

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF BEING A PRISON VOLUNTEER

Two essential objectives of prison ministry:

1. Equip/fit an inmate for fruitful and effective functioning as a believer
2. Equip an inmate for fruitful and effective living when he/she is released

Volunteer prison ministry involves the redemption of inmates and the resulting change in character, thinking and behavior – resulting in better prison life for all.

Two-thirds of all prison inmates recidivate within three years of release; i.e., they repeat criminal activity and are returned by the criminal justice system to prison.

The frightful costs of recidivism:

1. New victims of crime along with all the costs of having been injured – emotional and physical injury, medical costs, lost productivity and wages, overall disruption of normalcy.
2. Criminal justice system costs to police, prosecutors, courts, jails, prisons and taxpayers.
3. Incarceration costs – upwards of \$25,000 per year per inmate.
4. Broken marriages, families and important relationships, especially children with fathers/mothers.
5. Lost wages earned by offenders and therefore not available to their families or their employers.
6. Lost taxes to local, state and national governments.
7. Additional social welfare costs as local/state governments shoulder expenses, i.e., food stamps, Medicaid and temporary assistance.
8. Lost investments of money and time in local churches and communities.

Turning offenders around and fitting them for fruitful living:

1. The Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is the essential agent of change through the conviction of sin, repentance, renewing of the mind, redeeming of the soul and sanctification.
2. *More God, Less Crime: Why Faith Matters and How It Could Matter More*, by Byron Johnson analyzes all available academic studies on the role of God/faith in reducing criminality and concludes that faith really does matter!
3. Increasing criminal justice and incarceration costs are forcing governments and prison bureaucracies to emphasize and priority all “programs” that effectively reduce recidivism. Faith-based programs have risen to the top of the list. The BOP offers two programs: Life Connections and Threshold – both faith-based.

Addressing “thinking errors” that are common among criminals:

- Is most criminal activity the result of an inability to control impulses or the result of erroneous mental calculations? Most academics/professionals say the latter. *The Criminal Personality, Volume I: A Profile For Change*, by Samuel Yochelson and Stanton E. Samenow.
- Five examples of thinking errors that are common among criminals: (1) deflect any responsibility; (2) finding fault with someone else; (3) avoiding accountability and blaming a situation; (4) lying; (5) anger.
- Volunteers can address all of these errors and issues with the resources of our faith, especially repentance.