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Finding Healing and Freedom From Addiction

by L. Haviland

As a young man, Marlin shared his dad's love of motorcycle riding—and of alcohol.

"I learned a lot of very good practical things from my dad," says Marlin. "But I also learned how to drink. In my earliest memories when people were having fun, there was always alcohol in their hand."

Marlin got drunk for the first time at age 6. He liked how it helped him forget his feelings of loneliness and his parents' arguments, even just for a moment. As he got older, he began experimenting with LSD and cocaine.

Although he was a husband and father by his early 20s, Marlin felt lonely and unwanted. The death of a beloved uncle left him feeling even more abandoned.

False security

Marlin's addiction to alcohol was eventually



Photo by S. Thompson

Marlin got drunk for the first time at age 6. By his 20s, he was a struggling husband, father, and addict. After years in and out of prison, he finally found lasting freedom.

replaced by an addiction to meth. "I thought it was ... some sort of magical potion that cured everything," says Marlin.

Soon after using meth regularly, he began selling

it. He was making money and getting the admiration and acceptance he had been searching for.

"I felt like I was good at selling drugs and fixing cars," adds Marlin.

"Those are about the only two things that I ever excelled at."

Eventually, though, Marlin was facing felony drug charges, jail time, and prison.

While in jail, he sometimes went to Bible studies—though mostly just to socialize. Marlin had always had faith since he first learned about Jesus as a child. But he felt that God had created him as an example of what He did not want people to be.

He kept trying to improve himself, but his attempts to live life on his own terms frustrated him. After one prison stint, Marlin joined a yearlong recovery program and volunteered at church, making sure his kids attended youth group. But then his children's mother relapsed after several years of sobriety. His father became terminally ill. His life was spiraling out of control.

Marlin blamed God and returned to using and selling meth.

"I was doing all the things that I felt, in my

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7 Life Hacks for Repurposing Everyday Commissary Items

by C.L. Bopape

When money is tight, it can be hard to justify spending commissary funds on self-care. And sometimes the items you need aren't readily available for purchase. The good news: You may have alternative solutions and

resources within reach. Try looking at some of the things you already have with fresh eyes and an open mind. To help you do that, we've included seven practical tips and inexpensive shortcuts that will help you consider ways to navigate your life behind bars with greater efficiency and convenience.*

1. Stop the bleeding.

If you're fond of black or green tea, here's another reason to keep a few tea bags on hand: They contain a natural chemical that helps with blood clotting. Steep the tea bag for a few minutes and let it cool. Then wrap it in gauze (or

a thin, clean cloth) and press it against the bleeding area for five minutes—a great hack to use after tooth extractions!

2. Get pain relief.

If you've done more reps than usual during your workout, your muscles may feel a little sore the next day. Pain medication isn't your only option. Some people have

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LumenSt: Getty Images

Letters to the Editor

Donald in Tennessee

As I was reading Inside Journal, I ran across a piece explaining the eligibility of the Colson Scholarship and noticed it's designed for reentry. Do you guys know of any programs that will help me with financial aid for my education [while incarcerated]?

Dear Donald:

A Pell Grant is one way for current prisoners to receive financial assistance. The Fall 2023 edition of Inside Journal contains information on Pell Grants (if you don't have a copy, see page 5 for how to order it). See page 8 for more news on the Pell Grant program.

John in Connecticut

I am very interested in more information about Wheaton College and would like

a copy of your Inside Journal Reentry specialty edition.

Dear John:

The Reentry edition is not available for an individual order, but your chaplain or prison staff member can place a free order (bulk order of 50 copies) through prisonfellowship.org/storehouse. Once you're released, you can visit correctionalministries.org/colson-scholarship to learn more about Wheaton College's Colson Scholarship.

Eric in Nevada

I want to learn more about the Word of God and get closer to Him. Pray for me that I find favor in the situation that I'm in. I truly would thank you for it. I need to learn how to control my temper in every area of my life.



Ekely: Getty Images

Dear Eric:

We will be praying for you. Anger is a powerful force, but God is more powerful. You may also want to speak to a counselor to find the root of your anger—in men, anger/irritability can be a sign of depression. No matter the root cause, it takes time to rewire your brain patterns, so keep at it.

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*

*Bibles and Workbooks are available in English or Spanish. You can order a Bible and Workbook together, or separately. Limit one order per person.



Finding Healing Continued from page 1

mind, God should have been blessing me for," says Marlin. "So I turned my back on Him and decided that life was easier when I was numb and high."

After 10 years of freedom, Marlin was arrested again and sent to a state prison. In the back of his mind, he never stopped asking God where He was and if He was aware of what Marlin was going through.

Marlin heard about the Prison Fellowship Academy® at the Lino Lakes facility in Minnesota. The Academy is a yearlong life-transformation program he had joined during a previous sentence but never finished. Something inside of him told him God had never turned His back on Marlin. He signed up for the Academy and was accepted back in.

Away from the distractions of the world, Marlin found space to focus on his relationship with God.

"I read where Paul says in Philippians to be content in everything," Marlin remembers. "[Jesus] was working in my heart. If [prison's] the place I had to be to hear

Him and be in relationship with Him, then I was content with that."

After he graduated from the Academy, he stayed on as a clerk and continued to learn from other participants. Marlin would then share his wisdom with people around the prison.

His time in the Academy motivated Marlin to be a better father and person and helped him discover his purpose in serving others.

"God put this burden on my heart to come out and be successful," says Marlin, "to be a path-paver instead of a stumbling block-maker, which I had been for most of my life."

True security found

After his release from prison in 2018, Marlin knew he needed support as he continued his recovery and found his place in his community. He began a paid internship with Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge and later was hired as a program manager at FreedomWorks. Both are faith-based organizations that help those struggling with addiction or those returning from prison.

One of Marlin's greatest regrets was

hurting his children. But now, his relationship with them has been mended.

Marlin now serves as director of reentry services at Damascus Way, an organization that helps provide housing and support to people in reentry or substance abuse recovery.

"God equips me to continue to do the work."

He has confidence in who he is in Christ and no longer needs to numb himself from life's challenges. He has been sober for more than eight years and tries to live by the values he was taught in the Academy.

He's forever grateful for his wife, children, and grandchildren—and for God's strength and mercy.

"I was an auto mechanic and a drug dealer for most of my life, and now I'm managing a budget and supervising people," says Marlin. "God equips me to continue to do the work." ■

Good Grief: Finding Hope Amid Loss

by A.R. Quinn

In 2015, an incarcerated dad named Charlie received a visit from his wife and child. Hours after the visit, a state trooper came to the prison to tell Charlie that his family had been killed in a car crash on their way home.

When the shock passed, guilt overwhelmed Charlie, as this thought crept into his head: *If you weren't in prison, they wouldn't have been driving. They would still be alive.* Charlie attended their funeral—in handcuffs and leg chains. When he was released soon after, it was hard for him to go on living.

When someone dies, the grief can be extremely painful. People can also grieve the separation from an estranged child or loved one who is still alive but disconnected.

There is a unique sting to grief in prison. Perhaps you were imagining sharing your life with a certain loved one after your release, but they became terminally ill and won't be around for your next chapter. Perhaps you thought you would have time to mend your relationship with someone, but that person moved away and can't be reached. Or maybe the last person to wish you a happy birthday or send you mail—the one person who connected you to memories of a happier time—has passed away.

With grief comes not just sadness, but guilt, despair, rage, loneliness, and fear.

Go easy on yourself

Losing someone you love—even if you haven't spoken for years—is one of life's most stressful experiences. It can trigger grief over past losses. You might feel

abandoned, depressed, or anxious. You might be unable to cry or unable to stop crying. All these things are normal, so be patient with yourself. There is no "right" way to grieve, and grief doesn't move in a straight line. One day might be OK, and the next might be awful. Focus on one day at a time, one moment at a time. Sleep. Drink water. Move around. Avoid alcohol or drugs; they won't give you the help you need.

When my dad died, I was 3,000 miles away. I heard the news over the phone. I never saw his body. I never sat beside him and said the things you say at the end. The weight of those unsaid words sat heavy on my shoulders. A counselor suggested I sit down and write my dad a letter, so I did. I poured it onto the paper—all the regret, love, hurt, and forgiveness. Then I tore it up. Although my dad never read it, the process of writing it was healing. I felt lighter.

If there are things you never got to say, consider writing them in a journal or a letter you won't mail. Just expressing unspoken feelings can provide some relief.

We are never alone

God promises that He is "close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed" (Psalm 34:18). Praying can help bring comfort. Prayer has been known to calm anxiety even in people who are not yet sure if they fully believe in or understand God.

There are also books on grief and grieving, like *A Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis, which he wrote after his wife died. It also helps to talk to someone you trust—perhaps a chaplain, ministry volunteer, or good friend. You might be surprised by the way others' journeys can help you realize you're not alone.

The Bible says Jesus was "a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief" (Isaiah 53:3). Even Jesus' mother can relate to what it's like to suffer a great loss. She watched Him be cruelly tortured and mocked before enduring a slow and painful death on the cross. It's hard to imagine the anguish she must have felt.

Mary eventually experienced the hope greater than any grief: the reunion of loved ones in heaven. At Easter, we celebrate Jesus' victory over sin and death. Whoever puts their hope

in Him will share in His victory. In fact, Jesus promises that He has gone ahead to prepare a place where we can be with Him always (John 14). Through His resurrection, we have hope that death itself cannot destroy.

If you have suffered a loss, allow yourself to remember good times

with the person you lost. Perhaps honor them by doing something they enjoyed, making a donation in their name, or organizing a service project in their memory. Grief can feel like an endless sea, but these actions become rafts, helping us find purpose when circumstances are beyond our control. ■



Gerasimov174; Getty Images

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

Tomorrow is not guaranteed. So if there's something you want to say to someone, what better day than today? And if you haven't surrendered your heart to Jesus, what better day than today for that too?

God wants you to find hope in Him before you leave this earth. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord isn't really being slow about His promise, as some people think. No, He is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent." And 1 Thessalonians 4:13b–14 says, "We want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died, so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with Him the believers who have died."

Loss, as painful as it is, can humble and inspire us to focus on things that matter. Relationships matter. Love matters. Salvation in Jesus matters. Don't wait for tomorrow to connect with your loved ones—or with Jesus.

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

"Dear Jesus: Help me to cherish my loved ones every day. Help me to heal and find hope in You. I surrender my life to You, confess my sins, and ask Your forgiveness. 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: "GOOD GRIEF," c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790. For a free Bible or accompanying study guide, see our ad on page 2.

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!

Eoneren: Getty Images



Problems Are Opportunities for Joy

Submitted by Lakesha in Georgia

JAMES 1:2-4:

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

I love this specific verse in the Bible. I was sentenced to 10 years. At first I felt like the Lord had turned His back on me. I continued to cry out to the Lord and He heard my cry. I had to take my focus off how big my problems were at the time and realize how big my God is all the time! God didn't bring this punishment on me; I brought it on myself. Instead of throwing a pity party for myself and using excuses as a crutch, I began to repent and lament to the Lord. Many are called, but few are chosen! The Lord made it clear to me that my situation was not about me and what I wanted but instead this was a much-needed journey, and I was the chosen vessel set to deliver God's Word effectively through song! My praise and worship caused other believers and even some nonbelievers to realize God never leaves nor forsakes us.

“Father God, I come to You, thanking You for all that I have been through, but mostly I thank You for choosing me to bring souls to Your kingdom. My focus is on You and Your promises. You get all the glory, and I bless Your holy name. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.” ■

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: Please note that by submitting your work, you are authorizing Prison Fellowship to publish in full or part anything you send. 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.

RECOVERY CORNER

Relapse Quiz

What is the average number of times a person will relapse before reaching sobriety?

- A) 1
- B) 3
- C) 5
- D) 8

ANSWER: C) 5. According to an extensive 2019 study on alcohol and drug relapses, the average number of recovery attempts for an addict is 5.35, with women averaging 4.18 and men averaging 6.12. Multiple recovery attempts are usually needed for remission. Dr. Timothy Walsh, CEO of a renowned addiction treatment and mental health counseling program in Minnesota, told Inside Journal that withdrawal and relapse are most likely during the first few months of recovery, but at 18 months without a relapse, two-thirds of people will stay clean. The success rate is even higher after three years. “Recovery is an ongoing process,” says Walsh, “and every single time you relapse, you learn something, your motivation gets greater, and your emotions get stronger.” So don't give up. ■

READER RECIPES

TWO SIMPLE WAYS TO USE PEANUT BUTTER

PB&J Crunch-Wich

Submitted by CBG in Nevada

- INGREDIENTS:
- 1 serving of peanut butter
 - 1 serving of jelly
 - 1 package ramen noodles (any flavor)

DIRECTIONS:

Split ramen noodles into two halves (seasoning packet won't be used). Either moisten the noodles until they're slightly softened or leave raw. Then cover each half with peanut butter and jelly. That's it—nothing more to it! A crunchy change from regular bread.



Sonny11: Getty Images

No-Bake Brownies

Submitted by Anika in Texas

- INGREDIENTS:
- 1 serving of peanut butter
 - 1 serving of hazelnut spread
 - 1 serving of energizer trail mix

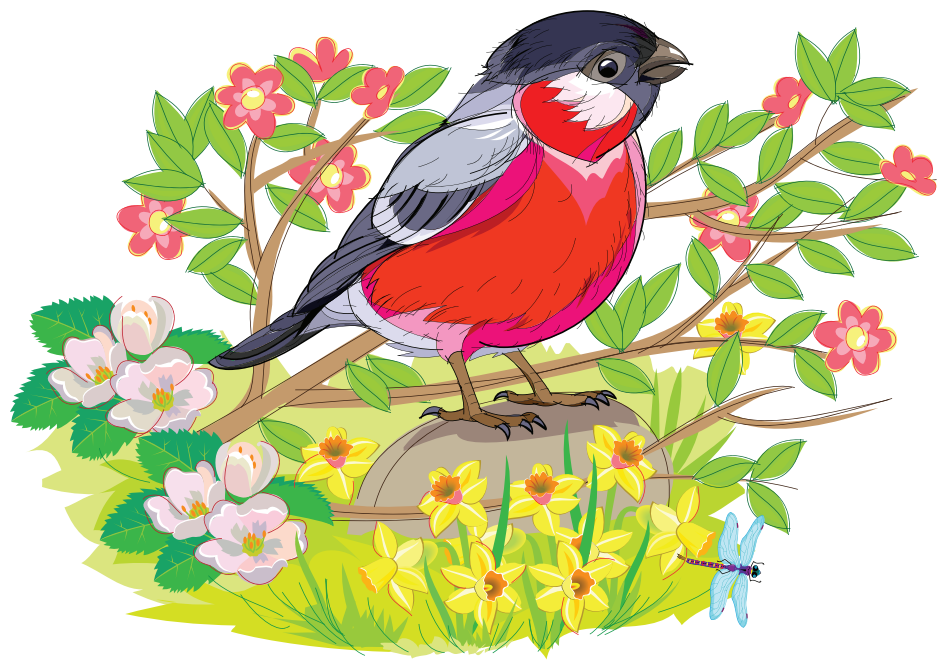
DIRECTIONS:

Combine all ingredients, mold into a brownie shape, and allow to set.

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

ACTIVITY: FIND THE DIFFERENCES

Find the 8 differences in these spring drawings. Answers on p.7.



Natalja Cernecka: Getty Images

INSPIRING QUOTES

“Let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.” –Mother Teresa

"You can never learn that Christ is all you need, until Christ is all you have." –Corrie Ten Boom

FROM THE INSIDE OUT: A Voice for Change

by S.L. Ray

Joy was in and out of jails and prison, feeling lost and hopeless. One day, Joy decided that this time behind bars was different, and she was ready to be present and available for her two wonderful children. After her final release, she started a nonprofit, Walter’s Way: Regaining Your Life Foundation, which helps returning citizens and their families. She also joined the Prison Fellowship Justice

Ambassador program. Through the Justice Ambassador program, Christians are inspired to advocate for meaningful policy change on both the federal and state levels. Currently, there are 364 Justice Ambassadors that participate in the program. The Justice Ambassador program also has a cohort training that aims to equip formerly incarcerated Ambassadors to use their voice and story to advocate for justice that restores. Over the course of several weeks, this

specialized cohort training program teaches Ambassadors to share their own stories and skillfully persuade a variety of audiences (from churches to lawmakers) to embrace second chances and criminal justice reform. These Ambassadors learn how to tell their stories in a way that builds empathy and highlights the need for second chances. After graduating from this program, these Ambassadors can participate in a

variety of activities, including meeting with lawmakers to discuss important laws, hosting community events, and raising awareness about the importance of second chances. Joy is one of these graduates. She joined the Justice Ambassador cohort program, and after graduating, she was able to share her story of reentry, homelessness, and overcoming with a group of lawmakers. These lawmakers were inspired by her, and they are considering policy

changes that will help formerly incarcerated individuals in Oklahoma find and secure safe, long-term housing. Prison Fellowship believes that formerly incarcerated men and women have a unique opportunity to share their stories for justice reform. If you are being released soon, consider becoming an advocate as a Justice Ambassador. If you are not being released soon, your families can advocate on your behalf. Visit prisonfellowship.org/action to learn more. ■

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: PAST EDITIONS OF INSIDE JOURNAL NOW AVAILABLE!

Did you miss the inspiring article on animal programs in prison? Or our full-year calendar? Those were two of the many great features in our Winter 2024 edition of Inside Journal. If your chaplain ran out of copies or never received this edition, back orders can now be ordered FOR FREE by visiting prisonfellowship.org/storehouse.

NOTE: Individual copies are not available. Free bulk orders will be shipped to requesting **chaplains or facility staff only**.

Reentry: Resume Tips

by S.L. Ray

Many of you will eventually be released, which often means dealing with job searches and interviews. You'll need a resume. But how do you write a resume if your recent months/years were spent behind bars?

The easiest way to create a resume is to go to Microsoft Word on a computer, click the pull-down menu that says "File," and open a new document under "New from Template." Then on the templates page, type "resume" in the search bar on the top right to see the different ready-made resumes. These templates allow you to type your information in the fields that show the sample information.

If you don't have access to Word, try your local library or use a free alternative

(such as "OpenOffice"). Type your name on top in a large font size, followed by your phone number and email address. Then create sections for Education, Experience, and Special Skills, whether formal (Certified Welder; Tutor) or informal (therapy dog trainer, peer counselor). If you speak or read other languages or have specific computer skills, that might be good to include. And if you're involved in volunteer work, charities, or professional organizations, you may want to list those as well. But it's best to cater the resume to the field of work and keep it specific to whatever the job description is asking for. You don't need to list all your cooking and baking skills if you're applying for a graphic design job.

Short bullet points are better than long sentences. And be clean and consistent

in appearance. For example, dashes between date ranges should be the same length (2007–2009; 2010–2012) and bullet points should have short verb phrases ("Tutored peers in math; helped organize GED classes; cleaned cafeteria after every breakfast," NOT "I tutored peers; Sometimes I even helped organize things like GED classes; the cafeteria was clean because of me"). The goal is to make a visually pleasing one-page summary of your best traits. You can always go into more detail after you land the in-person interview.

Because of your incarceration, you may have gaps in your employment history. You may also have skills you learned, degrees you earned, or jobs you held while incarcerated. Do not lie about having a criminal record or falsify information, titles, dates,

Mykyta Dolmatov: Getty Images



supervisor names, etc. Always be honest in your resume.

You can explain in an interview how the obstacles you overcame behind bars make you ideal for the position. You could even list "County of ____" or "State of ____" as your employer in the "Experience" section, and then reveal your incarceration during an interview. But again, do not lie on your resume or in your interview.

Make sure you spell-check everything carefully. Have a friend or mentor read over your resume for mistakes. When your resume is complete, save a digital copy and print several hard copies.

EMAIL TIP: There are many free web-based email providers out there, so if you don't have an email address yet, go to Gmail or Yahoo or similar and create one, keeping it as simple and easy to remember as possible for the sake of potential employers. *RileySmithHome@mailprovider* might be a better choice than *RySmitty_3895@mailprovider*.

Some of the information in this article was adapted from the U.S. Department of Labor's "Employment Information Handbook for Ex-Offenders." Be sure to follow all your parole requirements and release rules. ■

7 Life Hacks

Continued from page 1

found relief from homemade rubs made by combining shea butter, coconut oil, or lotion with a small amount of ground cayenne pepper. But make sure you keep the rub away from open wounds and sensitive areas like your eyes and nose, and wash your hands thoroughly after use.

3. Try threading.

Gather a couple of pieces of dental floss or remove loose threads from a garment (but don't deliberately damage clothing). Loop them together and tightly pull the strands back and forth across your face to pluck unwanted facial hair without razors or tweezers!

4. Take care of your skin.

Some government-issued soaps can dry out your skin—especially the delicate skin on your face. If your facility also has hard water, that can be especially drying. Consider using an old (but clean) toothbrush to exfoliate your skin. Gently rub it in circles on your face to remove dead or dried skin. And if you've used that same drying soap as a substitute for shaving cream, you may experience razor burn. Some incarcerated men and women say that applying deodorant after shaving can reduce the discomfort, but the effects aren't immediate. In the meantime, place a cool rag on your skin

(or even the cooled tea bag from #1).

5. Ease belly troubles.

Prison meals often consist of starchy carbohydrates and fatty foods. For some people, this type of diet can cause heartburn or stomachache. To calm heartburn, some prisoners swear by swallowing two teaspoons of mustard with a small glass of water. For an upset stomach, clear sodas such as Sprite or Ginger Ale can help, but be sure to avoid caffeine, which could make your stomach feel worse.

6. Dress to impress.

Whether you're appearing before the parole board or preparing for a

family member's visit, sometimes you want to stand out, look good, and feel extra special. You could start by creating your own hair gel: Soak a Jolly Rancher in a small amount of hot water until the water is a bit sticky; mix with a dab of lotion and run a small amount through your hair. You could also practice folding your clothes neatly and smoothing them out with your hands to minimize wrinkles. And if hair straighteners are allowed in your facility, determine whether you can use one to "iron" small sections of your clothing.

7. Trap bugs.

Place bottle lids upside down under furniture legs and then fill them with a small amount of

water. This can trap insects and keep them from climbing up the furniture legs and onto other surfaces. Some prisoners claim this helps stop ants, bedbugs, roaches, and other unwanted pests from invading their space.

A little creativity can help you save money, time, and energy. It can also give you a sense of accomplishment and independence simply by being resourceful. Use your life hacks and thrive.

**Be sure to follow your facility's regulations. Do not alter or misuse prison property or violate rules/privileges. The tips in this article are for informational purposes only and not meant to replace medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek a medical professional for any questions regarding a health condition or treatment. ■*

Q&A With Prison Fellowship’s New President and CEO

by J.R. Breault

In late 2023, Inside Journal’s parent organization, Prison Fellowship, announced a new president and CEO, Heather Rice-Minus. Prior CEO James Ackerman prayerfully passed the leadership role over to Heather, a longtime employee of Prison Fellowship. We sat down to talk with Heather about her dreams for Prison Fellowship—and the faith that guides all she does.

Prison Fellowship: What is your favorite part of your new role so far?

Heather Rice-Minus:
My favorite part of my new role is having more opportunity to be [connected] to the participants in our intensive prison programs. Having spent more than a decade focused on what we [at Prison Fellowship] do in the community, from justice reform to mobilizing churches to serve families, it’s refreshing to spend time seeing the transformation of incarcerated men and women. I’m also always so struck by how believers inside lead focused lives of purpose. It deepens my own faith.

PF: Describe a moment in your life that deepened your faith in Jesus.

HRM: Watching my dad fight cancer has deepened my [faith]. He’s endured so much in the past 12 years, but he was always so positive and focused on Jesus. He never questioned God. He was always taking care to learn the names of the children of his nurses and to ask how they were doing each time he saw them. I learned so much from watching how he focused on letting other people know they are seen even when he could have been wallowing in his situation. ... Watching him convicted me to be focused on loving my neighbors and on that which has eternal significance.

PF: We know you studied law. What was the best thing about law school?

HRM: The best thing was how you learn to think and analyze information to make a case. A highlight was being part of [a practice trial] team where we prepared oral arguments for both ... sides of a case. It taught me to look at both sides of an argument from an objective perspective and see holes and strengths

in each side. That experience has come in handy in my work as a lobbyist for justice.

PF: What’s your favorite TV series or movie?

HRM: [My husband] and I enjoyed watching the Parenthood series together, which follows the lives of a family who live relatively close together—the grandparents, four adult children, and their families. There are so many issues that come up in the lives of the characters—raising a child with autism, fighting cancer, building a family through adoption, and starting a family business. It has both humor and drama, but it’s not over the top—you can see yourself in the characters.

PF: Who in your life has had the greatest impact on your faith?

HRM: Watching my parents live out their faith was [very influential]. They were missionaries in the Middle East when I was born and always modeled spiritual disciplines and loving God and neighbor. I have also had incredible mentors in life, including a woman named Christin who was on staff with



Photo by S. Thompson

[a nearby international ministry] while I was attending [college]. She disciplined me for several years and challenged me to do the same for other women on campus. I was also impacted by [Christian author] Rachel Jones’ prayer life and commitment to Christ; we worked alongside each other in the horn of Africa when I taught English there for a year. She spent decades there living out her faith and raising her kids in a vastly different culture.

Fellowship as you look to the future?

HRM: That the Church inside would inspire revival of the local church, and as a result, we would see renewal of justice, mercy, and hope in our culture.

PF: Which Scripture is especially helpful or inspiring to you right now and why?

HRM: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). I try to meditate on “apart from Me you can do nothing.” It’s easy to feel like I need to have all the answers in this role, but in fact, I need to abide in God and submit this work to Him. When I do, He is so faithful.

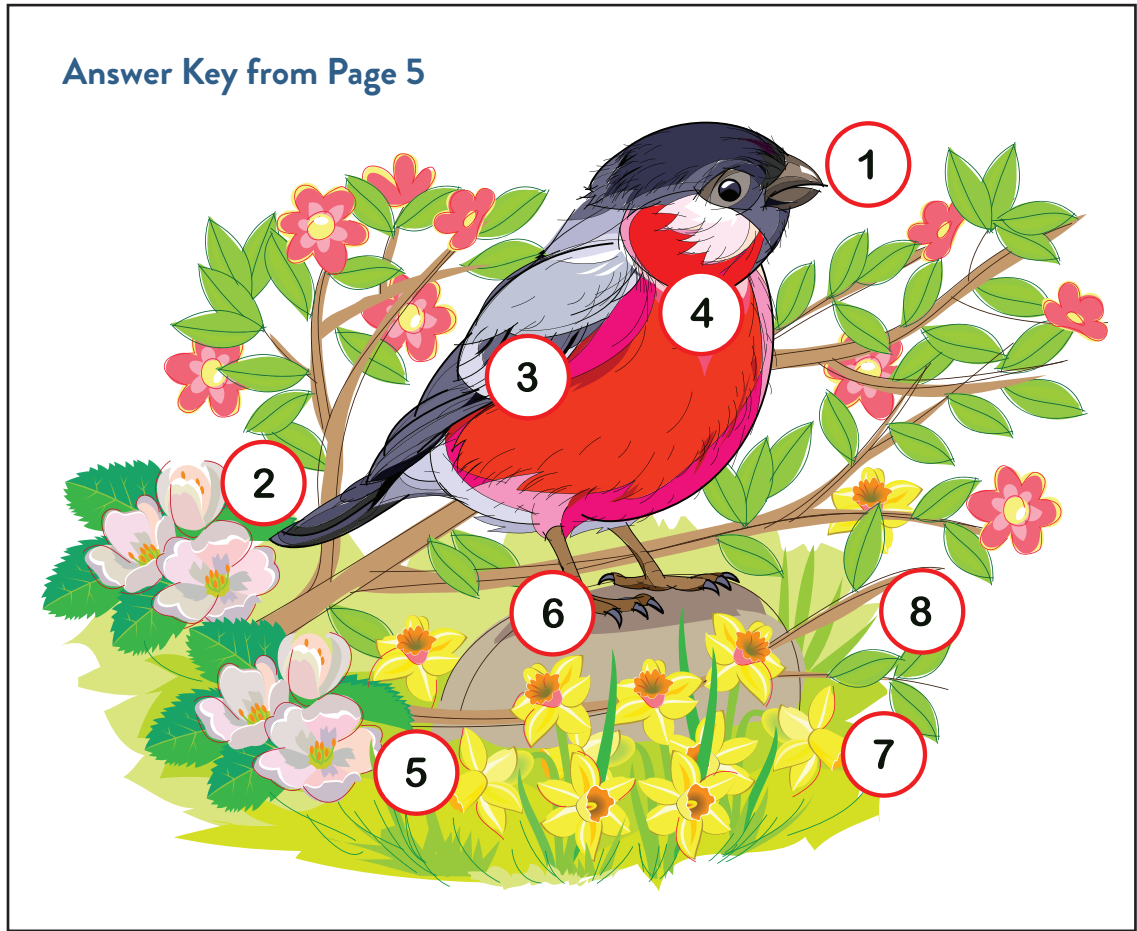
PF: How can we pray for you in your new role?

HRM: You can pray for discernment: that the Lord would show me the next right thing to lead the ministry into this next era and that His glory would manifest in ways that make it clear that it must be God at work. ■

PF: What is something that has surprised you while working in the prison ministry space?

HRM: The Church inside. It’s alive and well. Christians behind bars often have a profound understanding of grace and have completely surrendered to Jesus. The tightknit community I see in our Academy programs is incredible—the transparency and affirmation among the members is something that is very hard to find outside the walls.

PF: What is one of your greatest hopes for Prison



NEWS + NOTES

Soccer Match Inspires Participants

This past fall, Mule Creek State Prison (MCSP) in Lone, California, hosted an unforgettable soccer match. With the support of Warden Patrick Covello, MCSP welcomed visitors from Prison Fellowship for a soccer game against the men from D and E yard.

The teams played an intense, fast-paced soccer match. In the end, MCSP prisoners defeated the volunteers with a score of 5-3.

Prison Fellowship staff and volunteers also held Christian worship services that day. The uplifting events were well-received by many grateful men at MCSP.

Bystanders noted the positive demonstration of sportsmanship, skill, and unity as the incarcerated men came together as a team and conducted themselves with poise and respect.

Top College's Prison Program Has First Graduation

For the first time, incarcerated students earned bachelor's

degrees from a top-10 school in U.S. News and World Report's rankings. Northwestern University near Chicago is ranked ninth best (tied with Johns Hopkins University) out of nearly 500 national universities.

Incarcerated students wore their caps and gowns and walked across the graduation stage on Nov. 15, 2023. They fulfilled all their coursework while in prison.

The founding director of Northwestern Prison Education Program, Jennifer Lackey, told Axios.com that this program is "quite literally a lifeline" for some students.

This class of first-ever incarcerated graduates studied during the COVID-19 pandemic, when remote learning became more common. However, with limited access to technology behind bars, students would handwrite assignments and exams that Northwestern staff members had printed.

This program helped inspire participants during the pandemic. One student named Broderick was learning thermodynamics through

Northwestern's program while trying to recover from a serious case of COVID-19.

"Your mind can get into a dark, deep depression. Your mind is what's imprisoned," Broderick told Axios. He said putting the brain to work is "the best exercise you could have in prison."

Students who are released before graduating can continue joining classes outside of prison. Darryl, who was incarcerated for 27 years, started classes shortly before being released, which he continued remotely after his release. Sometimes he joins video calls where professors are teaching in prisons.

Second Chance Month Is Approaching

April is Second Chance Month®, a nationwide celebration of the dignity and potential of people with a criminal record. Since launching the first Second Chance Month in 2017, Prison Fellowship has led the effort to raise awareness of the barriers faced by returning citizens. In the past, thousands of

organizations, churches, government leaders, and businesses have officially supported Second Chance Month.

As we approach Prison Fellowship's eighth year observing April as Second Chance Month, we invite you to celebrate right where you are. Past in-prison events have included 5K walks around the yard, prayer services, fundraising events, and more (all with permission from and partnership with prison staff). If you end up participating in Second Chance Month, write to us and let us know how you celebrated!

Pell Grants Help Despite Roadblocks

After a nearly 27-year ban, Pell Grant* eligibility was restored in the summer of 2023. This allowed nearly 760,000 incarcerated people to become eligible for federal student aid.

But there are many roadblocks to accessing this financial assistance. First, Pell-eligible education programs aren't offered in all prisons. Second, if a student is enrolled in a college program and is then transferred to another prison, there's a chance the new facility

may not offer the same program required for that student to continue receiving Pell funding. Third, if the student does not complete the education program, they might need to repay the Pell Grant money. Fourth, limited internet access means students would need access to printed materials. And finally, the most aid money an incarcerated student could receive during the 2024 school year is \$7,395. Despite all that, Pell Grants are expected to help thousands of incarcerated men and women afford a college degree.

According to EdSource, to be Pell-eligible, the applicant must demonstrate exceptional financial need, be a U.S. citizen or an "eligible noncitizen," pursue a degree or certificate in an approved program, and not yet have earned a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree.

**To learn more about Pell Grants, see page 8 of our Fall 2023 edition of Inside Journal. If you missed it and need a copy, see "In Case You Missed It" on page 5. ■*



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Lay Your Burdens on the Cross

Easter is Sunday, March 31, 2024. But Easter isn't just here one day and gone the next. Matthew 28:6 says: *He is risen from the dead.* (NLT) Notice the verb there. Not "was" but "is." That means it's something that is currently happening, not just something that happened once in the past tense. Christ is risen, today and every day.

Inside the cross on the right, write out the struggles and weaknesses Jesus forgave you for when He died on that cross. Write your burdens inside this cross and remember that Jesus took all of those burdens away when He died for your sins.

He IS risen, for everyone who chooses to believe in Him, including YOU.

He is risen