

Inside Journal



Prison Fellowship®

for Men

YOUR SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND INFORMATION

VOLUME 35, NO. 3

SUMMER 2026

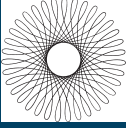
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Riding the Tide of Redemption

by D.P. Bender

“My life was a train wreck,” says George about the years before his arrest.

George grew up in a Christian home. He went to church, volunteered on the worship team, and tried to play the part of a Christian. But as a Black kid in a mostly white community, George often felt out of place. As he entered adulthood, he felt less connected to God.

“I knew who God was, but I was drawn away by my own evil desires,” George says.

In his early 20s, George married and started a family. He still went to church and played in the worship band, but when he went out with friends, he didn’t act very Christ-like. He smoked marijuana and cheated on his wife. He also struggled to be the father his two daughters needed.

Photo by Prison Fellowship



Addiction and a series of bad choices shattered George’s life and ended someone else’s. Behind bars, George thought his story was over. Then he heard someone reading the Word of God. That’s when everything changed.

“I was a bad husband, bad father, and bad son,” says George.

George’s poor choices led to chaos in his life. His business failed. His truck was taken away, and his license was suspended.

He was also living with another woman.

Instead of trying to fix the chaos, George smoked more marijuana to try to escape the pain. At a certain point, he began having a nervous breakdown. While

mentally unstable and high, he got behind the wheel of a car and struck a woman while she was walking. She died instantly.

Hearing words of comfort

Police arrested George, and when he found himself behind bars, he felt terrible guilt over what he did and the person he’d become. He didn’t want to live anymore. Then he heard someone reading Scripture.

“Instantly, my mind cleared,” George says. “I came to my senses.”

George found a Bible, started reading it, and discovered great comfort in God’s Word. As he served a sentence of 30 years to life for his crime, his faith grew. George found a church inside prison and began helping the worship team, just as he’d done as a kid. He even wrote

a song and played it at a Prison Fellowship® Hope Event—a Christ-focused yard event co- led by members of local churches and the Church inside—and his song moved people on the prison yard to tears.

George wanted to be a better father, but he had made so many wrong choices in his life that he couldn’t see a way forward, especially now that he was behind bars. Then he discovered Prison Fellowship Angel Tree®, a program where local church volunteers deliver Christmas presents, the Gospel message, and a personal note from an incarcerated parent to their child.

“To think someone would buy my kids gifts for me—it made me feel like a father again,” George says.

When Angel Tree volunteers served

Continued on page 8

How To Support Your Kids Through Your Incarceration

by L.C. Aggen

Incarceration can be hard on families. When a parent is incarcerated, it can impact children in unique ways and strain their connection with their parents. But incarcerated parents can do a lot to support their children and grow their relationship.

Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) is a relational

model created by the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development designed to help meet the needs of children who have faced difficulties in life. TBRI has three pillars: felt safety, connection, and self-regulation. By focusing on these three pillars, parents can strengthen their children’s resilience.

Felt safety is when a person not only knows they’re safe but feels safe. For children, felt safety looks like knowing they are going to be provided for, loved, and treated with compassion and empathy. **Connection** is built through intentional acts of love. **Self-regulation** refers to managing emotions. It is not pushing aside big or difficult feelings, but rather accepting them

and working through them in a healthy way.

Here are TBRI-inspired parenting tips you can use to help your child feel safe, loved, and able to manage their emotions.

1. Stay calm, no matter what. Often, when a child gets upset or acts out, it’s because they don’t know how to express their emotions in a healthy way.

Continued on page 8



Aekprachaya Ayuyuen. Getty Images

Letter From the Editor

Prison Fellowship Celebrates 50 Years!



In 2026, Prison Fellowship is celebrating 50 years of ministry. And what a journey these five decades have been!

Back in 1972, Chuck Colson was serving as special counsel and advisor to President Richard Nixon when the Watergate scandal unfolded. Nixon resigned, and Chuck pled guilty to a Watergate-related crime in 1974. Chuck's seven months in federal prison stirred in him a new calling. Having given his life to Jesus the year before, he made a promise to the men in his unit that he wouldn't

forget about them after his release.

"I've seen big shots like you come and go," yelled Archie, a man in Chuck's unit. "They all say the same things while they're inside. Then they get out and forget us fast. There ain't nobody cares about us. Nobody!"

Chuck set out to prove Archie wrong. He vowed to make it his life's mission to "remember those in prison," like the Bible says in Hebrews 13:3. On August 9, 1976, two years to the day that Nixon resigned as president, Chuck filed papers to incorporate a

new nonprofit ministry: Prison Fellowship.

The full impact God has made during these past 50 years—in and through Prison Fellowship staff, volunteers, donors, supporters, churches, and community partners—is immeasurable. But here are some of the *measurable* numbers, to put it all into perspective:

- More than 12 million children have been served through Angel Tree Christmas.
- More than 120,000 children have attended an Angel Tree camp.
- More than 350,000 people have participated in a Bible study or Prison Fellowship Grow.

- More than 1 million *Inside Journal Life Recovery Bibles* have been distributed.

- More than 20 million copies of *Inside Journal*® have been distributed.

In this edition of *Inside Journal*, read Prison Fellowship news on page 8. And for information on Prison Fellowship Angel Tree, check out pages 4 and 5.

Our mission at Prison Fellowship is to encounter Jesus with those impacted by incarceration. The key word here is "with." Just as Chuck envisioned all those years ago, we aim to come alongside the men and women behind bars, experiencing the love of Jesus together.

People don't bring Jesus into prisons—He is already there. He is moving through the hearts of men and women every day, in big ways and small. As we head into the next 50 years of ministry, we celebrate all God has done and will continue to do.

As always, we are praying for you. And we're praying for a revival of the Church inside and outside of prison that brings justice, mercy, and hope to our culture. As they say in the Prison Fellowship Academy, "Better than yesterday. Not done yet!"

—S.L. Ray and the
Inside Journal Editors ■

50 YEARS OF RESTORING HOPE

- 1973** • Chuck Colson becomes a Christian.
- 1974** • Chuck pleads guilty to obstruction of justice and is incarcerated.
- 1976** • Chuck founds Prison Fellowship.
- 1982** • Mary Kay Beard starts Angel Tree.
- 1983** • Justice Fellowship (later Prison Fellowship's advocacy team) is founded.
- 1990** • The first issue of *Inside Journal* is published (in black and white) and delivered to prisons.
- 1997** • The first InnerChange Freedom Initiative (later called Prison Fellowship Academy) unit opens.
- 2000** • The first Operation Starting Line (later called Hope Event®) is held behind bars.
- 2011** • Chuck spends his final Easter in prison.
- 2012** • Chuck goes home to be with the Lord at age 80.
- 2014** • First Spanish edition of *Inside Journal* is published and delivered to prisons.
- 2017** • First full-color issue of *Inside Journal* is published.
First women's edition of *Inside Journal* is published and delivered to prisons.
- 2025** • Prison Fellowship Academy, Grow, and Lead operate in all 50 states (in jails, prisons, and federal facilities).
Prison Fellowship Foundations, a new Bible study that helps incarcerated men and women find themselves within the story of God's great love, is published.
- 2026** • Prison Fellowship celebrates 50 years of ministry.



Helpful Resources

Being released soon? **Tear this article out and save it in preparation of your release.**

1. Celebrate Recovery has chapters throughout the United States. Visit celebraterecovery.com to learn more or to find a meeting near you.
2. **FindTreatment.gov** is a confidential and anonymous resource that helps you find treatment near you for substance use and mental health conditions. Find programs and services in the United States and its territories that are right for you using search filters that include:
 - Special programs/groups offered
 - Recovery support services
 - Accepted age groups
3. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline at 1.800.662.4357 is available 24/7 for free and confidential help in Spanish and English.
4. The 988 Helpline offers individualized and compassionate mental health and substance use support to anyone, anytime.
 - Call or text: **988**
 - Chat in English: 988lifeline.org
 - Chat in Spanish: linea988.org

This material is used courtesy of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (samhsa.gov). Inclusion of SAMHSA content does not constitute or imply endorsement or recommendation by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, or the U.S. Government. ■

The Gift of ‘Ordinary Time’

by J.C. Oliphint

The Christian church has a calendar that celebrates certain events related to Jesus. The two most well-known holidays that usually come to mind are Christmas and Easter. It’s not surprising that Christians would make a big fuss over those two. The birth of our Savior and His miraculous resurrection should inspire praise and worship from His people! There’s also Advent, a time of waiting that leads to Christmas, and Lent, a 40-day season from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday, the day before Easter.

But for much of the year, including the summer months, the church calendar consists of a season known as “Ordinary Time.” During these weeks, there are no major church celebrations, no big hymns written about this time, and no special Hallmark cards to send. But that doesn’t mean this “ordinary” season can’t be a time of great spiritual growth. When you think about it, most of life is ordinary. Life behind bars, especially, can sometimes feel the same, day after day. The routine of prison can even make days and weeks blur

together like a single, unchanging block of time. The good news is that God meets us in the mundane. Sometimes it’s actually *easier* to hear God’s voice in the quiet, ordinary moments of our everyday lives. “Be still, and know that I am God,” the Lord declares in Psalm 46:10. And in Psalm 37:7, David similarly directs us to slow down as we turn our attention to God: “Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for Him to act.”

God also delights in using ordinary lives for His extraordinary purposes. When He wanted to deliver the world-changing news about the birth of His son, to whom did He choose to announce it? A group of lowly shepherds, tending to their sheep. And who were Jesus’ earthly parents? Mary, a poor teen mom, and Joseph, a carpenter. The people Jesus chose to be His disciples weren’t part of the wealthy upper class, nor were they part of the religious elite. Several of them were humble fishermen—ordinary men.

Look inward

Ordinary Time is also the perfect season to

consistently meditate on Scripture as God works on our hearts. Some Christians use spiritual practices to help establish and maintain a daily rhythm for spending time with the Lord. Here are three to consider:

- **Examen:** This ancient practice involves prayerful reflection on the events of the day. Try these five steps: 1) Become aware of God’s presence. 2) Review the day with thanks. 3) Reflect on your emotions. 4) Pray about one part of your day. 5) Pray for tomorrow.
- **Lectio Divina:** Another ancient practice, this spiritual meditation dives deep into one part of Scripture. Find a short passage in the Bible, then read it slowly and thoughtfully four times. Each time, use these themes as a guide: read, meditate, pray, contemplate. Some people compare this way of reading God’s Word to eating delicious food: take a bite, chew it, taste it, and digest it.
- **Centering Prayer:** Choose a meaningful word from the Bible. Sit silently, close your eyes, and think about



Marinela Malcheva/Getty Images

the word in relation to God and His presence with you. End the prayer with another period of silence and gratitude to God.

God is good—all the time

Don’t worry if your day-to-day life feels unexciting, uneventful, and ordinary. God does not need dramatic events to reach you. In Lamentations 3:22–23, we are reminded of God’s constant faithfulness to His people, no matter where we are or who we are or what we’ve done: “The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is His faithfulness;

His mercies begin afresh each morning.”

Did you notice the eternalness of the language in those verses? God’s faithful love *never ends*. His mercies *never cease*. They are new *each morning*. That means if the sun rose today, then God has fresh love and mercy for you.

In every season, whether we’re on a peak or in a valley, in a busy period or a quiet one, in a celebratory season or an uneventful one, God is with us, and God is faithful. May our lives reflect that same, ordinary faithfulness as we seek to walk with Him, come what may, day after day. ■

DOES YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE FEEL ORDINARY?

Do you sometimes struggle to celebrate or connect with Jesus in between big holidays like Christmas and Easter? God is not surprised when that happens, and He calls us to persevere in our faith—not because we are strong, but because *He* is strong, and He is trustworthy.

Hebrews 10:23 says, “Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep His promise.” And as we hold tightly to hope, we don’t keep it to ourselves. In the next verse, Hebrews 10:24, we’re asked to invite others into that same hope: “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.”

God can use Ordinary Time to accomplish extraordinary things in your life—and in the lives of those around you. Be courageous and reach out to others with kindness.

The next time your day feels dull or lifeless, ask God to remind you of His presence. Not sure where to begin? Start with this simple prayer:

“Jesus, I want to experience Your love in the everyday, ordinary moments of my life. I confess my sins and ask Your forgiveness. Show me how to live for You. 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 “ORDINARY,” 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 4.

Parent–Kid Quiz:

Answer the questions about yourself and mail them to your child. Then, ask your child to answer the same questions and mail them back to you.

- What is one of your proudest achievements?
- If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you visit?
- What is your favorite vegetable?
- Who is your favorite Disney character and why?
- What’s one piece of advice you would give your younger self?
- If you could have any animal as a pet, what would it be?

- What movie could you watch over and over?
- What superpower do you wish you had and why?
- What is the kindest thing you have ever done?
- If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
- If you had no limits, what is your idea of a perfect day?
- If you could only eat one food the rest of your life, what would it be?
- If you won \$100 million, what would you do with it?

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.*

FROM THE INSIDE OUT: Parenting Behind Bars

by *L. Haviland*

Being an incarcerated parent affects more than the mom or dad behind bars. It impacts everyone in their life.

Their children may feel confused, overwhelmed, and scared—and so might the people raising them.

As a parent or parental figure* in prison, you may have feelings of helplessness relating to your children, which is understandable. You might also want to be more involved in your kids’ lives, as well as to help the person raising your children. Being in prison does not take away your role as a parent. You can still play a vital part in their life—even from behind bars.

One positive way you can help your child’s guardian or other parent is by signing up your child(ren) for **Prison Fellowship Angel Tree**. It is a great step to deepening your relationship with your child. Ask your chaplain for an Angel Tree application. (See page 5 for more details.)

Another way to help your family is by letting your child’s parent or guardian know about our webpage for families, **prisonfellowship.org/family**, where they can:

- Sign up to receive our encouraging monthly email newsletter, written just for parents and guardians

raising children. This newsletter contains content to help readers navigate the incarceration of a loved one, including devotionals, resources, information on upcoming events, and stories about other families who are finding hope while facing difficult circumstances.

- Take part—through our monthly newsletter—in online support groups in a community free from judgment or criticism.
- Receive scholarships for Angel Tree summer camping at our partner camps, where kids can enjoy

the outdoors, make new friends, and hear about the love of Christ.

- Learn more about one-day sports and STEM camps and mentoring opportunities, available in select cities, where children can be enriched through exposure to career paths, after-school programming, college prep, and more.

These resources—all free of charge—allow children and their parent or guardian to meet others facing similar challenges. Angel Tree offers families the chance to feel known, seen, and

loved as they receive emotional support, access to fun activities and a supportive community, and more.

We look forward to hearing how Angel Tree has helped support you and your family along the journey. ■

**Angel Tree serves both parents and parental figures. A parental figure is a loved one who takes responsibility for a child and provides emotional support, guidance, and love. This can include parents, grandparents, stepparents, and anyone who fills the role of a parent in a child’s life. Be sure to follow any legal or custody/contact orders for your child.*

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.

God Hears My Voice

Submitted by Daniel in Washington

“In panic I cried out, ‘I am cut off from the LORD!’ But You heard my cry for mercy and answered my call for help.” –Psalm 31:22

“I have gone too far.” “My hurt is too deep.” “The humiliation is too much to bear.” “The sins I have committed are unforgivable.” All of these have been my mantras for the greater part of my adult life. It has been so easy to hide behind these statements and not face my mistakes. *After all*, I would tell myself, *it would hurt even more to confront my sin*. So instead, I just kept on sinning and then repeating these statements. It was an endless cycle.

Then my world came crashing down under the weight of my wrongs. I committed what felt like the “unforgivable sin.” Even the law thought it was great enough to land me in jail. I was truly at the end of myself.

From within the concrete block walls of my 8-by-11-foot cell, I cried out to God. I have realized a couple of things from this:

(1) God *always* hears when we cry out with a broken spirit; a heart that is broken and saddened by our sin (Psalm 51:17).

(2) We have never gone too far. Our hurt can always be healed. God will carry our humiliation for us, and most importantly, He will always forgive.

I spent my life deciding that God couldn’t possibly hear me or love me. But, even in my sin, He loved me and rescued me (Romans 5:8). He loves you, too. Cry out to Him today.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, by the world’s standards, I am a wretched criminal, but in Your eyes, all You see is a formerly broken sinner washed clean by the blood of Jesus through His finished work on the cross. Thank You for forgiving what almost seems unforgivable. In Your holy name, amen! ■

WRITERS WANTED!

One of our readers wrote the devotional above. If you’d like to write a devotional for Prison Fellowship, please list a Bible verse, followed by a personal short story (two to four paragraphs) that ties into that verse, and end with a prayer or meditation on that verse or topic. Please add the line: “I give Prison Fellowship 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 must be your own, original work (no AI and no copying from other sources). Devotionals may be edited for content. Only your first name/initials and state will be used. Not all submissions will be chosen.



Open doors for your child through Angel Tree!

Through Prison Fellowship Angel Tree, your child may be eligible to receive a gift at Christmas, connect with a church, attend summer camp (at little to no cost), participate in sports camps (in select cities), and more. Plus, your child’s parent/guardian will get access to practical resources like our webpage and monthly newsletter for Angel Tree families.

Call 800.55.ANGEL (26435) to learn more.

Eligibility requirements:

- You must be the parent, stepparent, or mother/ father figure.
- There must not be a court order restricting your contact with the child(ren) or their parent/guardian.
- Your child(ren) must live in the United States.
- Your child(ren) must be 18 years old or younger.
- The form must be filled out completely and legibly and then signed.

Ask your chaplain or program coordinator for an application today!

Contact your child(ren)’s parent/guardian to gather the most current information for your application. **Forms must be postmarked by Oct. 1.** Ask your chaplain about your facility’s deadline for completed forms.

IMPORTANT: *If your information is incomplete or inaccurate or if your child(ren)’s parent/guardian cannot be reached or refuses to participate, we may not be able to deliver gifts to your child(ren).*



Creative Challenge: Write Out Your Testimony

‘This Is What Happened to Me’

by L. Haviland

Have you ever heard the expression “share your testimony?” For Christians, this means telling others how God changed your life. In 1 Peter 3:15–16, it says, “If someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way.”

And keep in mind that if you have found new life in Christ, it might be because someone shared their testimony with you. Now God can use your story to bring hope and joy to others!

One way to craft your testimony is by writing it out in your journal. For this activity, first try thinking of your story in these sections:

- My life before God changed me

- How God changed me
- My life now

From here, write your testimony by building up from three words to three sentences to three paragraphs. Be sure to ask God for guidance as you think about what you want to say.

In three words

Although three words is the briefest way to write out your personal account of how God changed your life, it may also be the most difficult. Boiling down all the details, everything that happened, into three words? You can do it!

Remember, your first word should describe your life before you came to faith in Christ, the second word can explain how you felt in

the moment when God transformed you, and the third word is your life now.

Here’s an example:
Rejected. Embraced. Secure.

In three sentences

Now try adding more to your three-word testimony by expanding it to three sentences. Here’s an example:

I grew up thinking my family loved me unconditionally, but I was wrong, which led to feelings of rejection. Jesus met me at my lowest point. I am grateful to Jesus for His love for me and am secure in His care.

In three paragraphs

Write your story out in three paragraphs using

the same “before, after, now” pattern.

Example:
I always felt close to my family. I thought they loved me unconditionally, but it was a love based on obligation, and I had times where I felt rejected. I discovered I had built my life on a very unsteady foundation. It was a painful, devastating time for me.

In college, I was invited to study the Word of God, where we read John 20:24–29, the story of Jesus revealing Himself to Thomas and the other disciples after His resurrection. During this Bible study, I experienced His love in an overwhelming way. Though I never touched the nail marks in His hands or in His side, I suddenly knew that He is alive, that He loves me purely and unconditionally, and that

He died for my sins. I am grateful and live with secure confidence, knowing I am fully accepted and truly loved.

Journaling your testimony is a great way to strengthen your faith and remind yourself of all that God has done in your life. Then you’ll be ready to share it with others whom God has prepared to hear your story.

EDITOR’S NOTE:

Feel like your testimony is still in process? That’s OK! You can still write about your path so far and the direction you are headed. We’re all on a journey, and God’s mercies are new every morning. As they say in the Prison Fellowship Academy: “Better than yesterday. Not done yet!” ■



READER RECIPE

No-Bake Candy Cookies

Submitted by David in California

INGREDIENTS:

- 6 plain oatmeal packages
- 3 honey oat granola bars
- Assorted candies of your choice, such as: 3 Hershey bars, 3 M&M packets, 3 Milky Way bars
- 1 tablespoon (or more) of peanut butter
- Splash of milk or water

DIRECTIONS:

Crush granola bars and assorted candies into a bowl. Stir in a large spoonful of peanut butter and the dry oatmeal. Add just enough milk or water so it’s easier to stir; mixture should still be thick. Stir thoroughly. Cook in microwave for 2–3 minutes, stopping often to stir again and prevent overcooking. After it’s melted, keep stirring as it starts to cool, and then scoop cookie-sized piles onto plastic (or a nonstick plate or surface). You can eat them while still warm and gooey, or let them cool completely for a firmer cookie. Get your sweet tooth on and enjoy!

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



Scholarship OPPORTUNITY

Being released soon? The Charles W. Colson Scholarship provides former prisoners with a Wheaton College education.

Eligibility Requirements

- Be a Christian
- Be a U.S. citizen
- Have a felony record (felonies must NOT include a sexual offense, arson, or repeat violent offenses)

Award

Undergraduate Degree:	Graduate Degree:
Up to full tuition, room & board	Tuition for a Master of Arts

Questions? Call 630.752.5727 or email cmi@wheaton.edu.

To get more tips and tools for a successful release, ask your chaplain (or other prison staff if you don’t have a chaplain) to visit prisonfellowship.org/reentry.

Wheaton College is an explicitly Christian and academically rigorous college in Illinois that offers more than 40 undergraduate degrees and 18 graduate degrees. Visit wheaton.edu for more information.

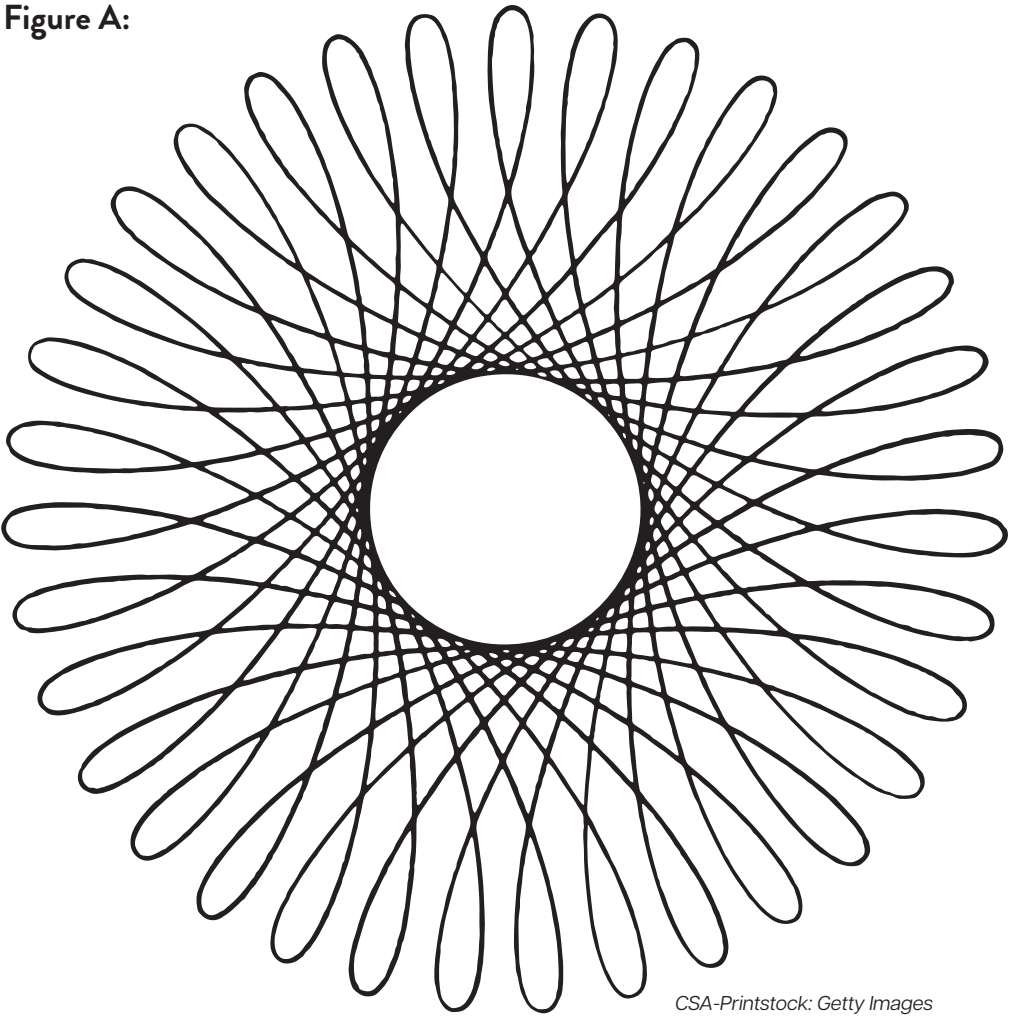
ACTIVITY: Childhood Pastimes To Revisit as an Adult

When you were a kid, you might have used a geometric drawing tool called a spirograph. It created cool circle patterns, like the image below. Simple activities like this can be great for your mental fitness and your stress levels. Here are a few ideas to try (be sure to follow all facility rules and avoid any contraband).

1. **Figure A:** Color in the spirograph using colored pencils or different shades of a standard pencil.
2. **Figure B:** Create a fidget spinner/top, as shown, using cardboard or paper and poking a bottle cover through the center.
3. **Figure C:** Brighten your cell with a paper flower bouquet, as shown. Use a round base (such as cardboard or the base of a plastic foam cup) to draw several same-sized circles. Next, since scissors won't likely be available, tear the circles out with your hands or press down hard with a pencil or fingernail to cut them. Do the same to tear the swirl pattern, as shown. Roll these swirls into cone shapes using a coffee stirrer, straw, or stick. Finally, place them in a cardboard vase or paper wrapping as shown.
4. **Figure D:** If allowed pencil sharpeners, create trees or flowers out of the shavings, as shown.
5. **Play the categories game.** Using different letters of the alphabet, see how many presidents, dog breeds, fruits, or other topics you can name. For an added challenge, do the same but use the same number of syllables for each item you can name.

These are just a few of the childhood activities that can exercise your brain while lowering stress levels. Know of any others? To share any other fun activities you enjoy—or recipes, life hacks, or more—write to us at “Activities,” c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790.

Figure A:



CSA-Printstock: Getty Images

Figure B:



Wrestock: Getty Images

Figure C:



Elena Abrosimova: Getty Images

Figure D:



ajlchan: Getty Images

The Outstanding Chaplain Award *Recipients*

We asked readers to nominate their favorite chaplain for the Prison Fellowship Outstanding Chaplain Award. Based on your nomination submissions, here is our next round of recipients:

Deana Armstrong (NM), Joe Cain (FL), Richard Downey (OH), Mark Melhorn (PA), Sara Moran (SC), Kenneth Reid (CA), Jack Schneider (WA), Dowon Suh (OR)

The Outstanding Chaplain Award honors dedicated chaplains who faithfully and lovingly serve those behind bars. This ongoing award is given monthly. Mail your nomination to OCA, c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790. Or 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.

News + Notes

by *D.P. Bender*

Prison Golf Creates Bonding

Golf.com shared that prisoners are playing golf with each other and their superintendent, Tim Thrasher, at Cedar Creek Corrections Center (CCCC) in Washington. Thrasher has always loved the game and felt it would help connect people at the facility. The equipment the prisoners use comes mostly from Thrasher’s personal stock. For the makeshift golf course, participants use the softball field when the weather is warm and the indoor gym when weather

is poor. Participants, including Thrasher, golf every Wednesday night. Players can even win prizes, such as toiletries or other items from the commissary. But golfing at CCCC is not about the prizes—it’s about connecting with people the participants wouldn’t otherwise spend time with. One resident who participates said, “Most of us wouldn’t even talk to each other in prison because of prison politics, they call it. But in golf, we do.”

Laws Support Second Chances

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin

Stitt recently signed a bill that will help reduce fees issued in criminal cases. When fees are unfairly high, it becomes difficult for people to succeed once they leave prison. Explaining his support, Stitt recently told reporters, “In Oklahoma, we believe a second chance should actually be a second chance.”

On the federal level, Prison Fellowship is rallying support for the Safer Supervision Act, which also aims to support second chances. Goals of this bill include reducing automatic and overly long supervised release terms, allowing earned-time credits

during incarceration to be applied toward conditional release, and more. The idea is to give courts the ability to treat each person according to their crime, progress, and risk factors. Prison Fellowship employees, Justice Ambassadors, and faith leaders have visited more than 30 congressional offices to gain support for the bill.

BOP Enters Historic Partnership With Prison Fellowship

For the first time ever, Prison Fellowship is partnering with the Federal Bureau of Prisons to bring the Prison Fellowship Academy to select federal institutions around the country. The Academy is a yearlong

in-prison program that helps participants envision a new way of living. More than 16,000 people have participated in the Academy at the state level, and the program has a long track record of changing lives and improving outcomes. Texas, for example, has seen a 53.8% reduction in rates of Academy participants reoffending after release, as compared with those with similar backgrounds and criminal histories. The new partnership also includes Warden Exchange®, a program designed to help corrections professionals reimagine prison and build skills that improve well-being for both those incarcerated and staff. ■

Tide of Redemption

Continued from page 1

George’s daughters, the girls were thrilled.

“My youngest got a basketball and a skateboard,” George says. “My other daughter got makeup and dresses. They’d call me and say, ‘Thanks, Dad!’ It gave me hope.”

Angel Tree paved the way for George to begin rebuilding his relationship with his children, even

while they were apart.

A second chance

In 2021, George was released after serving 17 years. He was excited to continue growing his relationship with his kids on the outside. One of the first things he did after leaving prison was play basketball with his youngest daughter.

A good friend stuck with George throughout his time in prison, and

when George got out, the friend hired him to work at his surf shop. George had always loved surfing, and he was so grateful to have the support of his friend. It made a big difference in his life.

George also started a junk-hauling business. Members of his church often hire his company. George says it’s dirty work, but it’s helping him to live clean. He also serves in his church and volunteers with

Prison Fellowship inside the same prison he once served time himself.

“The first time I walked back into that prison—wearing a Prison Fellowship shirt—I ran into my old cellmate,” George says. “We hugged and cried.”

George also remarried and now lives near the ocean, where he gets to surf on his days off.

Looking back on his journey, he says God has been his friend.

“He’s the ultimate friend. Even when I turned my back on Him, He never left me,” George says.

As he shares his story at Hope Events and in churches, George prays everyone he meets finds the same love and hope that he has found in Jesus. ■

How To Support Your Kids

Continued from page 1

Children learn how to regulate their emotions from their parents. You can share about situations that made you mad or sad and how you kept your cool. For example, did you find slowing down your breathing helped keep you calm? Also, don’t downplay or dismiss a child’s emotion. The child needs to feel safe with you and to trust that they aren’t going to be pushed aside.

2. Find your own safe space to open up. This can be with a chaplain or pastor, friend, family member, support group, or anyone you trust.

Find others who are also parenting from the inside and share ideas. Everyone has some kind of pain from their past. You don’t want to bring your own hurts and traumas to your relationship with your child. Having someone to talk to about your own painful experiences can help you to become a safe space for your child to share their own.

3. Use playful engagement. Play connects you to the heart of a child. It builds trust and shared memories. Play can take many forms. If your child visits, you can play with toys or draw pictures together,

depending on your child’s age and interest. If you are not allowed materials at your facility, you can practice riddles and play make-believe. If only calls or letters are allowed, try asking about their favorite superhero, what they would do if they were president for the day, or something they’ve drawn or painted. Think of ways to use play and imagination to connect with your child.

4. Keep at it. More than anything, your child will need time to learn to trust and rely on you. Don’t get discouraged. Building a relationship looks a lot more like a roller coaster than it

does a straight path—it has many ups and downs. Over time, you will hopefully see your relationship grow. If you are released, keep practicing these same tools with your child. Consistency is key when it comes to maintaining and building a relationship.

You may feel stuck trying to relate to your child or connect with them while you are in prison, but know that you are not alone. Many parents struggle with figuring out how to meet their child’s needs. These tips can help as you work on building your relationship with your children. ■



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INSIDE JOURNAL®

is published four times a year by Prison Fellowship, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790.

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A member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and the American Correctional Association.

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