Trawczynski/Getty Images

Image Sudoku

EASY

★		■	◆
■	◆		●
●	■	◆	
	★	●	■

MEDIUM

●		★	
	■		◆
■		◆	
	★		●

HARD

		◆	
			★
●			
	■		

Irina Kuznetsova/Getty Images

STAFF PICKS:

Here are some of our editors’ favorite poems.

‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers by Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.



HOW TO GET THERE by Michael Leunig (1945–)

Go to the end of the path until you get to the gate.
Go through the gate and head straight out towards the horizon.
Keep going towards the horizon.
Sit down and have a rest every now and again,
But keep on going, just keep on with it.
Keep on going as far as you can.
That’s how you get there.



Love After Love by Derek Walcott (1930–2017)

The time come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other’s welcome,
and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you
all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.



A Hymn to God the Father by John Donne (1572–1631)

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow’d in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.



Risk by Anais Nin (1903–1977)

And then the day came,
when the risk
to remain tight
in a bud
was more painful
than the risk
it took
to blossom.



READER SUBMISSIONS:

Here are some of our favorite poems written by you, our readers.

Forgiveness by Code in Florida

In this life my choices and decisions haven't always been too clever,
And my actions really not much better.
However I'm so grateful to be in your care
Because to be punished and how would only be fair.
Even though, everyday still I am so blessed
Because of your love and sweet forgiveness!
When I think of your power, you set my soul on fire.
I smile and feel true peace.
I look forward to leave this body, when my soul is released.
Thank you, God! Though my words can only describe so well how I feel.
I know you are there, I know you hear me, I know you’re real.
You strengthen me with tenderness,
And love me with your forgiveness!



HE CAME LOOKING FOR ME by David in Florida

Hurt and unhappy I ran away from home to go live on the streets.
Slept in abandoned houses and sold illegal drugs to make ends meet.
Teamed up with other juvenile delinquents who lived the same way.
Ducking and dodging truant officers was the highlight of our day.
As I hid in the run-down house a gentle and a loving familiar voice said
"Son please let me in."
Yet shame blocked my positive response, because of disobedience and sin.
Unable to face the loving voice on the other side of the door.
I made a quick dash up stairs to a hidden room on the second floor.
Thinking I was successful at evading, and there was no way I could be found.
Sitting inside the hidden room I heard foot steps closely walking around.
Then the voice spoke up again and said, "Son don't hide, I've come to take you home.
There's no place I won't find you, no secret unknown.
Even though your feelings of hurt caused you to run away.
Eventually you'll develop the courage to overcome the evil day.
So stop running from your fears, son, because there are giants to defeat."
Proudly then I walked out of the hidden room, happy that he came looking for me.



God’s Hotel by Mykeshia in Pennsylvania

As I lie here awake in this horrible place,
I start to wonder why I’ve lost faith.
Some call this a prison, even a jail,
But, to me, this is God’s hotel
Where He took me from out the hood,
Cause honestly, it wasn’t looking good.
As I’m wondering, here lying awake,
I’m praying for daylight, at least for my sake.
I think of my wrongs, then confess my sins,
So my fresh start can finally begin.
I’m no longer blind and I finally see,
That God’s hotel, was just what I need.
For most, a punishment this may be.
For me, it’s the beginning of a great opportunity.
Where I can work through all my problems,
Maybe then, I’ll begin to solve them.
My soul cries, thinking I’ve lost to sin,
But in the end, this was really a win.
Cause God can work on me in here,
So once I’m free, I’ll have no fear.
I was so sure I wouldn’t fail
But, here I am, back in jail.
To my name, not even a dime.
But really I’m rich because I have time.
Time to move forward and finally rise up
And work through my past, where I’ve been stuck.
Time for me to take a good look,
Because this is the beginning, not the end of my book.
It won’t matter what I choose
If in the end I was gonna lose.
Cause this was God’s plan for me
And I can’t escape my destiny.
I may not understand the reasons behind it,
However, I am listening and trying to abide by it.
I may whine and cry, maybe even think I will die,
But in the end I know I will survive.
Because God is here holding my hand,
As He walks me down this road He has planned.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Do you have a poem you want to share with our readers? Or even a great recipe using commissary items? Please send your poems, recipes, or other inspiring works to: SUBMISSIONS, c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790. Please also write “I give Prison Fellowship permission to publish my submission” somewhere on your letter. NOTE: Submissions may be edited for content or space. Not all submissions will be printed. If selected, your works will be printed with your first name only; no last name or personal information will be included.

NEWS + NOTES

by Emily Andrews

Prison Launches Radio Station

According to CBS Denver, Colorado is launching the nation’s first statewide prison radio station entirely run by incarcerated people.

The University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative coordinated the project. Incarcerated men and women in three Colorado prisons are producing the radio programs, which are available to more than 14,000 listeners behind bars across the state.

“There’s so many people inside who are on a journey of positive change, and to be able to play a small part in that is really an honor,” Ryan Conarro, Inside Wire general manager and program director, told CBS Denver.

“This is an opportunity to really change the stigmas of what prison is.”

At Limon Correctional Facility, a man named Anthony joined the team of incarcerated producers to do something good with his time behind bars.

“This is an opportunity to really change the stigmas of what prison is,” said Anthony. “I want to live worthy if I get a chance to be back out there in the world.”

The University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative hopes to increase their radio productions in more facilities in the near future.

New Pell Grant Provisions Coming

As of July 1, 2023, all incarcerated students who are enrolled in eligible prison education programs will once again be eligible for Pell Grants. These changes have the potential to increase access to postsecondary education in prisons and give many of our nation’s incarcerated men and women a second chance.

Through the Department of Education’s Second Chance Pell experiment, new statutory provisions will restore Pell Grant eligibility for students in a prison setting. Eligible prison education programs are approved to operate in a correctional facility, operate in the best interest of students, offer transferable credits, and lead to professional licensure or certification.

Research on prison education shows that individuals who enroll in postsecondary education are 48% less likely to be reincarcerated and 12% more likely to find gainful employment after release.

Second Chance Hiring

Timm Wroe made a decision that led him to spend 25 years in prison. Behind bars, he made another decision—to continue his education and pursue a business degree while incarcerated.

After his release from prison, Timm struggled to find work, and when he did land a job, his ankle monitor made it difficult to come and go. Then he found a work-from-home position with a marketing company. Going into the interview, Timm was nervous. He had never worked a corporate job before and worried he lacked the skills.

In a Chief Executive Group article, Timm said he did his research about the job and the company. When he spoke with a recruiter on the phone, he was honest about his background. It turns out she also had a long prison sentence. “She helped me realize that the skills I picked up while incarcerated were more valuable than I thought and explained what would carry over into my new role,” Timm said.

Nearly one third of working-age adults in the U.S. have a criminal record. They face countless barriers and negative stigma that make it difficult to find gainful employment after their release. But as more businesses open opportunities to people impacted by incarceration, more people like Timm can prove they are much more than their past mistakes. ■

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Sudoku answer key (from page 6)

EASY

2	1	5	3	7	9	8	6	4
9	8	6	1	2	4	3	5	7
7	3	4	8	5	6	2	1	9
4	5	2	7	8	1	6	9	3
8	6	9	5	4	3	1	7	2
3	7	1	6	9	2	4	8	5
5	2	7	4	1	8	9	3	6
6	4	8	9	3	7	5	2	1
1	9	3	2	6	5	7	4	8

★	●	■	◆
■	◆	★	●
●	■	◆	★
◆	★	●	■

MEDIUM

8	7	6	4	9	3	2	5	1
3	4	5	7	1	2	9	6	8
2	9	1	5	6	8	4	7	3
9	8	2	1	3	5	7	4	6
7	5	4	8	2	6	3	1	9
1	6	3	9	4	7	8	2	5
4	1	7	3	5	9	6	8	2
6	3	8	2	7	1	5	9	4
5	2	9	6	8	4	1	3	7

●	◆	★	■
★	■	●	◆
■	●	◆	★
◆	★	■	●

HARD

1	6	5	8	4	7	9	2	3
7	8	9	3	1	2	5	4	6
4	3	2	5	9	6	1	7	8
2	9	7	4	6	3	8	5	1
5	1	8	7	2	9	3	6	4
3	4	6	1	5	8	2	9	7
9	7	3	2	8	4	6	1	5
8	2	1	6	7	5	4	3	9
6	5	4	9	3	1	7	8	2

■	★	◆	●
◆	●	■	★
●	◆	★	■
★	■	●	◆



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