

Inside Journal



Prison Fellowship®

for Women

YOUR SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND INFORMATION

VOLUME 8, NO. 3

SUMMER 2026

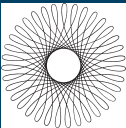
IN THIS ISSUE:



Gift of Time,
p.3



Quiz,
p.4



Activity,
p.7

Angela’s Long Journey From Rebellion to Restoration

by S.C. Anthony

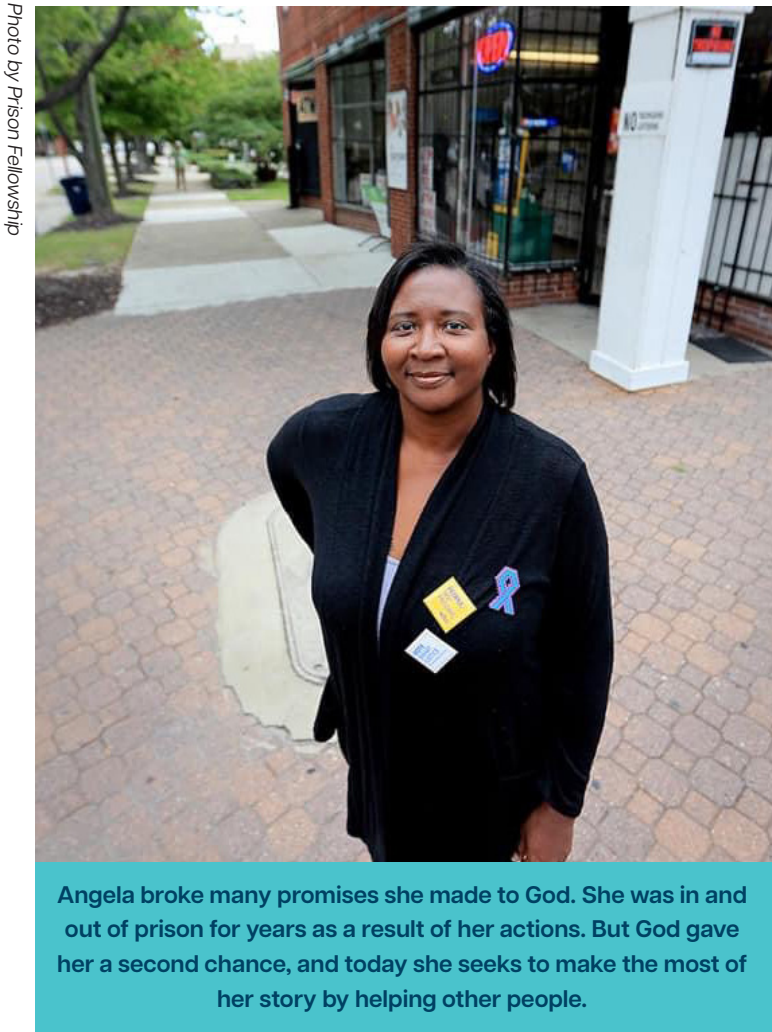
“I used to walk on the wild side as a youth,” says Angela, who grew up in North Carolina.

Her dad, a soldier in the Army, was often gone. Angela, her siblings, and three cousins were raised by her mom and grandmother.

In third grade, Angela wrote her first fraudulent check. Her mom had given her old checks from a closed account, and Angela tried to use one of them to pay a bill she racked up at the school. Her mom caught her and punished her, but Angela’s rebellious behavior continued.

A year later, Angela’s parents got divorced. She was able to see her dad from time to time, but it wasn’t the same. Her mom dated other men, but Angela was mean to them because she blamed her mom for the divorce.

Angela’s grandmother was a big influence in



Angela broke many promises she made to God. She was in and out of prison for years as a result of her actions. But God gave her a second chance, and today she seeks to make the most of her story by helping other people.

her life. She was a faithful woman who made sure Angela attended church. She constantly prayed over Angela and encouraged her.

“She was always my cheerleader,” Angela says.

But her grandmother’s love and support weren’t

enough to break Angela away from her rebellious behavior.

After the check fraud, Angela got involved in a series of other financial scams.

During her adolescence, Angela had her first child, soon

followed by another. But even raising two young children didn’t motivate Angela to stay out of trouble.

Heavy burden of painful loss

Angela’s financial scams continued, but eventually, the law caught up with her. Though she faced a 25-year sentence for obtaining property by false pretense, she was instead given three years’ probation.

“Me and probation didn’t get along too well,” Angela explains. “I just refused to let somebody tell me what to do.”

Throughout the next decade, she continued her rebellion—and a cycle of incarceration and probation. She had another child during this time—but prison separated her from all three kids.

Being away from them was hard enough on Angela, but the loss of

her grandmother in 1998 shattered her.

“When that happened, I felt like a piece of me left as well,” Angela says.

Her facility chaplain suggested Prison Fellowship® Angel Tree. Angela signed her kids up, ensuring they received a Christmas gift and a handwritten note from their mom.

“So many people showed up for my children at that time,” she remembers. “It was such a blessing.”

Although Angela wanted to change her ways, she kept getting into trouble even after being released. While living in Virginia in 2008, she was arrested for trying to write a bad check, once again. She bargained with God.

“If You show me You’re real in this process, I will serve You the rest of my life,” Angela recalls

Continued on page 2

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



Ludmila Chernetskaya: 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.

Angela's Long Journey Continued from page 1

praying.

She was facing a 21-year habitual offender sentence in North Carolina.

"God, I'm trusting You in this process," Angela prayed.

She stood in court in 2010 expecting the worst. Then the judge said words she hadn't expected to hear: "Today is your lucky day."

Instead of 21 years, Angela was sentenced to just under a year.

"Lord, I thank You!" Angela said.

Focused determination

Angela served her time in North Carolina and went back to Virginia without a job or housing lined up. She enrolled in school and lived off her loan money, which included paying for a hotel. She worked hard and earned an associate degree in business accounting.

Angela's struggle to find stable housing became the inspiration for her next step in her reentry journey. In 2013, while watching a sermon, she felt God was telling her that He could use her for good.

She wanted to help people in their reentry, so she got to work on a business plan and attended reentry meetings to educate herself. She then started her own organization called House of Dreams ReEntry Services, which provides returning citizens in southeast Virginia with resources, mental health support, job skill development, financial literacy, and more. House of Dreams has allowed her to assist hundreds of people who were once in her shoes.

Angela has found another way to help people: by becoming a Prison Fellowship Justice Ambassador. She has since taken part in Prison Fellowship days of action in Virginia

and Washington, D.C., advocating for laws that make a real difference in people's lives.

Angela also started the Restorative Identity Lab, a first-of-its-kind "identity-first transformation" program for people impacted by the criminal justice system. It's currently in five state prisons in Virginia, and she's hoping it expands.

In 2024, Angela got married. Her husband is incarcerated, so prison advocacy is especially personal to her. Angela is also working toward becoming a licensed evangelist, the next step of what she describes as her "calling."

She knows that God made everything possible in her life.

"I'm grateful for God even entrusting me to do what I promised Him for the last time, because I made so many broken promises before," Angela says. ■

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.

Freedom From the Past, Far From Perfect

Submitted by Corinne in Texas

“You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.”
—1 Peter 4:3

The Word of God has the power to cut through flesh and failures. That’s what I felt when I read this verse for the first time. Right after I was arrested, they threw me in the SHU (restrictive housing) on suicide watch. I was in so much pain from guilt and shame that I cried out to God for the first time since I was a kid. I asked Him for help. Desperately, I searched the Bible for comfort. But I found conviction, too. The truth was, I had lived a life of wrongdoings, which eventually led to my charge. After five years of active addiction, my poor decisions and habits had finally caught up with me when I was 22. My sin and pride had kept me blind and separated from God, and as I dove into His Word, I began to see things for the way they really were.

The Bible is a book meant for sinners. It’s filled with stories and advice for those who are far from perfect. After all the wild and destructive living I had done, I never thought I could have a relationship with God. Turns out, I’m exactly the type He’s looking for.

The wreckage and darkness of my past can be left behind for good. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I can make wise and healthy decisions. I am not the person I was; in fact, sometimes I’m surprised by the changes I’ve experienced in myself. I am beyond grateful for the blessings of self-control and a sound mind from a loving Father.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank You for saving me from my reckless past. Please help me to live in the truth of my salvation. May I walk confidently in the freedom You have so mercifully given me. 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.

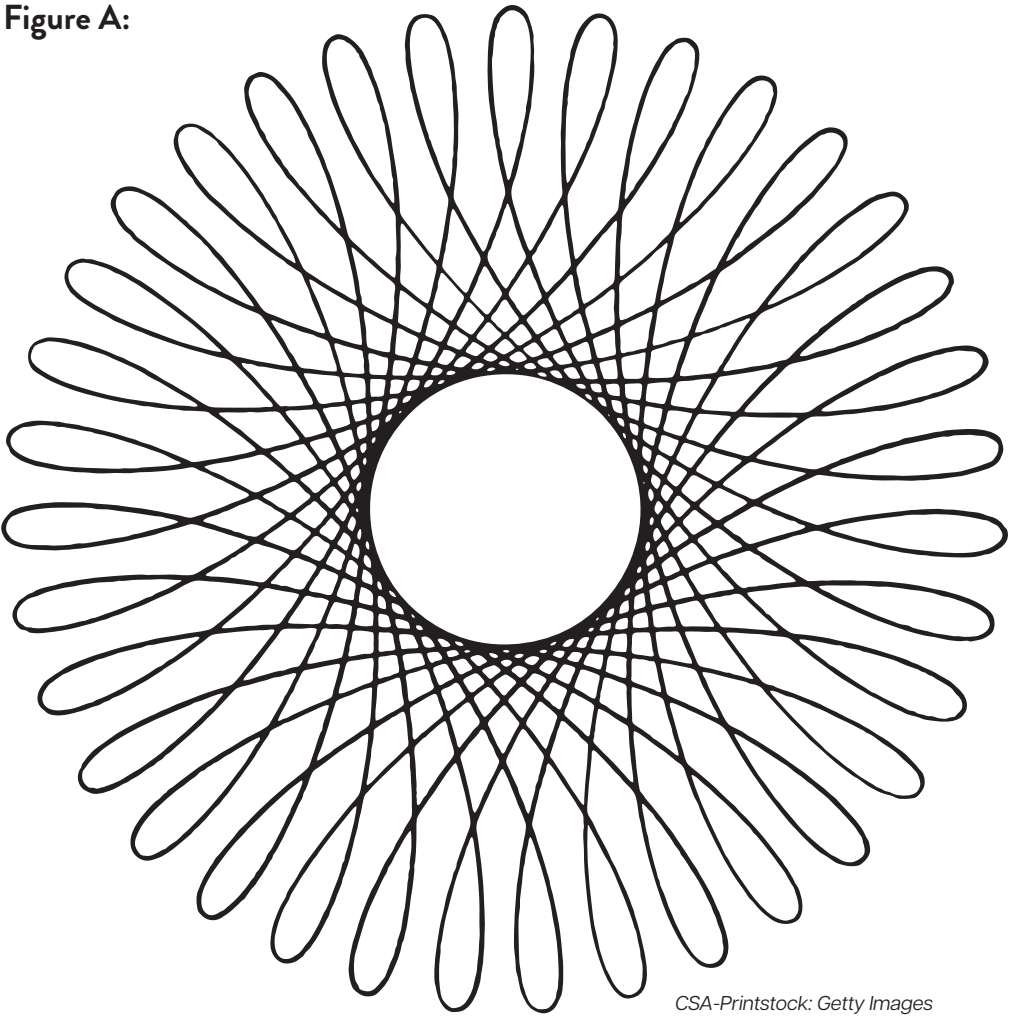
ACTIVITY: Childhood Pastimes To Revisit as an Adult

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

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.

New Fashion Program Launches

A new fashion design program has started at a state prison in New Jersey, according to several news reports and the New Jersey Department of

Corrections. The DOC announced a partnership with the Pratt Institute of Brooklyn, New York, to begin a workforce development program focusing on fashion design at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility. Participants will receive 10 months of training in fashion design, construction, and business planning. In addition to learning how to design, drape, and assemble garments, students will also learn digital design using programs like Adobe Illustrator, InDesign, and more. The business training will help them understand branding, supply

chains, and marketing. New Jersey DOC Commissioner Victoria Kuhn told reporters, “This collaboration will prepare participants for release by providing them with both state-of-the-art technical skills and the discipline, professionalism, and confidence needed to succeed.”

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. ■

RECOVERY CORNER 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. ■

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. ■



© 2026 Prison Fellowship and Prison Fellowship Ministries **INSIDE JOURNAL®** is published four times a year by Prison Fellowship, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790.

prisonfellowship.org
877.478.0100

Editorial Manager:
D.P. Bender

Editor in Chief:
S.L. Ray

Writers:
L.C. Aggen,
S.C. Anthony
D.P. Bender,
L. Haviland,
J.C. Oliphint

Designer:
E. Hays

A member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and the American Correctional Association. **Inside Journal®** is a registered trademark of Prison Fellowship®.