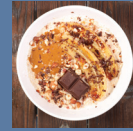


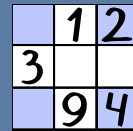
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# Starting Again for the First Time

by L. Haviland

Looking back on her wholesome upbringing and strong family foundation, Pam admits there really was no reason for some of the choices she made in her adolescence. Whether it stemmed from curiosity, boredom, or rebellion, Pam began abusing drugs and partying in her late teens. She started a relationship with Aaron, a close family friend. But they weren't in a healthy place.

"We were both using drugs. Neither of us was going anywhere good," Pam says. "But we both knew each other and knew where we came from."

Pam had been making money as an exotic dancer but gave it up once she and Aaron began dating. But after she quit, neither of them



Photo by Shana Thompson

From battling addiction to giving birth while incarcerated to remarrying the same husband she once divorced, Pam's journey has been a windy road. But God eventually led her to the healthy place she's at today.

had a job, and their drug habit required money. Fueled by the urgency of addiction, Aaron suggested a crazy idea,

which Pam somehow agreed to.

"We ended up robbing a bank," she recalls. "I drove the

getaway car, and he went in and robbed the bank. And then we were off to the races."

The two justified their actions by telling themselves that Aaron was unarmed, no one would get hurt, and the bank, being insured, would recoup their money later. The robbery went well enough that they decided to rob another bank a month later. Within a few weeks, though, Aaron was arrested. Pam's arrest took place soon after, followed by her realization that she was pregnant.

## Grace at a dark time

Aaron was sentenced to 37 and a half years in prison and Pam to two years. Pam says giving birth while incarcerated and being separated from her newborn were

intensely painful moments.

"You have to go to the hospital," she explains. "You have to go in the shackles and the cuffs. And people are seeing you pregnant and they look at you like you're a monster having a baby."

After Pam gave birth to her son, her mother cared for him during the remainder of Pam's sentence. She knew not everyone was fortunate enough to have a close family member step in like that. "There was another girl [in prison] who had to give up her baby," Pam says. "I almost felt guilty for having that option."

After her son's birth, Pam chose to let herself feel the pain of her choices, knowing that if she tried to escape

*Continued on page 2*

# 5 Tips for Furthering Your Education

by Stacia Ray

Fall is back-to-school time for students in most schools. But kids aren't the only ones who benefit from learning new things. No matter your age, your brain needs exercise to stay strong and healthy, just like other muscles in your body.

Here are five ways to strengthen your mind and further your education.

## 1. Read every day.

Reading not only lowers blood pressure and helps you sleep, it can also slow down or prevent the mental decline that comes with aging. Commit to reading one chapter of a book per day. Or challenge yourself to read one chapter of the Bible every day. Perhaps start with the New Testament. It has 260 chapters, so you only need to read

an average of three chapters a day to get through it in just three months. Even if you miss a day or two, don't quit.

## 2. Make music.

Write your own lyrics to the tune of "Amazing Grace" or "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" (both are public domain songs, so there's no copyright issue). Learn a new instrument if your facility offers



RRice1981: Getty Images

programs/books on this. Or listen to classical music to try to figure out how many different instruments were

used. Research shows that playing or listening to music promotes creativity and happier moods,

*Continued on page 5*



# Letters to the Editor



Ekely: Getty Images

## Deb in Colorado

I enjoy every one of your Inside Journal for Women. Thank you! I'd like to sign up for the correspondence Bible Study. ... Broken bones,

black eyes, and broken heart describes most of my last 20 years of my life. Now I'm in prison. How will I know if God has forgiven me even after I repent?

## Dear Deb:

God knows our heart and knows when we feel remorse about something. (On the flipside, He also knows when we're trying to fool Him or ourselves by saying we want forgiveness but not actually meaning it.) The Bible says in 1 John 1:9, "But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness." So, if you've confessed your sins and humbly asked for forgiveness, trust that your faithful Father has indeed forgiven you. And no self-doubt, shame, wrongdoing, or enemy attack can keep us from receiving God's unconditional love (Romans 8:39).

## Joan in Illinois

I've served 25 years of a 28-year term. ... I try daily to prepare myself mentally to return to society after being locked up for the first time in my life. I have zero room for failure and for not doing everything that I can to get my life in order. I come from being in an abusive relationship with my co-defendant. Through the grace and mercy of God, I've overcome that in my life, [I'm] ready to move forward and live the life that God intended for me. And for a chance to make my children, grandson, and family proud of me. I would like to know if I qualify to join your program.

## Dear Joan:

The Prison Fellowship Academy®, a months-long, biblically based program, is currently in several Illinois facilities. Prison Fellowship also offers (in select facilities nationwide) small-group studies and seminars led by volunteers in a supportive, Christian environment. Talk to your chaplain to learn more.

READERS: To find out if your facility offers the Academy or similar programs, ask your chaplain or counselor. If there are currently no Prison Fellowship programs available, your chaplain or other prison staff can contact us at 1-800-206-9764 to talk about setting them up.

Sincerely,  
The Editorial Staff ■

## Starting Again

Continued from page 1

from her emotions, she wouldn't learn to change.

"I'm so thankful for everything I felt," she says. "I didn't want to take anything that would numb me, because you're going to remember that when you have the chance to do different."

Pam made the most of her time in prison, correcting her behavior, her thinking, and

especially her relationship with God.

"All the distractions were off, and God had my full attention," she says.

She used the time to strengthen her relationship with God, knowing she would need to have a solid faith upon her release. Pam also took advantage of every program her prison offered, from learning to parent to dealing with trauma.

"[Prison programs] will give you a support system and set you up for success," she says.

## Second time's a charm

After her release, Pam focused on her family. She and Aaron married while he was incarcerated. For various reasons, they eventually divorced. But they remained friends, and Aaron stayed involved in the lives of Pam's children she had with someone else after their divorce. Pam brought the children to visit Aaron regularly in prison. Aaron also signed their children

up for Prison Fellowship Angel Tree®.

"It's not the gift," says Pam. "It's the thought behind the gift. It's the inclusion. It's love. It's the thought. It's the 'how is this possible when my dad is in prison that I could get these gifts that I want?'"

Their children also attended Angel Tree camping in the summers. "My two kids that went are polar-opposite children, and they both had the time of their lives," she says. "They learned a lot spiritually and even just in the real world of like, 'Hey, I'm a kid, and I'm at this camp, and my dad's like your dad.'"

Pam began volunteering to help facilitate Prison Fellowship Academy classes, driving over 90 miles each way. She found herself just as blessed as the people she was seeking to bless.

"Prison Fellowship Academy is life-changing, not only for the inmates but also the volunteers,"

she says. "It brings hope to a place that often feels hopeless."

Both Pam and Aaron were growing in their faith—and back in love with one another. They became engaged. A year later, after serving 17 years, Aaron was released, and they remarried a month

later—but now with a new approach.

"[God] was a part of us, but He wasn't all of both of us," Pam says of their earlier marriage. "He wasn't our One. [Now], I call Aaron my Two and I'm his Two, but our One is God. It wasn't like that before. Now God's up here, up top." ■



Photo by Shana Thompson

**"Prison Fellowship Academy is life-changing, not only for the inmates but also the volunteers. It brings hope to a place that often feels hopeless."**



# Walk the Walk: Putting Knowledge into Practice

by J.R. Breault

*“When are we ever going to use this?”*

**D**o you remember ever thinking or saying something like that when you were sitting in math class or learning about ancient Rome? Kids complaining in the classroom often don’t have great attitudes—but they do have a point. Education is most powerful when it’s put into practice.

Imagine taking a swimming class and getting 100% on every written test—but then jumping into a pool and ignoring every single thing you learned. You know all the information, but you decide not to kick your legs, move your arms, or breathe the way you were taught. You wouldn’t be a very successful swimmer, would you? The lifeguard would be coming to your rescue pretty quickly!

Or what if you attended a class on preparing for your release, which taught you step-by-step instructions for successfully returning to your community after your sentence ended—but on the day of your release, you decided to do the exact opposite of what you were taught. It’s one thing to listen to information, but it’s something else to put it into practice.

The Bible talks about this in the book of James: “But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves” (James 1:22).

What does it mean to “fool ourselves”? It’s when we tell ourselves lies about our hearts or behavior. We might think things like “I’m

doing great—I never miss chapel, I know all the Bible stories, and I can even quote some verses from memory.” But if we treat other people rudely, excuse our bad habits, and tell lies, we are fooling ourselves.

God doesn’t just want us to take in knowledge—He wants us to be changed by it. He wants us to act on it.

Read the verses that come after the one quoted above: “For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it” (James 1:23–25).

## Food on your face

The writer is using a word picture of looking in a mirror. What if you looked in a mirror, noticed you had peanut butter on your chin, and then walked away and forgot all about it? Looking in the mirror—and even thinking “Hey, that doesn’t belong there!”—doesn’t do you much good if you aren’t going to act on wiping off the peanut butter.

It’s the same way with God’s Word. We might hear a moving message about how God wants us to turn our lives over to Him in response to His love. We might even get tears in our eyes or say “amen.” But if we walk away and live no differently, we are the same as a person walking around with food on their face.

So what is the answer to letting truth actually change us? The James passage tells us: “If you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard.”



There are two parts to it: doing and remembering.

## Living out what you learn

To do what God’s Word says, we need a plan. Here’s one: Any time you hear teaching about the Bible, ask yourself “what next?” Make a list of action steps, and be specific. Instead of “grow in faith,” how about “read the Bible each day”? Instead of “be a better parent,” try “send a weekly letter.” The more we act in new ways and develop new habits, the more natural they will become. It can also be helpful to share your plan with a trusted friend who you know will hold you to it.

When it comes to remembering what we have heard, nothing is better than passing it on. Putting truth into our own words helps it stay in our minds and hearts. Maybe you can do this aloud with a friend or on the phone with a family member. Or maybe you can write a summary of what you learned and what it means to you—either to mail as a letter or to keep and reread later.

The Bible contains life-changing truth—not only principles for living, but also God’s great rescue plan through

Jesus. When our hearts don’t simply listen but are also ready to act and remember, we will be amazed at what happens in our lives.

The Bible passage above says, “God will bless you for doing it.”

We don’t know exactly what that will look like—His blessings are different for everyone. But we do know that as we respond to God’s Word in obedience, we will be transformed! ■

## ARE YOU JUST GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS?

Are you walking the walk, or just talking the talk? If someone taught you free and practical ways to sleep better, you’d at least give them a try, right? The same is true for living out all we learn in our faith journey. To experience the best versions of ourselves, the way God sees us, we need to live out His goodness. Philippians 4:5 says, “Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do.” Did you catch that? Not just to people we like, and not just when we’re in a good mood, but in all we do.

God wants to enrich our lives. But He also wants us to enrich the lives of others by sharing His love in all we do and by living out His teachings. God sent His only Son Jesus to show us how to live, and to teach us examples of His traits: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (also known as the fruit of the Spirit, in Galatians 5:22-23). Some days, living this way will be easier said than done. But spiritual habits are just that: habits—which take time to form and master. So practice these traits every day.

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

*“Dear Jesus, I want to learn more about Your teachings and traits and then put them into practice in my daily life. I want to be the version of me that You created me to be. I surrender my life to You, confess my sins, and ask Your forgiveness. Please help me walk the walk. 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 “WALK THE WALK,” 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.



# READER RECIPES

## Big Boy's Delight Cheesecake

Submitted by Steven in Florida



margouillatphotos: Getty Images

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

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Chocolate chip cookie
- 2 Maple brown sugar oatmeal packets
- 1 Peanut butter squeezer (or ½ tablespoon)
- 5 Cream cheese single-serve cups
- 1 Vanilla pudding snack pack
- 1 Butterfinger candy bar (or similar)

### DIRECTIONS:

In a bag, crush the chocolate chip cookie into crumbs. Then add both brown sugar oatmeal packets. Mix them together. Place the mix into a bowl, and then add four teaspoons of water and the peanut butter. Mix it all together until it molds to the bowl.

In another bowl, empty out the five cream cheese cups and then add the pudding. Stir together until blended. Crush the candy bar (on a plate or even in its original packaging) and then add three-quarters of the crumbs to the cream cheese mix. Stir it together and pour it into the first bowl (of the peanut butter mold). Finally, place the remaining one-quarter of the candy bar crumbs on top and set the bowl in the fridge for two hours until chilled. Then enjoy what Steven (the aspiring baker who submitted this recipe) calls "heaven in a bowl." ■

# RECOVERY CORNER

## Celebrate Recovery Inside

A Q&A with James D'Amato, a former Prison Fellowship chaplain resource specialist.

### Prison Fellowship: What is Celebrate Recovery?

James D'Amato: Celebrate Recovery® (CR) is a yearlong 12-step program that helps people in recovery experience fellowship through Christ's healing power. John and Cheryl Baker founded the program in 1991 at Saddleback Valley Community Church in Lake Forest, California. Since then, CR has grown to nearly 40,000 churches nationwide.

### PF: What is Celebrate Recovery Inside?

JD: Celebrate Recovery Inside is the in-prison extension of CR. The first incarcerated group formed in 1998 in New Mexico and today, prisons and jails throughout the United States and other countries use CR Inside as part of their recovery programs. Prison Fellowship partners with CR to bring Celebrate Recovery programs to incarcerated adults as part of the Prison Fellowship Academy. The addiction recovery program addresses alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, overeating, and more by dealing thoughtfully with life's hurts, hang-ups, and habits. Through these programs, men and women behind bars can grow spiritually and overcome their addictions.

### PF: What's the difference between Alcoholics Anonymous and Celebrate Recovery?

JD: Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a fellowship of men and women that support each other in their fight against alcoholism. AA acknowledges a Higher Power but is not Christ-centered. Another difference is that AA meetings usually mix men and women together, while CR is gender specific. Also, AA is usually volunteer led. CR facilitators are thoroughly trained before they can lead groups.

### PF: Who can benefit from CR Inside?

JD: Everyone can benefit from CR Inside, not just those with addiction. CR Inside gives its participants a new path to make amends with those they have hurt and with themselves. Participating in the program allows them to create stronger personal relationships with their families and grow more faith-based bonds in every area of their lives.

To learn more or to see if your facility has CR Inside, talk to your chaplain or counselor. ■

## 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.



# DAILY DEVOTIONAL TEAR-OUT

Tear out this daily devotional and 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.

## Fall Harvest

by Stacia Ray

“Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So, let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time, we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.”  
—Galatians 6:8–9

For farmers, fall is harvest time. If the crops planted earlier in the year were watered and well cared for, the result will be abundant and healthy foods. But if the crops were damaged by storms or drought, the fall harvest won’t be as hearty or healthy.

The same is true for our spiritual life. Once we plant our roots in God’s love and not in the things of this world, we can start to see the benefits of His goodness. But we really need to pay attention to our crops. That means soaking up God’s Word instead of soaking up books/music/movies that can promote mental decay or trigger unhelpful thoughts. It means choosing words that encourage others and glorify God instead of using offensive or hurtful words. It means asking ourselves how Jesus would handle a situation before doing it our own way. And it means connecting to God more deeply and more often through prayer.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Never stop praying.” How much of your day is spent in prayer? Are your prayers conversations, or more like short wish lists of “please do this or that”? Do you only pray when things are really bad or really good? Try praying like you’re talking to a dear friend. Be real and vulnerable. Try praying more often, whether it’s quietly while walking alone or out loud with a group. As a random person walks by you, ask God to bless them.

If you’ve planned healthy habits in your spiritual life but haven’t seen a lot of blessings lately, remember verse 9: “At just the right time, we will reap a harvest of blessing.” That means God’s timeline, not ours. So, tend to your relationship with the Lord each day. And even if you have a bad day, like the end of verse 9 says, don’t give up. ■



Zoonar/S.Heap: Getty Images

### Tips for Furthering Your Education

*Continued from page 1*

and singing stimulates the part of the brain responsible for digestion, relaxation, and the immune system.

#### 3. Write often.

Writing strengthens creativity, memory, and communication. What you write isn’t as important as just putting pen to paper and writing something. At the end of a day, jot down everything that made you laugh. Ever wanted to write a book? Create a sci-fi novel or a

memoir about your life. Or send a poem to a loved one.

#### 4. Go to school.

If you have children or nieces/nephews, ask their caregivers what they’re learning in school and try to learn that subject along with them. Or if you’re not a mom/aunt or aren’t allowed contact, see what education classes are available in your facility and share what you learn with a friend.

#### 5. Get fluent.

You’re never too old to learn another language.

See if your facility offers classes, and if not, find a book in the prison library on learning a new language. Make study guides and practice translating basic phrases or simple song lyrics. If you have a child learning a language, study the same one and write short letters to each other in that language.

*Different facilities offer a variety of classes/programs/jobs. Be sure to comply with your facility’s rules and regulations. ■*

### GET A JOB!

Furthering your education isn’t just about academics. Strengthening your work ethic is also an important part of educating yourself and growing as a person.

Whether you are paid or not, here are just a few of the benefits to working while incarcerated:

- Giving back to society by becoming a productive citizen.
- Preparing for a successful career after prison.
- Gaining practical job experience for your resume.
- Developing work skills, including soft skills like punctuality and responsibility.
- Learning to work on a team.
- Finding a job more easily after prison.
- Reducing violence in your facility.

Working hard can play a part in your restoration and prepare you for a more successful return to society after your release.

## WRITERS WANTED!

If you’d like to write a devotional for Prison Fellowship, please list a Bible verse, followed by a personal short story (2-3 paragraphs) that ties in to that verse, and end with a daily prayer/meditation on that verse or topic. Please add the line “I give Prison Fellowship my permission to publish my works.” Send it to “DEVOS,” c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146. No previously published works allowed. Submissions may be edited for content. Only your first name/state will be used. Not all submissions will be chosen.

# The Importance of Education Behind Bars

by **Sammy Perez**

I was first incarcerated at the age of 14. From there, I spent about a decade in and out of youth and adult prisons. I never graduated high school and didn't read my first book until age 19 while incarcerated. I obtained my GED behind bars. Shortly after being released from prison at age 26, I enrolled at Liberty University online.

I was a bit scared, as I had never pursued formal education. But I knew obtaining a degree would be critical to my success. I studied while maintaining a full-time job and supporting my family. Four years later, I graduated with honors with a degree in psychology, becoming the first person in my family to graduate from a 4-year university! I later continued my education and obtained a master's degree in professional counseling.

A few years after graduation, I was invited to teach a class on incarceration and families at the Catholic University of America. This was a significant accomplishment for me, because the word "college" was never discussed in my household growing up. Education has opened so many doors for me, and I recommend it to every man or woman who's incarcerated.

Getting an education, especially during your sentence, will enrich your life in many different ways:

- It will introduce you to new concepts and ways of thinking.
- It will challenge you to think critically about topics that you may not have done before.
- It will also provide you with a sense of purpose. Finding purpose is hard while in prison because you have a lot that is stripped away from you. Pursuing higher education is a way to gain control of your future and can provide a sense of purpose and responsibility during your time in prison.
- Taking classes while you are incarcerated will fill your time with pursuing something productive that will reap great benefits upon your release. (Editor's note: Research by the RAND Corporation shows that people who take college courses during their incarceration have a 43% lower likelihood of returning to prison after release).
- If you are able to obtain a degree, it will make you more marketable to potential employers upon release. It will also open the door for upward mobility (promotions), which will allow you to obtain higher-paying jobs that will provide for your loved ones. There is a huge difference between working a dead-end job and working a job that offers benefits, vacation, and substantial pay.

Obtaining a higher education may seem daunting. If so, challenge yourself to step into the unknown. While it may be scary, stretching yourself to new heights is where you will find personal growth and accomplishment. It's well worth the effort!

*Sammy Perez is the director of Prison Fellowship's grassroots program and an advocate for education and career opportunities for people who are formerly incarcerated.* ■

# FROM THE INSIDE OUT: More Poetry Written by Our Readers

We asked you to submit original poems you wrote, and wow, did you ever deliver! The submissions we've been getting are fantastic. Some of you should consider keeping a notebook or journal of all your thoughts and poetry, whether to look back on yourself or share with loved ones. Inside Journal sure has some talented readers.

## WISDOM

by **Jennifer in Maryland**

They try to break us down  
They gonna take our crown  
They want it all, our sweat  
Our tears, our laughter, our thoughts  
We cannot give up  
If it's just a little, then it's a whole lot  
Because it's our blood, our rhythm, our joy  
Our belonging, our prize of self-worth  
The rain, the crows  
It hears us, they hear us  
And it sings for us too  
Reach out and feel again  
But with patience and boundaries  
For ourselves.  
We must show them that we can.  
Listen to our  
Wisdom of calmness

## ARMOR OF GOD

by **Amanda in Indiana**

We're in a spiritual war  
The battles are our thoughts  
Spirit hold the sword  
That Jesus came and taught

Every day we put on our armor  
As we use discernment for our gifts  
Watching out as Satan shoots his arrows  
Being sure our paths are missed

So grab up your belt, helmet, sword, & shield  
And stand firm in your faith  
Cause all us soldiers are more than conquerors  
When we call out His holy name!

## PHD

by **"Ellie Swan" (pen name) in Connecticut**

Patience  
Humility  
Determination  
Free me Jesus  
From this plantation  
Not tired, wired  
Stuck on starvation  
They are breaking the law  
In my incarceration  
Too much motivation  
Lack of recreation  
Sanity saved by my medication  
Scan the barcode  
Depersonalization  
Patience  
Humility  
Determination  
Free me Jesus  
From this plantation  
Sad and lonely  
Dreaming of emancipation  
Trying to follow the rules  
In this staycation  
Peace, freedom  
And salvation  
Peace, freedom, and salvation  
May your blessings  
Meet multiplication ■



Creativeye99: Getty Images

## SAMMY'S 5 TIPS FOR CAREER SUCCESS AFTER RELEASE:

1. Pursue an education. Get a diploma/degree, and if you already have one, pursue advanced education.
2. Be humble. Be open to learning from others, and don't think you're "too good" for school.
3. Have a positive mindset. Positivity goes a long way, especially if education sounds hard or boring.
4. Be open to a variety of jobs. Your "dream job" may not happen right away, so be willing to work your way up the ladder or to do less-rewarding jobs at first.
5. Utilize resources. There are many websites and organizations that help people with a criminal record create a resume or find a job. There are also some great resources on the Prison Fellowship resource page (be sure to follow your parole/release requirements): [www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/support-friends-family-of-prisoners/supporting-successful-prisoner-reentry](http://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/support-friends-family-of-prisoners/supporting-successful-prisoner-reentry)



# 4 Simple Ways To Improve Your Public Speaking Skills

by James J. Ackerman,  
CEO of Prison Fellowship

When it comes to public speaking, I’ve often joked, “I have never met a microphone I didn’t like.”

But I didn’t learn to love public speaking overnight. I learned many things from my mother, the actress Elinor Donahue, and I learned a lot from practice.

Here are four basics to help you become a more confident and effective communicator.

### 1. Speak slowly.

My mother always said, “Speaking slowly may feel a bit unnatural or uncomfortable to you at first. But to everyone else, you’ll sound thoughtful and considered.”

My mother was right—most people get nervous in front of an audience and speak too fast. Slow it down and you’ll seem more confident. The other thing she taught me is to “muster the butterflies to give the best performance you can.” Having butterflies is a good sign; it means you want to do well. You must slow down enough to control them, or they will ruin your talk.

### 2. Prepare well.

Do your research. Make sure you understand your subject. Consider all the information that may be available to you

ahead of time, so that you can stand up in front of a room and explain it in detail. If people have questions, you want to be ready to answer.

Sometimes, I find it helpful to write things out in long form. Practice reading it aloud to yourself, even if you aren’t memorizing it word for word. Or you could write the outline in a few bullet points on a note card. As you’re speaking, you can glance down to remind yourself of what comes next.

### 3. Make it interesting.

Public speaking is a performance art. Believe in what you’re saying and put some passion behind it. You might try to add humor. Starting with a joke can be a great way to engage the audience and get them to accept you as the speaker.

Another great trick is building surprises into your talk. When I tell the story of Darryl Brooks, one of our Prison Fellowship Academy staff, I always tell his story in reverse chronology. I share that he’s a member of our staff who serves our Academy in Texas. He’s a wonderful leader, well-loved by all the men at the prison. Then I share that he was a graduate of that very same Academy and served 15 years in prison. It creates that element of surprise. Whenever you are giving a talk, try to find that thing that makes people go, “Aha, wow.” Because that’s the thing that they will remember.



Chinnapong: Getty Images

### 4. Practice makes perfect.

Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse—you can even rehearse certain vocal inflections or certain pauses. I like to read poems and speeches out loud just to practice that art of saying something with a cadence, or a certain flow. Practice different intonations where you really emphasize something powerfully, for the purpose of getting that point across.

As you’re practicing, remember your “why.” You have something to say about something that’s important to you. You can either stand there and worry about what everyone’s thinking about you, or you can decide to harness those butterflies and give it your best! ■

## ACTIVITY: Even & Odd Sudoku

Complete this Sudoku, placing even numbers in the blue cells. Answers on p.8.

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

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# NEWS + NOTES

by Lexi Aggen

## Coming Soon to a Prison Near You

In April 2019, the first episode of “The Chosen” premiered online and eventually on television. The series quickly grew in popularity and became the largest crowdfunded TV project in history. The approximately one-hour long show chronicles the life of Jesus as he calls his disciples. Dallas Jenkins, its writer and director, hopes to develop seven seasons to fully tell the story of Jesus’ ministry on earth.

This past year, the third season was released

in movie theaters around the country—and now “The Chosen” is coming to prisons! Prison Fellowship, in partnership with the Come and See Foundation, are on a mission to make “The Chosen” accessible to more than 300 prisons across the nation through Floodlight®, Prison Fellowship’s streaming platform.\*

“We are honored and excited to be partnering with Prison Fellowship so ‘The Chosen’ can be viewed by inmates across the country,” said Stan Jantz, CEO of the Come and See Foundation. “We pray that those who are

captive will find hope and healing through Jesus as they watch ‘The Chosen.’”

*\*Floodlight is currently not available in all prisons. Ask your chaplain to visit the chaplain resource page on Prison Fellowship’s website to learn more about getting Floodlight in your facility.*

## Growing Support for Addiction Recovery

The fight to provide more effective drug treatment has received growing support at the federal level in recent years.

The Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment

(MAT) Act passed through the House of Representatives in a 402-20 vote, then advanced into the Senate and was signed into law by President Joe Biden as part of a larger package in late 2022. The bill will help provide more effective addiction medication for those in prison. It also should help save lives and reduce the shame attached to addiction by normalizing some drug addiction treatments standard healthcare procedures.

There is a major need for new reforms related to addiction recovery, especially for those in prison. People released from prison are 12.7 times more likely to die

of an overdose during the first two weeks post-release than people who weren’t incarcerated. When people behind bars are quit drugs quickly and with limited support, their tolerance is usually lowered, which can lead to an overdose if they relapse.

Other legislation has been proposed in recent months that also addresses support for addiction recovery. Bills have been aimed at providing easier access to medications, including to those behind bars. These types of proposals could help those battling addiction while incarcerated and provide safer and more successful ways to recovery. ■

# DID YOU KNOW? Pell Grants

A Pell Grant is a form of financial assistance provided by the federal government for students who need help paying for college. Pell Grants are the most common form of financial aid given to low-income students in the United States. But for the past 30 years, they have not been available to students behind bars.

In 1994, Congress passed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which made it illegal for federal and state prisoners to apply for Pell Grants. Then in 2016, a limited number of incarcerated students were able to access Pell Grants when the government introduced the Second Chance Pell Program. However, in 2021, Congress passed a new law that permanently removed this restriction.

Starting in July 2023, all prisoners will be able to access Pell Grants for the first time in 30 years. This policy shift will open up academic opportunities for up to 700,000 men and women behind bars nationwide.

Here are some key things to know about who is eligible for Pell Grants and how to apply for them:

1. Pell Grants will be available to any resident of a prison, jail, or juvenile detention facility.
2. Incarcerated people can apply for Pell Grants regardless of what they have been convicted for or how long their sentence is.
3. To be eligible for a Pell Grant, applicants need to show they have a financial need.
4. Pell Grant applicants must have a high school diploma or GED.
5. Pell Grants can be used to pay for undergraduate studies only (not graduate programs) at public or nonprofit colleges and universities (see note below).
6. The maximum annual amount of a Pell Grant for the 2023-2024 academic year is \$7,395.
7. Unlike student loans, Pell Grants do not have to be repaid.
8. Pell Grants can only be used to pay for a maximum of 12 semesters of education.
9. Individuals who have already completed a bachelor’s degree are not eligible for Pell Grants.
10. To confirm eligibility for a Pell Grant, applicants must fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also known as FAFSA. The FAFSA can be filled out and submitted online or by mail.

NOTE: Pell Grants can only be used at educational institutions with eligible prison education programs (PEP). Many schools don’t have PEPs in place yet, but several are actively working on making their programs available to students behind bars. Contact a counselor or other staff member at your facility to see if they can help get you more information or to ask for a printed FAFSA application (be sure to follow all facility rules, judgement orders, privilege allowances, etc.). ■

## ACTIVITY: Sudoku Answer Key

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



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