

# INSIDE JOURNAL®

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**FOR WOMEN** 

YOUR SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND INFORMATION

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# A Future and a Hope for Angie

by L. Haviland and J.R. Breault

ngie recalls lying in bed, listening to her mother and alcoholic father fighting. "I remember wondering if it was ever going to end," she says.

Her parents
eventually divorced, and
Angie's life became a
bit more peaceful when
her mother remarried.
But Angie still craved
the love and affirmation
she couldn't get from
her father.

She turned to drugs, and by her late teens she became pregnant. After her son Jamie's birth, Angie worked full time and attended community college. The demand of life's responsibilities became overwhelming. She tried to escape with meth.

"It was like all my concerns, all



After some difficult chapters, Angie (shown here with her husband Travis and two of her children) now enjoys sharing her story of transformation and even wrote a book about her life.

my struggles, were answered," she says.
"I was losing [my pregnancy] weight. I could go to work. I could do my schoolwork. It gave me energy—I was Superwoman."

At first, Angie only used meth when she knew a stressful day was ahead or if she needed a "lift" for an event.
But soon she became addicted to it, lost her job, and left school.

Eight years after the birth of Jamie, Angie had another son, Brady. And seven years after that, she and her boyfriend Travis had a daughter named Faith. She stopped using drugs during her pregnancies, but her addiction to meth would return soon after.

She and Travis broke up, and a year later, he was arrested, tried, and sentenced to 10 years in federal prison.

#### A visit from church ladies

Angie's kids had been invited to attend a local church. Faith, 4 years old at the time, told the church ladies about her daddy in prison, and those ladies made sure Travis received a Prison Fellowship Angel Tree® application.

The first time the church ladies knocked on Angie's door, she didn't know what to think.

She had never heard of Angel Tree, which brings gifts to children in the name of their incarcerated parent.

"I was a little apprehensive because of the mind frame that I

Continued on page 2

# 5 Tips for Stress Relief

by Stacia Ray

here's a
difference
between "good
stress" and "bad
stress." Healthy, shortterm stress, like what you
might experience right
before an exam or an
athletic competition, can
motivate you and help
you to focus.

But unhealthy, chronic stress can have

long-term consequences on your mind, emotions, and body. It can lead to digestive and other health issues, depression, anxiety, and exhaustion.

The holidays can be stressful, life behind bars can be very stressful, and the holidays behind bars can be extremely stressful. Here are five simple ways to lower your stress levels when you feel overwhelmed\*.

#### 1. Practice self-care.

Some self-care activities include: massaging your own face and neck (use circular motions and move from the nose/lips outward); meditating and practicing deep breathing; and even simply showering and staying on top of daily hygiene. If you can't leave your cell,



sit-ups/push-ups and stretching exercises can lower blood pressure and reduce stress hormones, and if you can leave, jogging on the yard and weightlifting can also relieve stress.

#### 2. Serve others.

Studies show that serving others can

Continued on page 5

# Letters to the Editor

#### Melissa in Florida

We don't know what we don't know. I want to know what kind of resources you may have for a woman like me.

#### Erika in Texas

I recently read Mr.
[Charles] Colsons's
book, "Loving God."
What an excellent book.
I have decided I want
to minister to others
about the greatness of
God. ... I am applying for
the Prison Fellowship
Academy while I am still
incarcerated. I want to
do everything I can to
improve upon myself

during my remaining time here. I plan to return home with my family when I am granted parole. If you could please supply me with any resources of reentry and prison ministry, I would be grateful.

### Chontelle in Pennsylvania

I am writing in an effort to gain help, information, resources, and/or documents. ... I have been working hard to recover from addiction, abuse, and trauma by taking advantage of the programs, groups,

and classes offered.
I have used all my
resources that I have
available. My next
step is reestablishing
communication with my
son. I am open to any/all
options you suggest to
help me.

### Dear Melissa, Erika, and Chontelle:

To find out what free resources we offer, please have your chaplain (or other staff member if your facility doesn't have a chaplain) visit prisonfellowship. org/storehouse. For reentry resources, visit

prisonfellowship.org/
resources and scroll down
to the section called
"Preparing for Reentry."
It lists helpful resources,
tips on writing a resume,
a national directory for
reentry, and more. Call
211 (or visit 211.org) to
find a community resource
specialist in your area.

Get connected with Celebrate Recovery (or similar recovery program) if necessary. Be sure to follow all your release conditions and parole rules. We will also be praying for you. Keep the faith!

Sincerely,
The Editorial Staff ■



### 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\*



#### Hope for Angie Continued from page 1

was in," Angie says. "But they were so caring and so kind."

The ladies brought food and gifts for Faith on behalf of her dad. In retrospect, Angie says that the love of those women planted seeds in her heart.

In 2008, Angie's father died, followed three months later by the death of her mother. Angie barely had time to process these losses when she was arrested for conspiracy to manufacture meth.

On her way to the jail, she recalls, "I wasn't even able to consciously think about what was going on in my life—but there was so much, I thought I was going to lose my mind."

She spent her first two weeks behind bars sleeping around the clock. Her life felt chaotic and hopeless.

#### A loyal support system

One day, Angie received her first letter in prison. Three women from a church in Angie's small town had read about her situation and let her know they were praying for her. Angie didn't think much of it

until about a week later, when another letter arrived from just one of the women, Judy. Although Angie didn't know Judy, the letters kept coming.

Angie had received an Inside Journal Life Recovery Bible from a prison Bible study leader and set it aside—until Judy's next letter, which mentioned Jeremiah 29:11. Angie looked it up in her new Bible: "For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

Angie read the verse over and over again. For the first time in as long as she could remember, she was overcome with a sense of peace.

While Brady's father had taken custody of him, Angie's older son, Jamie, now 21, was caring for Faith, now 7. But Jamie was struggling to keep things together as a sudden caregiver.

When Christmas got closer, Angie remembered what a blessing Angel Tree had been in the past, so she signed up. That year—and the next four years after that—Faith received gifts on behalf of each of her incarcerated parents.

"The combination of it all was just so valuable," Angie says. "I can't thank God enough for that."

Angie also kept in touch with Travis through the prison email system. She eventually transferred to an inprison residential drug abuse program. She was released in 2012, about a month after Travis. They were assigned to different jurisdictions but eventually were able to live in the same sober home. Angie and Travis were married in 2015.

She went back to school and became a licensed drug and alcohol counselor, helping people dealing with substance abuse disorder. Angie has also written a book about her life, Hope Dealer (A Way Out).

Looking back, she sees how God used prison to bring her a peace she would not have experienced otherwise.

"I one hundred percent believe that God plucked me out of my environment and sat me down, so He got my full attention," she says. "I believe that He wasn't going to let me go, and that He did have plans to give me a hope and a future."

# From Lies to Light: Caring for God's Creation

by Dillon Shaw

aybe you've heard that expression "The jig is up." It means a trick has been revealed; your lie or scheme has been uncovered. When your lifestyle is unhealthy, "the jig is up" is actually a good thing.

I spent 13 years behind bars. One of the most refreshing realities of being in prison was the fact that no one could hide that they were broken and in need of redemption. This reality of being outed as broken was a relief to me, because I had lived most of my life trying to hide my flaws and failures.

Ironically, when I went to prison, I finally felt free to live in light and truth. The jig was obviously up, I'd been caught, and I could no longer hide behind the darkness and lies. However, discovering the freedom to live in the light and choosing to actually live in it are two different things.

When I lived a life of darkness and lies, I felt a pull to abuse my body with drugs and alcohol. My destructive self-talk told me, "You're worthless, you're a failure," and "No one (including God) will ever love someone like you." It felt natural to mistreat others because they mistreated me, or to manipulate people for my benefit.

When I lived in my personal prison of darkness and deceit, it was easy to disregard the wonder of creation all around me. I didn't appreciate the world's beauty—in fact, I was living in a way that contributed to its decay. Most of this was the result of my sin and selfishness. Sin and selfishness thrive in darkness. So does loneliness.

#### Freedom in the light

The Good News is that Jesus came to bring light to the darkness, and to set us free from the lonely prison of sin! In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus declares, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD's favor has come."

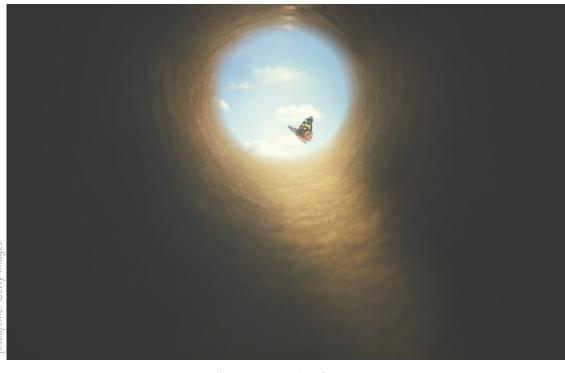
When Jesus sets us free to live in this new reality, He transforms us from the inside out into the kind of people who think, speak, and act like Him. This means shifting our thinking from selfish to selfless. When He walked on earth, Jesus valued all of creation, from the tiniest flower to the largest animal. He cared for the poor, sinful, and hopeless. He loved the criminals, outcasts, and untouchables. No one was unreachable in His eyes. No one was unworthy.

God challenges us to treat people with love, just like He did. All people. Even the difficult ones. Even the frustrating ones. "Love your neighbor as yourself" is the commandment listed in Matthew 22:39 as being just as important as loving the Lord. Notice how it doesn't say "love your friendly and likeable neighbor." That verse is referring to all types of neighbors.

#### A new life of selflessness

Not only does God offer us His love and care, but He invites us to share that love and care with His creation:

 He fills you with a sense of worth and calls you to help others to see their value (Romans 8:15-17; Ephesians 2:8-10).



- He calls us to represent Him to the lost world, and He welcomes us to invite others into His story (Genesis 1:26-31; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21).
- He comforts us in our troubles, and He invites us to comfort others in the same way (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).
- He cares for our needs, and He calls us to share that care with everyone (Matthew 6:25-34; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15).
- He wants us to care for others, both human and animal (Genesis 1:28). This verse says to manage the earth and

"reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground." This doesn't give us permission to abuse or neglect animals but to supervise and care for them.

Can you imagine a world where everyone cares for God's creation? If that's too hard to imagine, can you live today in a way that shows you care about yourself and others? Be a friend to the person who's always alone, pray for someone in need,

or point out something good you see in the people you interact with today.

Remind yourself that God created you unique and special. It won't always be easy it goes against the current of the world, and sometimes even of our own heart. But this new, others-centered life Jesus offers is far greater and more satisfying than the old, self-centered life of darkness and lies. It's freeing to no longer hide the you God made you to be. The jig is up, so stop pretending.

#### ARE YOU LIVING IN LIES OR IN LIGHT?

Take a close, honest look at your daily life. Do you ever act like you're better than someone else? Or on the flipside, do you beat yourself up as being unworthy? If you base your treatment of yourself or others on how you think you or they deserve to be treated, you might want to ask yourself if you're trying to play God.

If your gut reaction to being wronged is to do wrong to others, it's time for a new approach. That's not to say you should sit back and allow people to mistreat you. It's good to have boundaries. But if you walk around with a chip on your shoulder, living selfishly and not being loving to others, you are missing the life God called us to live.

In Matthew 5:14, Jesus tells His followers, "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden." And in verse 16, He continues, "Let your good deeds shine out for all to see." There was no loophole that said those good deeds should only be toward people you think deserve it. Jesus said in John 13:34b, "Just as I have loved you, you should love each other."

And Romans 5:8 says, "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." We didn't deserve God's love, but He gave it anyway. Talk about selfless! All we have to do to receive this amazing love is ask Jesus into our hearts.

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

"Dear Jesus, I want to leave the prison of lies and darkness, and to experience the freedom of Your truth and light. I surrender my life to You, confess my sins, and ask Your forgiveness. Please help me to love others. 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 "LIGHT OF TRUTH," 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.

All Creatures Great and Small

by L. Haviland

he powerful bond between animals and humans is undeniable. Perhaps it's because animals encourage social interactions and don't judge us.

Many facilities have animal programs such as raising puppies, caring for cats, and training dogs to become therapy animals. These specialized programs help boost the mental health and skill development of the participating men and women.

Thanks to interaction with their four-legged friends, participants of prison animal programs have greater motivation and a more optimistic outlook toward others, and some have been able to eventually leave prison with a new skill set.

Here are some of the unique animal programs found in correctional facilities throughout the country.

#### Dogs helping people

At the Richard J. Donovan
Correctional Facility in San
Diego, California, the nonprofit
organization Guide Dogs of
America/Tender Loving Canines
supplies the prison with dogs
for its aptly named POOCH
("Prisoners Overcoming
Obstacles & Creating Hope")
program. The incarcerated men
who have been trained to work
with the animals prepare the dogs
to serve military members and/or

veterans with

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), people with autism, and others.

The organization brings the dogs onto the facility grounds, along with dog handlers and trainers who teach the men to train the dogs. After the day's training sessions, the handlers then bring the dogs to a kennel on the premises for the night.

Martin Dawson, a Prison Fellowship staff member familiar with the program, explains its ins and outs.

"There are about 30 or 40 dogs on the yard at one time," Martin says. "The dogs live [in a separate unit] with their handlers. Each participant works with their dog for about nine months. Once each dog has completed his or her training, they are matched to individuals or families in need of their services."

The program began at Donovan in 2014. Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, it was put on hold. But it resumed in 2021, once pandemic restrictions were lifted. While the animals themselves are trained to change the lives of those who will eventually adopt them, the men doing the training might be the ones who experience the biggest transformation.

"I was a bad person when I came in here," says Chester, a dog training program participant. "When the judge called character witnesses, no one could say anything good about me. I deserved the life sentence I got. Now that I have trained these dogs, I can finally say that I have done something good in life."

Program participants take this dog-training responsibility very seriously. "The men have a great sense of accomplishment when their dog graduates," says Martin. "It really brings out their sense of nurturing."

photographer who took some
of the photos for this article,
explains that dog programs
bring purpose, comfort,
and companionship to
people behind bars—
which can be life-

Pro2sound: Getty Images

S. Thompson, the

changing for participants who may otherwise feel lonely or unloved.



Not just dogs: lemurs, bulls, and horses too!

Animal programs in prisons do not simply teach incarcerated men and women how to train various creatures; they also simultaneously pass along values to them that they'll need upon release: patience, compassion, and teamwork, just to name a few.

And you don't necessarily have to train an animal to benefit from what they have to offer.

In southern Florida, a special animal sanctuary is housed at the Monroe County Sheriff's Office detention center. The Children's Animal Farm boasts about 150 domestic and exotic animals that had been abandoned, orphaned, or abused. It is overseen by Stock Island Detention Center supervisor Jeanne Selander and a crew of incarcerated men called "trusties" because they are given the privilege of caring for the animals and interacting with visitors. "It's calming, keeps you out of trouble, keeps your mind focused," one participant told FloridaKeys TV.

In addition to turtles, ferrets, and birds, the farm also features a lemur, a sloth, a 2000-pound bull, and a 10-foot Burmese python. Selander told Beastly TV, "I think this program is great for the inmates. I think the love that the animals give them, the unconditional love, some of them have never experienced that before. And the animals don't judge. They don't care that you're wearing an orange outfit. So I think the inmates and the animals benefit from the love."

And at Hiland Mountain
Correctional Center, Alaska's
state prison for women, dogs who
were dropped from the Iditarod
Sled Dog race take a pit stop
for a couple of weeks. Several
incarcerated women at Hiland
provide the dogs with food,
affection, and companionship
until their handlers can return for
them. Volunteers from this "pit
stop program" told Todd Stafford,

an Alaskabased program manager at Prison Fellowship,

that the experience of helping to feed and care for the hardworking canines is often deeply therapeutic to these women.

Back on the East Coast, a program at Southern Maine Women's Reentry Center trains the women to raise puppies to become therapy dogs for various citizens. Director of Women's Services Amanda Woolford told Inside Journal, "You see a level of empathy increase with the dog handlers, knowing that they are raising and training a dog who will make a huge impact on another human being. That level of redemption can't be taught; it has to be worked on every day."

This center in Maine also houses a horse farm, where abandoned horses are brought to be cared for. Amanda notes the parallel experience between the women and the horses they are helping to rehabilitate: "They themselves had been abused and discarded, and the therapeutic value of earning a horse's trust and helping to nurse them back to health—there is something very cathartic about that process."

Even if your facility doesn't have an animal program, you can still appreciate creatures where you find them: bumble bees pollinating, ants actively arranging their world, and perhaps even a frog or rabbit hopping through the yard. Observe their energy and colors, notice how they interact with the space around them, and give thanks for what they bring to your day in that moment.

NOTE: Animal programs such as those mentioned in this article are not available in all facilities.

#### 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.

### Protection from the Storm

Submitted by Alicia in South Carolina

"You need not be afraid of sudden disaster or the destruction that comes upon the wicked, for the LORD is your security. He will keep your foot from being caught in a trap."

**Proverbs 3:25-26** 

Being in confinement, I have all kinds of sins going on around me. It's so easy to get caught up in it all, to fall into a trap. So I have to stay prayed up and rely on God to belo me stay on the right path and known

prayed up and rely on God to help me stay on the right path and know that He will protect me from the evil around me.

This Proverbs verse reminds me to be calm even in the midst of the storm. To have faith and trust in God, that He will keep me confident in His protection of my soul.

"Dear God, I pray for complete faith and trust in you, Lord. And that you will calm my fears and protect me. In Jesus name, Amen."



**DutchScer** 

#### **WRITERS WANTED!**

The above devotional was written by one of our readers. If you'd like to write a devotional for Prison Fellowship, please list a Bible verse, followed by a personal short story (2–4 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. Note: 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.

#### Tips for Stress Relief Continued from page 1

reduce stress, improve moods, and release chemicals to activate the "reward center" of our brain. Helping others can serve as a healthy distraction from our own problems. See if there are volunteer serving opportunities available (like if your facility has a tutoring program or hospice unit), or even just ask a friend how you can pray for them. Make a holiday greeting card for your loved ones or cellmate using the activity shown on page 6.

### 3. Connect with nature.

Search for squirrels, frogs, birds, or insects on your yard and observe them for a moment; note as many details as you can about their features, behaviors, noises. Give an animal a name and a fun back story. Listen to the breeze. Look for shapes in clouds. Connecting with nature reminds us we're not alone.

#### 4. Connect with God.

Philippians 4:6 is often summarized as "worry about nothing; pray about everything." God wants us to come to Him about everything big and small. Try talking to Him like you would a close friend, sharing your stressful moments and asking Him for peace. Reading the Bible can be soothing, as well. See the sidebar on right.

# 5. Find a healthy release.

Oftentimes when we feel stressed out,

we just need to let it out. Try yelling into a pillow or using "progressive muscle relaxation" (inhale as you tense one muscle group one at a time for five seconds and then exhale as you fully relax that muscle group). Vent to a friend or make an appointment to see a staff counselor. Just feeling heard can be a big stress relief. Drawing, journaling, and even swirling a pencil around and around on a piece of paper in quick, frantic

circles can also release some tension.

\*Be sure to follow your facility's guidelines and be respectful of others (ex: Yelling into a pillow isn't a good idea if it's disruptive, and serving others may be mistaken as "owing a favor," so be wise about what service you offer and to whom).

#### STRESSED OUT?

Here are some good Bible verses to help you through. Try reading these while taking slow, deep breaths and meditating over the words. (Note: All verses in this newspaper are shown in NLT translation.)

- Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. —Philippians 4:6
- Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And if worry can't accomplish a little thing like that, what's the use of worrying over bigger things? —Luke 12:25–26
- I cried out, "I am slipping!" but your unfailing love, O Lord, supported me. When doubts filled my mind, your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer. —Psalm 94:18-19
- As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in your commands. —Psalm 119:143
  - "The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm." —Exodus 14:14
- I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. —Psalm 34:4
- "This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." —Joshua 1:9
- Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I
  will give you rest." Matthew 11:28
- Each time he [Jesus] said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."

  So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

  —2 Corinthians 12:9–10



# Signs of Addiction

#### Physical Signs of Addiction

Examples of physical warning signs include:

- Noticeable changes in appearance, movement, and speech.
- Sudden increase or decrease in weight and appetite.
- Lack of grooming and hygiene.
- Unusual body odors.
- · Unkempt clothing.
- Enlarged or small pupils.
- Bloodshot eyes.
- Tremors, seizures, or excessive sweating.
- Marks on the skin.
- Slurred speech.
- Insomnia, excessive sleeping, or changes in sleep patterns.

#### **Behavioral Signs of Addiction**

Examples of behavioral warning signs include:

- Extreme mood swings and emotional outbursts.
- Skipping activities or obligations.
- Anxiety, depression, anger, or paranoia.
- Loss of interest in programs, extracurriculars, and hobbies.
- · Asking for, demanding, or stealing money.
- Shifts in relationships and emotional withdrawal.
- Lack of motivation and inattentiveness.
- Abusive or manipulative behavior.

If you or someone in your life needs help fighting addiction, there's hope. Reach out to a counselor or trusted staff member for help with getting the right tools for the right situation.

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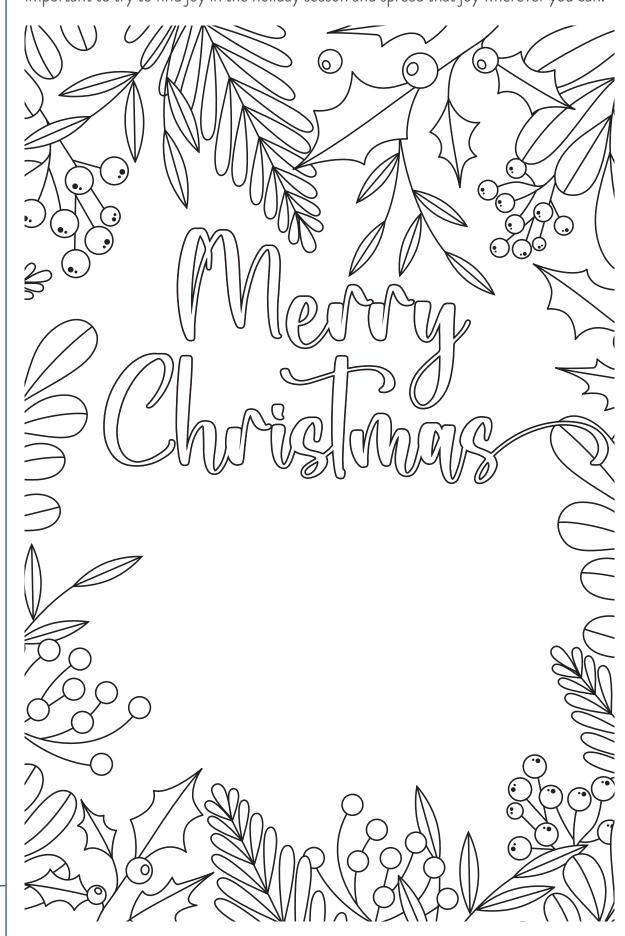
# THE OUTSTANDING CHAPLAIN AWARD

Do you know a chaplain who serves with compassion and dedication? Does your chaplain go above and beyond to bring hope and inspiration? Nominate your favorite chaplain for the Prison Fellowship® Outstanding Chaplain Award!

The Outstanding Chaplain Award seeks to honor dedicated chaplains who faithfully and lovingly serve those behind bars. Mail your nomination to OCA, c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790. Or if you have access to a computer, you can email your nomination to chaplainresources@pfm. org. Be sure to include the name of the chaplain you want to honor, the name of their facility (including city and state), your name, and your personal story or paragraph about why this person should be recognized as outstanding. Nominate your chaplain today!

# **ACTIVITY: Christmas Card**

Color and personalize this Christmas card (or trace it if you have thin white paper) and send it to a loved one or a fellow prisoner, or use it as inspiration to make cards of your own. If you have kids, you could even send it to them and have them color it for you. It's important to try to find joy in the holiday season and spread that joy wherever you can.



# READER

## Soup Burger

Submitted by Anika in Texas

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

**DIRECTIONS:** 

#### INGREDIENTS:

- Ramen noodles
- 1 can of beans
- Chicken (or tuna or other meats)
- Squeeze cheese or cream cheese
- Jalapeño pepper, chopped



DarkRay27: Getty Images

Sprinkle just enough water onto the ramen noodles to make them slightly soft/no longer crunchy, but don't cook them. Then divide noodles into two equal portions, as these will be your burger "bun." In a separate bowl, mix beans, meat, and jalapeño. Place the bowl in the microwave (or if you don't have a microwave, put in a plastic bag, and place bottom of the plastic bag in warm water to heat). Spoon the burger mixture onto the bottom ramen "bun," and then add the cheese to the top of the "burger" before putting the top "bun" on the burger. Enjoy!

# **2024 CALENDAR**

Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. -Ephesians 4:32

JANUARY								FEBRUARY							MARCH						
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HOLIDAYS JANUARY 1 – New Year's Day JANUARY 15 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day FEBRUARY 14 – Valentine's Day FEBRUARY 19 – Presidents Day MARCH 31 – Easter MAY 12 – Mother's Day MAY 27 – Memorial Day JUNE – Ask your chaplain for an Angel Tree participation form.							JULY AUGU your A SEPTE NOVE	JUNE 16 – Father's Day JULY 4 – Independence Day AUGUST – Don't forget to submit your Angel Tree participation form. SEPTEMBER 2 – Labor Day NOVEMBER 11 – Veterans Day NOVEMBER 28 – Thanksgiving Day DECEMBER 25 – Christmas Day						IMPO	RTA	NT D	ATES	S:			

# **NEWS + NOTES**

by Lexi Aggen

## Finding Vision for the Future

A program offered through the California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA) is changing lives in and outside of prison walls. The Braille program offered at the Folsom State Prison teaches men how to transcribe books into Braille, a form of writing for the visually impaired. Braille uses six raised dots in a pattern to represent letters, numbers, and punctuation, allowing a blind person to read through touch.

According to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the Braille program at Folsom began in 1989 and has been nationally recognized by the American Printing House for the Blind as one of the best Braille programs in the country. The products that have been created in the prison have been described as "top-notch."

Participants of the program are able to complete certifications from the Library of Congress and the National Braille Association, which can help them find employment upon release. The certifications offered through the Braille program require up to 700 hours of studying—which for

those outside of prison, could take up to a year to complete.

One participant from the in-prison program was able to earn certifications in Braille for math, music, and writing. He is now one of only 20 people in North America to hold all three certifications.

CALPIA offers a variety of in-prison programs throughout the state of California, with certifications for activities such as scuba diving, coffee roasting, welding, and more. Their mission is to change incarcerated individuals' lives through innovative job training for a safer California. CALPIA's programs have a 15% rate of reincarceration, much less than the national average of 67%. The Braille program at Folsom has an even better success rate. Out of the nearly 100 participants who have graduated from the Braille program, only one has been rearrested.

Learning how to produce Braille isn't the only thing the program offers. Participants are also trained in how to refurbish and calibrate donated eyewear. The glasses that are rebuilt by the men at Folsom are then distributed to those in need—both locally and globally.

Through these programs, participants

are able to gain a new view on their own life.

"It's simple," one Braille program participant shares. "The program offers a life-changing experience. It provides a career and a means to contribute to a community less fortunate." SEE SIDEBAR FOR BRAILLE ALPHABET.

#### Prison Fellowship: New Year, New CEO

After seven years of leadership, Prison Fellowship President and CEO James J. Ackerman is saying goodbye. Heather Rice-Minus became the organization's new

president in October and will officially be the new CEO on January 1, 2024.

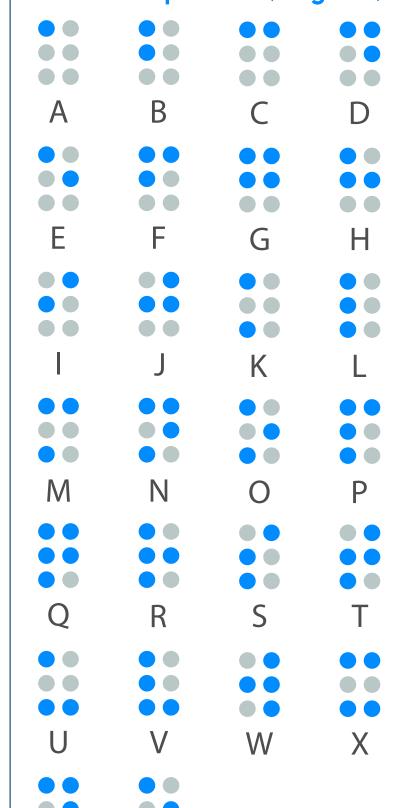
Since joining the staff of Prison Fellowship in 2013, Heather has been a key advocate on criminal justice issues, often meeting leaders on Capitol Hill to create a better criminal justice system.

"The board is grateful for James Ackerman's prayerful consideration as he felt called to pass the baton to a new leader," says Carl Dill, board chairman for Prison Fellowship. "The guidance and support he has already given to Heather is invaluable to our ministry and future. We thank James

for his wisdom and visionary leadership of the ministry."

Heather is honored and excited to step into this new role. "I am deeply humbled to be entrusted to lead Prison Fellowship into its next season of ministry, effecting restorative culture change for individuals, families, and communities impacted by incarceration," she says. "I fully believe that tomorrow's leaders are sitting in prison cells today—and I believe we will see revival in the Church in America. Christians 'outside' have so much to learn from the worship and humility displayed by our brothers and sisters in Christ behind bars." ■

### **Braille Alphabet (English)**





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#### NEW YEAR TO GET CLOSER TO GOD

**90-Day Journal Challenge**: Keep a prayer and gratitude journal, writing something (even a few short words) every morning or evening and listing the things God has done for you or things you're grateful for.

**90-Day Bible Challenge**: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have 89 chapters. By reading one chapter a day, with one grace day, you can read all the Gospels before the next Inside Journal newspaper arrives (for an added challenge, also read two chapters a day from Acts to Revelation, for a total of three chapters a day, to read the entire New Testament in 90 days).

Oleksandr Hruts: Getty Images