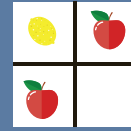


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Matters of the Heart: When God Uses a Crisis

by Cherise Bopape

Alice's childhood dream of being a country music singer is one of the few early memories she embraces as positive.

"There's a lot of trauma in my childhood," says Alice. "So I don't have a ton of memories in the in-between."

Her mother's addiction to prescription drugs created an unstable home environment, and Alice's parents got divorced. She eventually went to live with her grandparents. There, she learned about Jesus, but her foundation still felt shaky.

Alice attended more than a dozen schools from middle school onward. After



Photo by S. Thompson

Alice's early years were far from stable. School transfers, addiction, immigration to a foreign country, theft, abortion, parenting, divorce—and 97 felonies. But God had big plans for her future.

she graduated from an alternative school, her dad gave her a one-way ticket to Guam to live with her oldest brother. Alice then began

drinking, using drugs, and skimming money off sales at the dive shop and bar where she worked.

She traveled throughout the islands

around Guam, partying and making reckless decisions—which led to an unplanned pregnancy and an abortion. She recalls feeling remorse.

"I dove into a deep depression," she says, "[and] wound up coming back home to my grandparents."

While living with her grandparents this second time, Alice enrolled in college, started serving in church, and met her first husband. They had three children together.

Their marriage may have seemed fine to outsiders, but it was plagued with issues like cheating and abuse. When her marriage ended, Alice was devastated.

"When he left, it was like a death," says Alice. "I just spiraled into a deep addiction and crime."

Her criminal actions

snowballed, and she was eventually charged with 97 felonies. She served five years at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Oregon.

Divine intervention

While in prison, Alice participated in Prison Fellowship® Angel Tree (see page 4). The thought of her kids getting a Christmas gift on her behalf was a comfort to her. And the kids looked forward to receiving presents from their mom each December.

"It made me feel like even though I was in prison, I was a part of something," Alice reflects.

Alice used her prison sentence to improve herself and nurture her relationship with the Lord. But upon her

Continued on page 2

7 Ways To Start a Journal—and Keep It Going

by L. Haviland

Journaling—writing out your thoughts and feelings—is a great way to tap into your creativity, work through difficult experiences, and reflect on who you are and who you want to be.

To begin, all you need is a pen or pencil and paper—any notebook or scratch paper will do. Then start writing! Don't worry about grammar and neatness—just write.

That sounds easy enough. But many people

start a journal and then stop soon after.

So how can you keep it up? The key is to write regularly, even if it is just a few minutes a day and even if you don't feel like it.

Here are some types of journaling you can try:

1. Create a Scripture memorization journal.

Memorize your favorite Bible verses by writing them out over and over. Start with one Scripture a week, writing it

out three to five times each day and speaking it as you write it. By the end of the week, you will probably be able to write it from memory. And by the end of a year, you will have a treasure of Scriptures at your fingertips to encourage you, bring you comfort, and strengthen your faith.

2. Write out your fears and frustrations.

Use your journal to write your



Thai Liang Lim/Getty Images

thoughts on one situation that is bothering you each day. Putting it all down on paper may help you process your thoughts and look at things from another perspective. At the end of each day's

entry, consider adding one thing you are grateful for—maybe a beautiful sunrise, a refreshing glass of water, a good friend—to help balance the anxieties of life.

Continued on page 8

Letters to the Editor

Samantha in California

I have struggled with my addiction and my life outside of here. I want to change, heal, and restore my life and soul with the Lord. I want to leave from this time with a strong program, a strong way of life. I am rebuilding inside and out, and I'm writing for support, guidance, and maybe an opportunity to develop the life I deserve with my 6-year-old son.

Victoria in California

I'm writing to find support while I'm here and in hopes I will build a support upon my release. I struggle day to day with anger, stress, and overcoming drug addiction.

Dear Samantha and Victoria:

You are both in our prayers. Please see the sidebar for helpful verses during times of anger and stress. Ask your chaplain to visit prisonfellowship.org/storehouse for a list of our free resources, including addiction recovery materials. Look for programs and church services that may be available at your facility, and talk to volunteers, who can be a great source of encouragement. Faith-based addiction recovery programs such as Celebrate Recovery can also be extremely helpful, both while incarcerated and after release. Stay close to Jesus and never give up hope!

N. Davis in Pennsylvania

Would you send me some [Bible] passages about Jesus' love for me? I was reading the Inside Journal and came across your info. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Dear Ms. Davis:

Jesus' love for you is immeasurable—and unshakable! Romans 8:38-39 says, “And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even



Ekely: Getty Images

the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” See gray box for more encouraging verses.

**Sincerely,
The Editorial Staff ■**

Here are other encouraging verses to read when:

You're angry or stressed:

- Luke 6:27–28
- Ephesians 4:26–27
- Colossians 3:8–10

You're in danger:

- Psalm 32:7
- Psalm 91:11
- Genesis 15:1

You're worried or anxious:

- Philippians 4:6–7
- Matthew 6:25–34
- John 14:27

You're facing temptation:

- Matthew 26:41
- 1 Corinthians 10:13
- Ephesians 6:11–12

You're feeling guilt or shame:

- Psalm 51:7–15
- John 3:17–18
- 2 Corinthians 5:17

NEED A BIBLE?

**Get a free Inside Journal
Life Recovery Bible!**

NOW WITH A WORKBOOK!

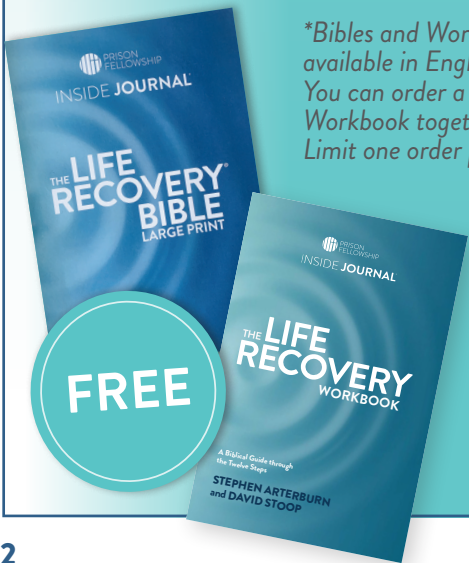
WRITE TO:

**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.*



Matters of the Heart

Continued from page 1

release, she struggled to find the support she needed to thrive on the outside. She had settled in a small town with limited resources and turned to drugs and crime again. Then she had a stroke—which was a blessing in disguise.

“God stepped in,” says Alice. “I believe that without a shadow of a doubt. He stepped in, and I had the stroke.”

This health crisis prevented Alice from carrying out the plans she had made for the upcoming week: crossing state lines with a large amount of methamphetamines. The consequences for such a crime could've landed her in prison for the rest of her life.

But still, Alice wasn't quite ready to get clean. As soon as she regained strength, she started using again.

About a month later, she experienced another health crisis: She had a heart attack.

“God took away the ability for me to use drugs again with that heart attack,” says Alice. “I knew if I used again, I would die.”

Her health crises were a turning point that

drew her closer to the Lord. She began to make plans for a healthier life. She decided she would move to Portland, since it was a large city filled with job opportunities and addiction recovery resources. It was also closer to where her children lived.

Moving on up

Alice packed her belongings in a single bag and boarded a bus heading for Portland. She was excited to celebrate the new year with her children. When she arrived, she tried to secure a room at a nearby women's shelter, but they didn't have space. Alice was unfazed. Certain that God would provide, she called again after visiting with her children. This time, a bed was available.

While at the shelter, Alice attended church and took classes. She also participated in Estate Hotel, a recovery program that provides addiction treatment, housing assistance, and job placement.

At one point Alice worked two jobs: one at an auto parts store and another at Bridge to Change, an organization that helps those recently released from prison transition back into society. Alice continues to work at Bridge to Change

and has even been promoted to a leadership role, earning several badges along the way.

“I know I'm doing what [God] wants me to do,” says Alice. “It's a very fulfilling job.”

Alice is also active in Celebrate Recovery, a Christian recovery program. She travels throughout the country, sharing her testimony at their events.

Alice isn't only successful in her professional life; her personal relationships are thriving, too. She married a man who loves Jesus, and her relationship with her young adult children is stronger now also. But it took time. When first released, Alice was the one who was always in need. Now her children call her when they need prayer or financial help.

Sometimes, she gives motherly advice to her children. Other times, she gives herself a little grace.

“I may not be involved in behavior that destructs my life ... like breaking the law and doing drugs and alcohol,” says Alice. “But I still have problems.”

What's different now—on the other side of the drugs, alcohol, and criminal behavior—is that she knows that Jesus really is the only way. ■

When in Doubt, Cry Out

by Emily Andrews

My nephew Ollie loves playing in the basement. There’s plenty of space for racing toy cars and building Legos. One day, when Ollie was 5, we were playing hide-and-seek. I suggested we turn off the lights to make it easier to hide. Since there are no big windows on that level of the house, the basement playroom feels extra dark when the lights go out. Before Ollie could protest my suggestion, I hit the light switch. Ollie started to scream.

“No, wait, it’s too dark and scary! Turn the lights back on,” my nephew cried, wrapping his arms around my legs in fear. “Don’t leave me!”

Of course, I knew the truth: We were in no danger. I wouldn’t leave him alone in the dark. But to a 5-year-old child feeling small and weak, the dark can seem big and scary. I felt the same way when I was 5.

With the lights on, Ollie and I played a few more rounds of hide-and-seek. Then we headed upstairs for a snack. Munching on veggie straws, we talked about Ollie’s fear of the dark. He shared his fears and his desire to be brave like me one day. I told him he would be. But I also knew it might not happen overnight. He could take as much time as he needed, and I would be there to help.

Overcoming fear and doubt
Imagine if after that game of hide-and-seek, I had teased my nephew or given him a nickname like “Scaredy-Cat Ollie.” That wouldn’t have been helpful—and it wouldn’t have told the whole story.

Thomas, one of Jesus’ 12 disciples, has been nicknamed “Doubting Thomas.” In the Gospel of John in the Bible, when Jesus appears to the disciples after the resurrection, Thomas isn’t there. Later, the disciples tell Thomas they had seen the risen Lord.

In John 20:25, Thomas replies, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in His hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in His side.”

Later, Jesus appears to Thomas and the other disciples. He greets them in peace, telling Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at My hands. Put your hand into the wound in My side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!”

“My Lord and my God!” Thomas says.

Jesus replies, “You believe because you have seen Me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing Me” (John 20:26–29).

A ‘hide-and-seek’ faith

In his book *Faith & Doubt*, author John Ortberg writes, “The main problem with doubt, when doubt gets toxic, is not what it does to us. It is what it keeps us from doing.” Doubt

is common, and even healthy—as long as it doesn’t stop us from pursuing the truth.

Thomas had doubts. Haven’t you? Doubts about yourself, about others, about God—these are all a real part of being flawed and limited humans in a world of unknowns. Sometimes, it’s difficult to be sure about what we can’t see or understand.

In our faith journey, there’s a difference between dishonest doubts and genuine questions. Thomas didn’t pretend he had all the answers. He didn’t run away. He brought his questions to Jesus with an honest, seeking heart. The Lord didn’t blame Thomas for being unsure but met him with compassion. Jesus sought out Thomas, though Thomas was questioning and afraid and “left out”—the only disciple who didn’t believe at first sight. That personal encounter changed everything.

The once-doubting disciple boldly declared aloud who Jesus is: Lord and God. Thomas’ faith grew stronger. He would spend the rest of his life sharing the Good News of Jesus with others. Just as Jesus sought out Thomas, Jesus comes to us—lonely and full of doubt as we are—and calls us by name. He welcomes us in and invites us to be a part of His Kingdom, where everyone has a place to belong. Just like I gave Ollie understanding and help, Jesus doesn’t condemn us for struggling



pictus photography/Getty Images

but embraces us with compassion.

Hold on to the Lord’s promise in Jeremiah 29:13–14a: “If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you.” God wants you to find Him. He can handle your questions, and He wants you to bring them to Him.

So if you are wrestling with doubt, keep going. Ask questions. Pray continually. Know that dealing with doubt is part of building a solid faith—a faith that believes even when you can’t see. Even when you feel unsure in the dark, Jesus will be there to meet you on the journey. ■

ARE YOU PATIENT WITH YOUR DOUBTS?

Jesus wants us to have a one-on-one relationship with Him that’s unique to us, rather than just blindly following our parents’ or friends’ faith. This personalized faith takes some digging—learning, reflecting, and even doubting.

And this digging takes time.

When Jesus rose from the dead, Thomas just couldn’t wrap his mind around it. His entire faith was shaken—everything important that he believed in was in question, and he desperately needed some sort of proof to help him through his doubts. Jesus loved Thomas and knew how scared he felt. Yet John 20:26 says it took eight whole days before Jesus came to reassure Thomas.

Seeking God’s truth requires patience. Some answers might take eight days. Some might take eight years—or longer. Don’t feel rushed or impatient. Take the time to really lean into Him—by reading the Bible and being honest and open with Him.

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

“Dear Jesus: I long for a personal, honest, and genuine relationship with You. Help me through any questions or doubts along my faith journey. I confess my sins and ask Your forgiveness. Amen.”

To learn more about Jesus’ love for us, write to “Doubts,” c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790.

ACTIVITY: Summer Sudoku

This “Image Sudoku” of summery fruits is great for people who don’t love numbers. You can even draw your own version and send it to a loved one to try. See answers on page 7.

1.

2.

Irina Kuznetsova/Getty Images

Angel Tree Provides Year-Round Connection

by Lexi Aggen

Prison Fellowship Angel Tree was founded in 1982. Originally, the program focused on helping incarcerated parents provide their children with a gift and message during Christmas. But over the years, Prison Fellowship has found new ways to help connect parents to their children. Below are some of the incredible opportunities your child is eligible for when you sign him or her up for Angel Tree®.



ANGEL TREE CHRISTMAS:

Staying true to its origins, Angel Tree Christmas creates a way for incarcerated parents to give a gift and message of love to their children during Christmas. Today, hundreds of thousands of children receive a gift and message through Angel Tree. Yet it's so much more than a gift. Children are connected to local church volunteers, who purchase and deliver the gift on behalf of the parent. Sometimes these volunteers deliver gifts directly to the child's house—even dressing up in festive outfits. Other times, churches throw parties for the children and their family members—complete with games, food, and a message of hope. Angel Tree Christmas often leads to deeper connections, with churches coming alongside these children all year long.



RECENT PHOTOS OF ANGEL TREE MOMENTS



ANGEL TREE CAMPING:

In 2002, Angel Tree camping launched. This aspect of Angel Tree allows children with a parent in prison to attend camp on a scholarship. This means camp costs little to nothing for the family. Angel Tree camping gives children a chance to experience new opportunities like zip lines, hiking, horseback riding, and more. It also allows children the opportunity to step into



leadership roles through ongoing programs at camps.

This was the case for Kerri. Thanks to Angel Tree, she first attended camp when she was 5 years old. That first summer she didn't smile much, but over the years, the continued care from the camp staff helped Kerri open up. After she became too old to be a camp participant, she was able to return as a camp counselor. She now helps other children like her and teaches them about the Gospel.

ANGEL TREE SPORTS CAMPS:

In 2005, Prison Fellowship hosted its first Angel Tree sports camp. Today, children in select cities attend a local one-day sports camp to learn athletic skills, gain confidence, and receive mentorship. Church volunteers lead the day, building relationships with both children and parents or guardians that could lead to long-term support.

ANGEL TREE STEM CAMPS:

Recently, Angel Tree started hosting Angel Tree STEM camps, where children in select cities can learn skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. At these one-day camps, children participate in fun activities that expose them to careers they may not have considered prior to attending.

SIGN UP TODAY!

Are you a parent or parental figure*? Is your child involved in Angel Tree yet? You can play a vital role in their life—even from behind bars. Angel Tree is a great first step to deepening your relationship with your child. You can change your child's life today—ask your chaplain for an application to Angel Tree. See page 5 for more details. ■

**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, aunts, uncles, stepparents, and anyone who fills the role of a parent in a child's life.*



How Angel Tree Camps Care for Kids

by Lexi Aggen

Angel Tree summer camps can be a place of healing. “I think I would probably have been going down really wrong paths if I didn’t have camp,” says Trystan, an Angel Tree camper. “I honestly don’t know what my life would be like without camp.”

While away at summer camp, kids have the chance to make new friends, get guidance from counselors, and enjoy the great outdoors. In 2002, Prison Fellowship started Angel Tree camping, through which children with a parent in prison can receive scholarships to attend camp at little to no cost.

Having a parent in prison is difficult. For many children, attending camp can bring healing. According to the

American Camping Association, children who attend camp have increased confidence, stronger faith, and improved relationships with family members.

Camp allows children to try new activities, like archery, ropes courses, canoeing, and more. Kids can also meet other children with a parent in prison, helping them feel less isolated. Counselors serve as mentors and positive role models. Above all, camp provides a space for children to hear the Gospel.

Because camp provides a safe place to be vulnerable, children may express negative behaviors while at camp. In 2021, Angel Tree camping partnered with Psalm68Five Ministries to offer Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) training to help camps serve

Angel Tree children better. TBRI is a method of trauma-

“I honestly don’t know what my life would be like without camp.”

informed care that focuses on working with children who have difficult life experiences, such as having a parent behind bars. Equipping Angel Tree camp counselors with TBRI training allows them to better meet the needs of these children.

TBRI training helps camp staff identify the need behind a child’s behavior. Sometimes

an outburst happens because a child is dehydrated or has low blood sugar and just needs a drink or a snack. Other times, a child is upset but isn’t ready to talk about it, so the counselor takes the child for a walk or practices breathing exercises to help the child calm down enough to talk about the situation.

Trauma-informed care isn’t about behavior modification; it’s about understanding why a child is acting out and teaching that child how to regulate their emotions.

As other Prison Fellowship programs work to help incarcerated parents receive a second chance after their release, Angel Tree camping helps give many children a “first chance” to encounter Jesus and find healing at summer camp. ■



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 Family Portal and *The Hope Connection*.

Call 800.55.ANGEL (26435) to learn more.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

1. You must be the parent, stepparent, or mother/father figure.
2. There must not be a court order restricting your contact with the child(ren) or their parent/guardian.
3. Your child(ren) must live in the United States.
4. Your child(ren) must be 18 years old or younger.
5. 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).*

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 first round of recipients:

Bruce Evans (AR), Oscar Grant (VA), Dana Everage (NV), Darrell Hunley (VA), Alan Leigh (HI), Leon McClimans (IL), Sylvia Moseley (OH), Lois Wendlandt (WI), Willie Whiting (AL), C. Yang (NY).

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.

OBJECT LESSON: Empty but Full of Potential

by Cherise Bopape

WHAT IS AN OBJECT LESSON? Object lessons are teaching tools that use everyday items to illustrate an abstract topic in a simple way.

OBJECT: A bowl

LESSON: When you feel you have nothing to offer, God sees your potential. You are valuable to Him.

Your perspective matters.

It’s like the old “glass half full” versus “glass half empty” debate: When you see a container that’s empty, do you look at it with anticipation and imagine good things that could fill it up? Or do you have feelings of disappointment because all you can think about is what’s missing?

What if you’re feeling empty inside? Do you focus on the void, or do you get excited by the idea of a fresh start?

This object lesson explains how prison can be the place where you grow, expect blessings, and realize the value of a healthy community. You don’t have to embrace a mindset that equates emptiness with failure and dread. Your address doesn’t dictate your worth!

Pick up a bowl and look at it closely. Think

about how you would describe it to someone else. Is it reusable or disposable? Does it look fine, or is it damaged? What similarities do you share with the bowl you’re holding?

There’s often something comforting about having a full bowl, especially when you’re hungry or when the contents look appetizing. In prison, you might fill a bowl with cereal, ramen noodles, or even a special meal made with items from the commissary. But what about times when your bowl is empty?

When you choose the right perspective, you won’t see your empty bowl in a negative way. You’ll look at it with anticipation, knowing that it’s ready to receive something good.

Similar to an empty bowl, your life may not feel full or fulfilling

during your time behind bars. Instead of viewing this season with anticipation, you may believe you are too tattered or disposable for God to use you. On the other hand, you may look fine on the outside but on the inside, something is lacking. You might reflect on your past and think you have nothing to offer anyone. Perhaps it’s time to shift your way of thinking. Have you ever thought of looking at your confinement as a blessing? With the right perspective, you can use this season of your life to become the best version of yourself.

In John 10:10, Jesus says, “The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.” If you long for this rich and

satisfying life, but the heaviness of your guilt, shame, or pride seems to get in the way, here’s good news: God can turn your season of lack into a season of abundance. Unlike a throwaway bowl, you are valuable, and God sees your potential. No matter what you’ve done in your past, God still has a purpose for your future.

Use your time behind bars to engage in activities that challenge you to grow. Associate with people who will build you up—people who are living the way you want to live. Find ways to connect with God and others by taking classes, participating in exercise

groups, or keeping a daily gratitude journal (see page 1).

And most important, when you nurture your relationship with the Lord—through activities like prayer, Scripture memorization, and reading God’s Word—you can expect a boost in your faith, greater peace, and wisdom for tackling life’s challenges. It’s as if you’re filling an empty bowl with life-giving food.

So the next time you see a bowl, think of ways to “fill up” any area of your life that feels empty. And remember you have potential. God can turn any emptiness into an opportunity. ■



Charlietocks/Getty Images

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: Up to full tuition, room & board
- Graduate Degree: 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/storehouse to order the free Inside Journal Reentry specialty edition.

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.



READER RECIPES

Jeremy’s Holistic Soup Bomb

Submitted by Jeremy in Michigan

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 “brick” of ramen noodles
- 1/2 ramen noodle seasoning packet (hot Mexican or chicken flavors recommended)
- 1 Tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1 Tablespoon garlic powder
- Generous amount of salt and pepper

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



golfphoto/Getty Images

DIRECTIONS:

Place all ingredients in a plastic cup or soup cup. Fill with 1 2/3 cups hot water and let stand for 15 minutes. Stir and eat!

(EDITOR’S NOTE: Jeremy says this soup helps him when he has a cold, and he suggests eating this three times a day when sick. Inside Journal cannot verify if this recipe helps with illness, but research has shown that spices such as garlic and chili pepper can help relieve cold symptoms.) ■

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.

Committing to Growth

Submitted by Linda in Alabama

“Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress.” —1 TIMOTHY 4:15

Growth is measurable. As you look back over your life, how have you grown spiritually? Charles Schulz (the cartoonist who created Charlie Brown) once said, “I think I’ve discovered the secret of life; you just hang around until you get used to it.” The problem with that is you don’t get better just by living. You must be intentional about it. No one improves by chance. Personal growth doesn’t simply take place on its own. Spiritual growth is a process also. The ultimate growth manual is your Bible: your Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth.

It’s powerful and living. Everything you need to know and everything that’s required for you to grow can be found in its pages. So when you are going through it, discouraged, depressed, anxious, or worried, open your Bible. Delve into it. Read it. Meditate on it. Apply its principles to your life and you will be amazed at how you grow.

God said He does not want you to straddle the fence. You cannot be lukewarm. Either you are for God or you are against Him. You have to make a choice. Trust in the Lord. Delight in the Lord. Commit to His way. Rest in Him.

No matter how insignificant or useless you may feel, God loves you and wants to use you in His plan. No matter how sinful and separated from God you think you are, His salvation is available. Just give Jesus a try.

PRAYER: God, help me to really be intentional with my life—to put in the effort to grow, both personally and spiritually. Help me to trust in You and be open to Your plan. In Jesus’ name, 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 prayer or 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.

RECOVERY CORNER

Just Visitors

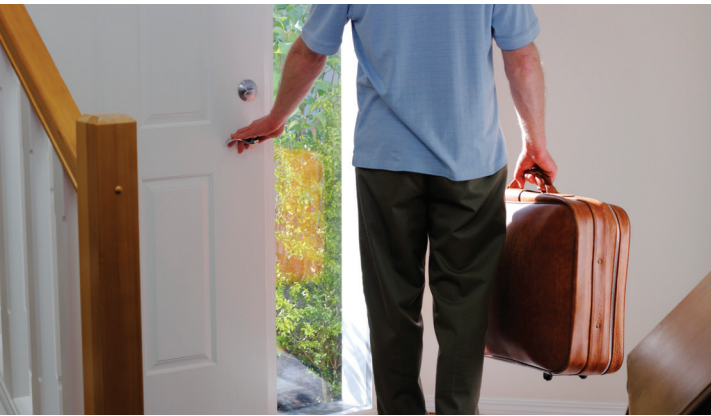
by J.R. Breault

No one likes to experience sadness, anger, or loneliness. Even “smaller” feelings like boredom or irritation can be hard to handle.

When negative feelings come along, it’s easy to want quick relief. Some people seek comfort and distraction in eating junk food or watching TV. These activities seem relatively harmless—if done in moderation. But some sources of temporary relief, like drugs and alcohol, can have devastating, life-changing effects.

Let’s go back to the negative feelings that often spark a craving for escape. What if we could slow down and think about them differently?

Often, unpleasant emotions make us feel anxious because we assume they are inescapable—that they are here to stay. We can’t see a light at the end of the tunnel of our depression or despair.



Serenethos/Getty Images

But the thing is, all feelings are visitors. They aren’t permanent guests. Sometimes they come for a few minutes. Sometimes they come for a few days or even longer. But no feeling stays forever.

When you experience a negative feeling, instead of looking for ways to kick it out, consider just sitting with it. Take the time to think about what the underlying emotion might be showing you. Get curious about your feelings instead of fearing them or wanting them to be over. Try journaling or talking to a trusted person about them. Do you really need to escape? Or can you patiently wait for the feelings to leave?

Any feeling is likely to be replaced by a different one relatively soon. If you slow down long enough to remember this, you have a much better chance of making a different choice—and breaking free of habits that aren’t serving you long term. ■

Summer Sudoku ANSWER KEY

1.

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2.

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🍐	🍏	🍋	🍊
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Activity found on page 3.

NEWS + NOTES

by L. Haviland

Work Release Crew Makes Daring Rescue

Incarcerated men who were part of a supervised work crew became unlikely rescuers while pulling a truck driver from his fiery vehicle this past January.

Four men from the Daviess County Detention Center—Brian Boehman, Chalan Cox, Nicholas Edge, and Joshua Powell—had been repairing potholes on the highway when a semitruck spun out of control, almost striking them and their supervising deputy Christopher Isbill. Although the vehicle crashed and burst into flames, all five men dashed to the truck to help pull the driver, Bryan Marcum, to safety. Using scrap metal, the men broke the truck’s window to gain access to Marcum.

The prisoners were praised for their

bravery at a ceremony in the detention center. Kentucky Today quoted Daviess County staff member Art Maglinger as saying, “These individuals placed themselves in harm’s way to save a life. Their courage and quick action were remarkable, especially given the immediate danger from the fire and leaking fuel.”

Maglinger added that he had submitted requests for extraordinary meritorious good time for the prisoners to reward their exceptional and selfless heroism.

Incarcerated Firefighters Battle Wildfires

Hundreds of incarcerated individuals were sent out as additional crew to assist in firefighting efforts as wildfires recently raged across Los Angeles County earlier this year, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) told NPR.

The firefighter group, Conservation (Fire) Camps Program, trains participants to respond to various emergencies. While these men and women mainly assist in battling fires, they are also trained to help during floods “and other natural or manmade disasters,” according to the CDCR website. The program operates 35 fire camps throughout California, and prisoners volunteer to participate; they are not assigned as part of their sentence.

Thanks to this program, which has been in effect for more than 100 years, prisoners and professional crews have worked together to contain California wildfires, which have grown in frequency. Participants in the program—almost 1,800 prisoners—are also called upon to serve outside firefighting crews with meals, laundry services, landscaping, and more. And program participants

are even eligible to apply for employment with CAL FIRE after their release.

When discussing the severity of the January 2025 wildfires, Joseph McKinney, a program participant incarcerated in a medium-security prison, told the LA Times, “We’re not used to seeing damage on this scale. ... This has been really devastating to see because there’s been so much loss here.”

Kids Declare Camp a Slam Dunk

Earlier this year, more than 150 children with incarcerated parents participated in a free sports camp in Mesa, Arizona. The March 8 event aimed to provide children ages 7–17 with a fun and supportive environment to learn new skills and build confidence.

Hosted by Prison Fellowship, the one-day basketball camp was led by experienced coaches and volunteers, including former Phoenix Suns player Brandon Johnson, who served six months in

prison following a 2012 sports betting scandal.

“God just placed me in the right position.”

Johnson told AZ Family, “It’s just full circle for me. I was incarcerated. I had a parent that was incarcerated. For me, I had the ability to play in the NBA, but the trajectory of my life took a turn. When I got out, I started mentoring and speaking. God just placed me in the right position; brought my life full circle to Prison Fellowship.”

The event taught participants not only about the fundamentals of basketball and the importance of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance, but also about the love of our heavenly Father. ■

7 Ways

Continued from page 1

3. Try a stream-of-consciousness diary.

For this kind of writing, simply write any and every thought as it comes to mind, even if these thoughts are silly or boring. For example, “I had oatmeal for breakfast. My right toe hurts. I love cats.” Stream-of-consciousness writing might be a funny stress reliever or might bring to light issues you didn’t even realize were on your mind.

4. Keep a prayer journal.

Write as though you were writing a letter to God. He really is there for you and wants to hear from you—the real you, whether happy or sad. Share your

anger and your fears. Cry out to Him. No matter what you have to say or how you say it, He can take it, so just be honest in your writings. You can also use this journal to pray for others. If you see prayers get answered, record that as well. When you look back through your journal, you will find evidence of God’s faithfulness.

5. Write letters to your younger self.

If you are feeling guilt, shame, or anger about things you did or that happened to you in the past, write to your younger self. Use words of patience, kindness, forgiveness, and understanding. Write like you would to a child who is still

learning and needs grace. Whatever your younger self needed at that time in your life, reflect on that.

6. Write letters to your future self.

Just as writing to your younger self can provide a healthier perspective on the past, writing to your future self can allow you to feel hope and expectation for the you that is in the works. Write to the version of yourself that you hope to be in the future. Cheer yourself on every time you reach a goal you have set for yourself.

7. Keep a gratitude journal.

Every day, write down three things: something you are grateful

for, something you are proud of, and something you are looking forward to. Morning journaling can focus on hopes for the day ahead, and nighttime journaling can focus on anything positive that happened that day, even if it’s small. A gratitude journal is a way to boost your mood and change your frame of mind.

Journaling can teach you more about yourself, show you something good in your day, help bring healing and encouragement, and allow you to work through difficult emotions. No matter what type of consistent writing you decide to try, go easy on yourself and don’t give up. ■



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