

Prison Ministry Volunteer Training Workshop

From Rules and Regulations to Restorative Justice



FACILITATOR VERSION

**A Restorative Justice Project
Christian Reformed Church in North America**



*Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you,
or thirsty and give you something to drink?
When did we see you a stranger and invite you in,
or needing clothes and clothe you?
When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?*

*I tell you the truth, whatever you did
for one of the least of these brothers of mine,

you did for me.*

Acknowledgments

This prison ministry volunteer training workshop was developed by Rev. John Lamsma for the Office of Social Justice of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

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About the author:

Rev. John Lamsma spent twenty-five years as a chaplain with the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). He began his chaplaincy in 1978 at the Federal Correctional Institution at Milan, Michigan. As the BOP rapidly expanded in the late eighties, Chaplain Lamsma was tapped to serve in new institutions: Sheridan, Oregon in 1989, and Florence, Colorado in 1992. During those years, the ministry also became more complex as many more religions were practiced in the institutions than before. In Florence, Rev. Lamsma worked with nineteen different faith groups. He also trained and worked closely with more than 1,500 volunteers during his career. In 1999 he became the Assistant Chaplaincy Administrator in Washington, DC until his retirement in 2003. In 2008, he accepted the part-time position as the Restorative Justice Project Manager for the Christian Reformed Church in the US. Rev. John de Vries, Jr. is his Canadian counterpart. He and his wife Debbie live in Sparta, GA on Lake Sinclair.

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A Note from the Author

This training workshop will help you to navigate the ins and outs of prison ministry by (1) covering the basic rules and regulations present in most institutional settings, (2) exploring the effects of incarceration on inmates, and (3) examining the principles and practices of restorative justice. Restorative justice is a different way of looking at and dealing with offenders and the people they've harmed – a way that can open up a whole new understanding of what it is you can accomplish through your ministry.

It is my hope that by the end of this training, you will not only have a good grasp of what is expected of you as a volunteer working in a prison setting, but also a desire to explore restorative justice practices further. This training will be beneficial for:

- volunteers who minister inside institutions
- mentors who work with ex-offenders in the community
- those who have meaningful relationships with inmates such as pastors or other church leaders

The sessions in this workshop are based on my own ministry and experience as a chaplain with the Federal Bureau of Prisons. I have conducted numerous volunteer training sessions, witnessed many exciting and rewarding ministries, and have seen the changes these ministries have made in the lives of inmates.

Major lasting, life-changing behaviors are made up of many minor, small steps in faith. As a volunteer, you will help to create the loving, caring, accepting environment in which those small steps can take place.

Regardless of the behavior that put them behind bars, prison inmates are still God's creation. Just as God reached and continues to reach out to each of us without our deserving it, we, too, reach out to prison inmates with an unconditional acceptance of them as image-bearers of God. It is when inmates begin to experience this acceptance that they allow their defenses to come down enough to take those small steps of faith.

As you pursue this training and begin or continue your prison ministry, it is my hope and prayer that this workshop will provide guidance to make your ministry exciting, rewarding and God-glorifying.

Rev. John H. Lamsma,
Restorative Justice Project Manager
Christian Reformed Church

Facilitator's Notes

This training workshop includes three sessions designed to cover material over approximately 6 hours. The sessions may be conducted individually over a period of a few weeks (allow about 2 hours for each session), or all over one day.

The leadership of a facilitator is necessary to guide participants through the materials, but the facilitator does not need to be an expert in restorative justice or prison regulations. The role of facilitator is to help guide participants through the material, mediate questions and keep sessions moving in the time allotted.

Notes and Tips

Review each session and familiarize yourself with its components before you begin. Make sure you have noted what additional materials you might need during the session, how much time is allotted for certain activities and so on.

Before beginning the workshop, consider setting aside a few minutes for an icebreaker activity and/or introductions. These sessions involve a lot of group discussion, so having the participants get to know each other a bit before jumping into the material is a good idea. You may also consider a short “debriefing” time after all sessions are completed so that participants can share their thoughts about the workshop. Consider opening and closing your time together in prayer.

If you choose to cover all of the material over one day, make sure to include adequate breaks between each session. Provide snacks and refreshments.

Using the DVD

The accompanying DVD includes portions of a recorded training facilitated by the author. It is divided into an introduction and four parts that can be used to augment your own training. We suggest using the DVD as follows:

Introduction: Play at the beginning of the workshop.

Q&A on Session 1: Play after finishing Session 1.

Q&A on Session 2: Play after finishing Session 2.

Restorative Justice: Play at the beginning of your discussion on Session 3.

Forgiveness: Play when you are ready to start discussing the six general principles of restorative justice in Session 3.

SESSION ONE: Ministry within Defined Parameters

Any text that is not designated for a participant to read should be read aloud by you, or you may ask a volunteer to read the text. You may wish to mark in the text where you will read or ask others to read.

SESSION TWO: The Effects of Incarceration

Any text that is not designated for a participant to read should be read aloud by you, or you may ask a volunteer to read the text. You may wish to mark in the text where you will read or ask others to read.

Additional materials needed:

- Group Activity: Picture Pyramid. **There are separate facilitator instructions included with this activity. You will need to prepare for this activity before starting the session.** Please refer to Session 2 Group Activity Facilitator's Notes on page 22-1 to make sure you have everything you need to perform this activity.

SESSION THREE: Restorative Justice in Prison Ministry

Any text that is not designated for a participant to read should be read aloud by you, or you may ask a volunteer to read the text. You may wish to mark in the text where you will read or ask others to read.



**SESSION ONE:
MINISTRY WITHIN DEFINED PARAMETERS**



SESSION ONE: MINISTRY WITHIN DEFINED PARAMETERS

FACILITATOR: Before beginning the workshop, you may play the Introduction section of the DVD.

In some ways, the rules, regulations and policies governing volunteers in prison are not difficult. They can be readily summarized in a number of “dos and don’ts.” The rationale and implications of these rules and regulations, however, are not always clear to ministry volunteers. Even after completing training or beginning ministry inside the institution, some volunteers will wonder the reasons behind prison rules and regulations.

This beginning session aims to help you not only become familiar with some of the basic regulations for working inside prisons, but also to help you understand why some of these rules are in place and why it’s important to follow them.

Learning objectives:

- At the end of this session, you will be able to identify some of an institution’s basic concerns and why these are important.
- You will become familiar with the standards of conduct expected from you as a volunteer.
- You will learn how to appropriately respond to some tricky situations that may arise while volunteering in prison ministry.
- You will know how the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts impact your ministry.

Part ONE: INSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS



“I’m just a volunteer. Why should it matter to me who does or doesn’t carry prison keys? And why should I care how many times a day the inmates are counted? I just want to get in there and help!”

It may not be obvious at first, but becoming familiar with the ins and outs of prison regulations – even as a ministry volunteer – *is* helping.

Volunteers who are informed about prison rules, and who are sensitive to why such rules and regulations are in place are much less likely to violate institution policies. A volunteer who is knowledgeable about prison policies is one who helps to keep the ministry safe and effective for everyone involved. A volunteer who takes the time to learn about the regulations of an institution – even the ones that don’t seem to directly affect her ministry – is one who shows she cares about the people who must operate under or enforce those rules.

Remember: correctional systems do not function in a vacuum. They are governed by laws, policies and directions provided by state and federal governments and funded by their budgets. Senators and representatives are elected by the voters, thus, correctional systems are in some way representative of the wishes of the populace.

» WORKSHEET ACTIVITY: For this activity, use the worksheet on the following page. Your facilitator will ask for seven volunteer readers. Each reader will read aloud their designated section from pages 7-11. As you come across the answers to the worksheet questions, mark them down. We will go over the worksheets together after every section is read (15-20 minutes).

Session 1 Worksheet Institutional Concerns

FACILITATOR: correct answers are indicated in blue.

1. How many security levels are there in prisons?

- A. 3 to 4
- B. 4 to 5
- C. 5 to 6

2. TRUE or FALSE

The higher the security rating of a prison, the safer it is likely to be.

3. TRUE or FALSE

An inmate in your program will never be transferred before the program is completed.

4. How many times a day does staff count inmates?

- A. At least twice, once in the morning and once at night.
- B. At least three times, morning, afternoon and night.
- C. At least five times throughout the day and night.

5. TRUE or FALSE

Your program may take place during an inmate count.

6. When it comes to institution keys, all prison staff:

- A. Must check their institution keys out upon arrival and in when leaving.
- B. Can access all areas of the institution with their keys.
- C. Can take their institution keys out of the institution when they leave.
- D. Do not necessarily have access to all areas of the institution.
- E. Both A and D

7. TRUE or FALSE

The chaplain's institution keys will only open the doors in the Chapel area of the prison.

8. TRUE or FALSE

Volunteers cannot bring their car keys into an institution.

9. In an institution, tools are:

- A. Assigned a rating corresponding to their potential danger.
- B. Can be used in potential escapes.
- C. Can be brought in by volunteers if needed for ministry.
- D. Both A and B

10. TRUE or FALSE

Volunteers cannot bring in any tools to the institution.

11. Prisons are especially susceptible to health outbreaks because:

- A. Close and confined quarters facilitate the spread of disease.
- B. Drug and alcohol use prior to incarceration make inmates more susceptible to diseases.
- A. Poor hygiene among some inmates prior to incarceration helps bring disease into prisons.
- D. All of the above.

12. All prisoners who enter into the Federal Bureau of Prisons are:

- A. Screened for TB
- B. Screened for TB and HIV
- C. Screened for HIV
- D. Screened for Hepatitis B

13. TRUE or FALSE

Because staff is constantly on the look-out for contraband, it is no longer a big problem in prisons.

14. TRUE or FALSE

A Bible can be considered contraband.

15. Which of the following items would be considered contraband:

- A. A home-cooked meal from an inmate's mother who asked you to bring it in on your next visit.
- B. Your program materials, which you take into the institution when you arrive, and out of the institution when you leave.
- C. A pack of gum you share with the inmate.
- D. Both A and C



Reader 1: Security Levels

Most correctional systems house inmates in five different security level institutions: minimum, low, medium, high and maximum. Some correctional systems add a sixth security level, high-medium.

A number of factors, such as the nature of the current offense, length of sentence, use of a weapon, previous criminal history, gang affiliation and present institutional conduct, determine where an inmate will be housed. Generally speaking, the inmate will be sent to the least secure facility necessary to control his or her behavior. A higher security facility means a higher cost of incarceration and higher staff to inmate ratio, yet it also means that conditions inside the institution have the potential to be more dangerous.

An inmate's custody level can change during his or her stay in prison for several reasons. Behavior, length of remaining sentence, overcrowding, or separation from other inmates are all reasons for security level changes. A change in security level often results in a transfer to a more appropriate facility housing inmates with similar security levels. This may also result in the inmate being transferred to a facility which is considerably closer - or further - from family.

An inmate may be present in your program one week and transferred to another institution before the program meets again. Meanwhile, other inmates arrive replacing the ones who were transferred or released from prison.

Federal Bureau of Prisons—Names of Institutions

Minimum = Federal Prison Camps

Low and Medium = Federal Correctional Institutions

High and Maximum = United States Penitentiaries

In addition to these facilities, there are also Federal Medical Centers, Metropolitan Community Centers and Metropolitan Detention Centers, which serve some of the specialized needs of inmates in the Bureau of Prisons.

Reader 2: Inmate Count

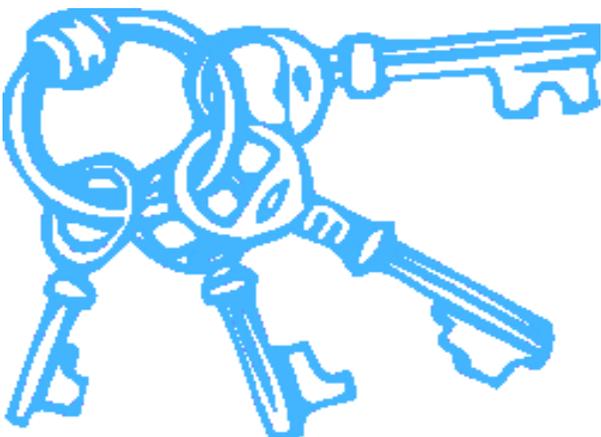
Inmate accountability is one of the most important concerns of institution staff. For example, if an institution is supposed to house 1,418 inmates, every effort is made to keep all 1,418 inmates within its secure perimeter. There are at least five formal counts each day, with six on weekends when fewer staff are on duty. In the Bureau of Prisons, inmates are counted at 4:00 p.m., 9:00 p.m., midnight, 3:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. On weekends, a 10:00 a.m. count is added. In addition, there are regular census counts, detail counts and special counts. During formal counts, no inmate moves from one location to another until the count has cleared. A formal count usually takes no more than one half hour to clear. All volunteer programs take place around the official counts.



Reader 3: Key control

The use and control of keys are critical to the safety and security of the institution. Staff check out the set of keys assigned to them upon entering the institution, then return the keys to the control room (the area may have different names in different systems) when they leave. Although a few exceptions exist, staff keys always remain in the institution; they cannot be taken home.

Keys assigned to a chaplain, for example, will only open the doors in the Chapel area, not in any other area of the institution. When the chaplain visits other areas of the institution, other staff will need to open and close the doors. Having a limited number of keys enhances the security of the institution. Only a few staff members have access to a wide range of areas in the institution, a necessity in case of trouble.



Some institutions do not permit volunteers to bring in any keys, not even their car keys. If that is the case, the keys are placed in lockers located in the entrance area of the institution. The volunteers may not leave the car keys in their vehicle in the parking lot since all cars must be locked. Check with the institution in which the prison ministry takes place to find out the correct procedures with keys.



Reader 4: Tool control

Every tool in an institution, which staff may check out, is assigned a rating according to their potential use, and is accounted for each day. A rubber mallet, for example, used to check the soundness of the bars in a given area of the institution, is not considered as dangerous as a hacksaw blade, and is rated accordingly.

Tools can be used in potential escape attempts, used as weapons or otherwise compromise the safety and security of the institution; thus, volunteers will not be permitted to bring in tools to the institution for any reason.

Reader 5: Disease Concerns and Controls

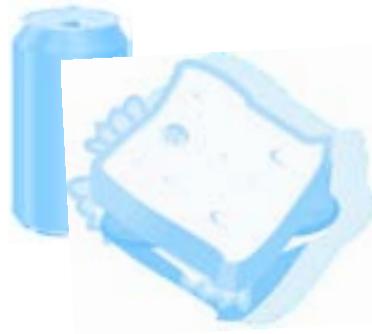
Close confinement, a lack of hygiene practice prior to incarceration as well as a high percentage of alcohol and drug addiction among inmates make disease control a major concern in a prison.

In the Bureau of Prisons every inmate who enters the system is screened for TB and HIV unless medically contraindicated. These are Public Health requirements in which all inmates must participate.

In addition, staff members are given the TB skin test annually to ensure that they have not contracted the disease. In recent years, staff members have also been inoculated against the Hepatitis B virus.

Although volunteers will not receive these tests and inoculations, they need to be aware of these health concerns in their ministry. If routine screening is desired, the volunteers will need to contact their own physicians in the community.





Reader 6: Contraband

Contraband is one of the most prevalent problems inside an institution and, unfortunately, improperly informed volunteers have helped contribute to this problem.

Contraband is any personal property not authorized by an institution's warden or policy. Authorized items that are altered or changed are also considered contraband. This may sound arbitrary and capricious, as though it depends on the whim of a warden, but that is not the case. The purpose of keeping an institution as free from contraband as possible is to improve the safety of the institution and well-being of inmates, staff and volunteers, and to prevent escapes.

Generally speaking, contraband falls into two categories: nuisance and hard.

Examples of nuisance contraband:

- an excessive number of papers, magazines or items purchased at the commissary
- food taken from Food Service
- altered clothing
- excess linens or towels
- items such as Bibles, religious tracts or study materials left by volunteers without permission
- jewelry (with few exceptions for small, inexpensive religious medallions or wedding bands without stones)
- gum (chewed gum can be placed in locks where it hardens, preventing access and requiring time from the institution's locksmith)



Reader 7: Contraband, cont.

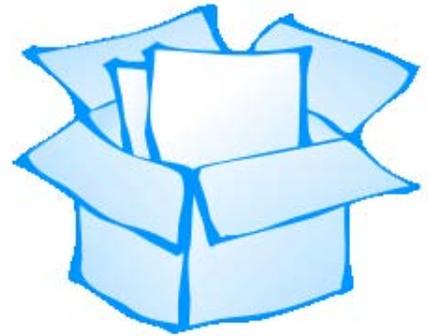
Hard contraband is defined as those items which can be of danger to other inmates, staff or volunteers, or used in planning escapes.

Examples of hard contraband:

- weapons
- liquor
- drugs
- cell phones (no cell phones may be brought into an institution by anyone – staff or volunteers)

Inmates have used ingenious methods to get contraband inside an institution, so staff must always be on alert. Contraband can be smuggled in by visitors, in prisoner mail, in the packaging materials of approved packages, in delivery trucks, and even tossed over the fence.

Staff members regularly pat down inmates, their housing units and cells on the lookout for contraband. Additionally, inmates go through metal detectors throughout the institution. Despite all of these precautions, contraband remains a problem, one that makes for a less safe environment for staff and inmates alike.



The list of items which are considered contraband varies among institutions. Become familiar with the contraband items in the institution where ministry takes place.

If volunteers are not sure whether a specific item is contraband or not, the best rule of thumb is simply “Bring nothing in and take nothing out.” If religious material is needed for a study program, the rule of thumb is “take everything out that was brought in,” unless previous approval has been granted.

» Take a few moments to go over your worksheets as a group and compare your answers. Fill in anything you missed and fix anything marked incorrectly (10 min.).

**Volunteer Tips for Unexpected Situations and Emergencies:
What do I do if...**

...an inmate is unruly?

It may happen that an inmate becomes argumentative during a program. This may escalate into unacceptable behavior on the part of the inmate—the inmate may become hostile and threatening. Remain calm and get help immediately. Either signal a staff member or if a phone is available call the Control Room. Help will come quickly. In the Bureau of Prisons every room in which volunteers present their programs is equipped with a telephone with a direct connection to the Control Room. Other institutions provide every volunteer with a body alarm which, when triggered, will bring a response team quickly to the area to deal with the situation. If the inmate tries to attack you, defend yourself. Staff assistance will come.

...a fight breaks out?

It may happen that a fight will break out between inmates. Sometimes more than two inmates will be involved. Remain calm. Call for help. Under no circumstance should the volunteer try to break up the fight. The volunteer may become injured and even seriously so. Wait for staff to arrive and follow their directions. They will isolate the fighting inmates, break up the fight and escort the inmates to the Special Housing Unit or segregation.

...there is facility emergency like a fire?

If a fire breaks out in the area where the volunteer program takes place, follow the directions on the posted emergency fire evacuation plans. Call or notify the supervising staff about the fire and follow the directions of the staff member. For staff and inmates, fire drills are a regular part of the institution activities and they will know what needs to be done.

...the weather is bad on my program day?

If an institution's security fence is no longer visible because of heavy fog or snow, it's considered a security risk and all regularly scheduled programs are cancelled, including religious programs. When in doubt, call your program leader. If weather gets bad while a program is in progress, it will be stopped and volunteers escorted out.

Part TWO: VOLUNTEER STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

As a volunteer, you should familiarize yourself with the standards of conduct written by the respective departments of corrections. These policies describe acceptable behavior regarding relationships with current and former inmates, their families and institution staff. Learning and maintaining these standards will help you to avoid simple but problematic mistakes.

These policies and standards, based on laws, departmental rules and regulations, support the correctional system's mandate to provide a safe and humane environment for staff and inmates alike. Even if volunteers believe that some rules make no sense at all, by coming into the institution they agree to abide by *all* the standards of conduct.

Many of these standards are unique to working in or volunteering in a prison. Under other circumstances, many of these standards do not apply. For example, if a minister officiates at a wedding in the community, it is customary to receive an honorarium. This is legal and encouraged and is payment for the time and effort the minister has invested in premarital counseling, the wedding rehearsal and ceremony. If the institution's chaplain or a minister who is a regular volunteer officiates at a wedding between an inmate and the inmate's fiancé in the institution, the chaplain or minister is prohibited from accepting an honorarium. It is against policy to accept gifts, and an honorarium is a gift from inmates and/or their families.

» GROUP ACTIVITY: We will discuss several real-life situations in which you may find yourself as a volunteer. Break into small groups and follow the group activity instructions starting on the next page (20-25 minutes).



Session 1 Group Activity

Group Activity: Scenarios and Situations

A discussion of real-life situations and how to respond.

Activity overview

The following short paragraphs describe situations that may very well occur during your time as a prison ministry volunteer. In groups of three to four people, read each paragraph and then discuss your responses. Do you agree or disagree with what you've read? How would you naturally respond to the situation described in the paragraph? Does the scenario prompt any questions or observations?

After your group has discussed each paragraph, use the material starting on page 18 to find the appropriate response to each scenario. For example, if you've just discussed a scenario about an inmate's family contacting you for help, you would look under the "Interacting with Inmates and their Families" section to find the appropriate way to respond to contact from an inmate's family.

FACILITATOR TIP: You may wish to have each group start with a different scenario: for example, group one starts with scenario 1, group two starts with scenario 4, group 3 with scenario 7 and so on, to make sure all scenarios have been discussed by at least one group.

This activity will take about 20-25 minutes.

Scenarios and Situations

1. You've been working with an inmate who has opened up to you about her case. It appears that a serious injustice has occurred and this inmate is innocent. You have a good friend who is a lawyer, and you feel like it's the least you could do to bring up her case with your friend.
2. Your doctor has put you on some serious painkillers for a recent back injury. The pills help with the pain, but your family says they are also making you a little loopy. You're not sure if you should attend your program.
3. A close friend knows you do prison ministry and asks how things are going. You had a difficult conversation with one of the inmates at your last session and really want to talk to your friend about it. You share everything else, so it only seems natural to talk about this.
4. You received a really nice letter from an inmate in your program and think it would be polite to reply.

5. Your prison ministry group formed a private group online where you can post information about upcoming meetings, arrange carpools and so on. You also find it a great way to share prayer requests about what's going on in the program.

6. If you've got on shoes and a clean shirt, then you've met the standards for appropriate clothing in a prison.

7. You're pleased to see that an inmate from your program has been released and is now regularly attending your church. The former inmate is always happy to see you and regularly asks about how the program is going and if any of his friends are participating.

8. An inmate who is very active in your study program is about to be released. You have really seen him grow and mature spiritually. You receive a phone call from a prospective employer who would like your reference on this individual, and you know that if you give the employer a good reference she is willing to hire the inmate upon release.

9. An inmate has been very flirty towards you, but you can tell no harm is meant by it. It doesn't really bother you and it's not like you encourage it or respond to it, so you just let it slide. The inmate's got enough to deal with as it is.

10. An inmate brings up a prison policy that doesn't make sense to either of you. Since you're already in the building and would like an answer, you decide to go find the warden's office. You're pretty sure you know where it's located and you wanted to meet the warden anyway.

11. An inmate in your program calls to ask you about something you talked about at the last meeting of your program. You're thrilled she's showing such an interest.

12. You work with an inmate who is devoted to his Muslim faith, and you don't really get why he's participating in a Christian program. He's an intelligent guy, and you'd really like to pick his brain about his belief system—maybe engage in a little healthy debate. Who knows, maybe you can change his mind.

13. An inmate's wife has begun attending your church and knows that you volunteer in the prison ministry program. She is concerned because she received an upsetting phone call from her husband and she has asked you to talk to him at your next meeting and let her know how he's doing.

1. Basic Standards of Conduct



Remain in the assigned area

Remain with the ministry team at all times and stay in the assigned area where there is supervision. It is imperative that volunteers do not wander off to other areas of the institution. This puts the volunteer and their supervising staff member at risk. If something comes up, follow the directions of the staff member so that safety for all is maintained.

Modest dress

Volunteers are expected to dress modestly and conservatively. Any form of clothing that is enticing and revealing is not permitted inside the institution. In the Bureau of Prisons, inmates generally wear khaki clothes, so volunteers should avoid wearing anything similar. Camouflage or clothing that can blend into the surroundings should also be avoided.

Illegal and legal mood-altering substances

Volunteers are not permitted to visit the institution under the influence of illegal substances, which are against the law, or legal substances such as alcohol or prescribed medications, depending on the side effects. More than half of inmates are incarcerated on drug-related convictions and to permit such behavior from staff or volunteers is not only hypocritical but also a violation of the employee standards of conduct. The volunteer under the influence is a liability to the prison ministry program.



Sexual harassment and misconduct

Sexual harassment is a concern in the work place, including prisons. This is true not only among staff members, but also among staff and inmates. Because staff members have power over inmates, consensual sexual contact cannot occur between them. Staff members can face dismissal and even criminal charges if sexual misconduct is proven.



Inappropriate behavior on the part of inmates towards volunteers is not permitted and should not be tolerated. If an inmate states that a volunteer is beautiful, has a nice body or stares inappropriately, the volunteer should inform the inmate that this behavior is unacceptable. If the inmate persists, the volunteer must inform the supervising staff member who will follow proper procedure in addressing the problem. Appropriate inter-personal relationships may be difficult for some inmates to learn, and if their behavior continues, they may be removed from the program.

Sexual harassment and misconduct cont.

Inappropriate behavior on the part of volunteers towards inmates is not permitted either. Although it appears that volunteers do not have enough time during their scheduled study or worship to engage in sexual activities with inmates, some have fallen in love. If this sort of situation is discovered, the volunteer will be summarily dismissed, and will not be allowed to visit, nor correspond with the inmate.

If a volunteer is struggling with relationship issues or having marital difficulties, it is best that the volunteer stops being part of the prison ministry team. A volunteer who is struggling at home may be compromised by those few inmates who are predatory and manipulative. It is best that volunteers recognize their own vulnerability and step down from the team until their situations are resolved or stabilized, rather than put the program, themselves and others at risk.

2. Interacting with Inmates and their Families



Acceptance of inmates

One of the basics of successful prison ministry is acceptance of the inmate. As a volunteer, you should recognize and accept the inmate as a child of God regardless of the attitudes and behaviors that placed him or her on the wrong side of the law. Your acceptance of an inmate will have a number of positive implications as the relationship deepens over time.

Acceptance also means that you must allow for the beliefs of an inmate, even if those beliefs go against your own. As per the First Amendment, the institution's chaplain is to accommodate all of the religious beliefs of the inmate population; all authorized groups have the right to meet and the right to meet without fear of any form of criticism. It is likely that some inmates in your ministry program will belong to other faith traditions. Please do not criticize or make negative comments about other faith groups or use materials that denigrate other views or faiths.

It is true that a small number of inmates are innocent and should not have been convicted, and it is also true that some inmates received inadequate legal counsel. Volunteers must remember that they can only provide ministry within the boundaries and framework of the program; becoming involved in the inmate's legal issues does not fall into this framework.

Legal issues

Do not become involved in the legal issues of any inmate. For some inmates a real need exists for legal assistance and advice, but prison ministry volunteers are not to provide such help.

Telephone calls

An inmate's telephone list includes all of the phone number the inmate is authorized to call. In the Bureau of Prisons, volunteers cannot be placed on an inmate's telephone list, thus a volunteer should not accept a phone call from any inmate participating in their ministry program.



Some correctional systems do allow inmates to make collect calls to family, friends, and sometimes to volunteers. Even if the institution does not have specific prohibitions against volunteers receiving phone calls from inmates to whom they minister, a wise volunteer will not accept such calls. It is simply not good practice to allow contact with inmates outside of the study or worship time in the institution.

What is so important in the volunteer-inmate relationship that contact outside of the program schedule is needed?

This is a good question to keep in mind when faced with a phone call or other contact from an inmate. Such contact may indicate over-involvement with an inmate, and over-involvement leaves a volunteer open to manipulation.



Correspondence

Likewise, do not accept letters from or send letters to inmates in your program. If continued conversation about the issues or concerns discussed during the program time is warranted, then there is always time to continue the conversation at the next program meeting.

Contact with former inmates

Every correctional agency forbids program volunteers from continuing relationships with inmates upon their release or transfer to another institution. The potential of compromise is too great and happens too frequently to allow such contact to occur.

If a former inmate becomes active in the church that has the prison ministry, then the church must develop support groups for the inmate that do not involve any prison volunteers. Any contact with a former inmate in your congregation should always be cordial and supportive, but you may not talk about the progress of the prison ministry, or share information about anyone who is participating in program or who is still in the institution (see the section below, The Privacy Act, for more).

Should a former inmate decide to worship in your church, notify the institution's chaplain. Wardens do not like surprises and must be made aware of any issues that might impact the security of the institution.

Contacts with families of inmates

Volunteers may not have contact with families of inmates. They may not call anyone on behalf of an inmate, and they may not accept gifts from or give gifts to family members or anyone else on behalf of inmates. Every correctional system has a regulation like this in place. The dangers are too great for volunteers to be compromised, violate the provisions of the Privacy Act (see below), and endanger the safe and orderly running of the institution.

Programs like Angel Tree, which provide donated gifts to children of inmates, are necessary and rewarding. Prison ministry volunteers, however, may not participate in these type of programs.



Contact initiated by family members

Inmates may tell their family about your church's prison ministry and who some of the volunteers are. Family members may then contact volunteers directly or attend the church and begin to develop relationships with church members.

Should members of an inmate's family begin to attend your church, the best way to assist this family and meet their needs is to set up a separate support group of church members who are not volunteers in the prison ministry program. Inform the institution's chaplain that an inmate's family members have become a part of your church community.

If family members call you, you may not share any information about the inmate or his or her participation in your program. Nor may you share information about the inmate's well-being. As much as you may like to reassure the family that all is well (or share your concern that all is not well), providing such information is a violation of the Privacy Act (see below). It would serve all volunteers well to direct any family calls to one designated person so that accurate and consistent responses are provided.

The institution is concerned about contraband, and contact between prison ministry volunteers and families of inmates has the potential to compromise security. It may seem harmless to bring in an inmate's favorite cookies from Mom, but doing so is a violation of rules and potential security compromise. Remember, even if certain rules make no sense to you, they are there for a reason, and by coming into the institution you agree to abide by all of the standards of conduct.



3. The Freedom of Information and the Privacy Acts

The Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts

The Freedom of Information Act of 1966 makes government agencies more transparent and records more accessible to the public. The Privacy Act of 1974 places some limitations on what specific information the public may receive in response to the requests made. These two laws significantly impact what type and amount of information is available to the public about inmates and the institutions in which they are confined.

A certain amount of information about an inmate (except for those who are in protective custody) is public. In the Bureau of Prisons, the following is public information about an inmate and may be released:

- inmate's name
- register number
- place of incarceration
- age
- race
- conviction or sentencing data
- past movements via transfer or writs
- general institution assignments

All other information about inmates is covered under the Privacy Act. Violation of these provisions is not simply a violation of institution rules, but is a misdemeanor and may include heavy fines.

When a church group enters a prison and ministers to inmates, almost all of the information shared during study or worship time is covered under the provisions of the Privacy Act. It is illegal to share that information outside of the volunteers who are part of the prison ministry. Whether or not a specific inmate attends the study or worship time is also covered under the provisions of the Privacy Act. This may not be shared by anyone.

No volunteer or church ministry program has any intention of violating the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts. The majority of violations by volunteers and church ministry groups, however, fall under these two laws, and unintentionally so.

A good rule of thumb to follow is simply: "When in doubt, don't share it!"

Although the Privacy Act does allow for certain information to become public, it is best for church groups to not become involved with this. Any release of information covered under the Privacy Act requires the approval of the institution's Warden.

Prayer and the Privacy Act

Though it sounds strange, one of the easiest ways to violate the Privacy Act is through prayer. It is natural for a church to support its prison ministry through prayer, but volunteers need to be careful about how they share prayer requests and petitions.

Volunteers may share inmate prayer requests of a general nature with their church as long as the information does not identify specific inmates. For example, a church may pray in general for the struggles of inmates' families. Such information is not specific enough to be traced back to a particular participant in the prison ministry program.

Likewise, if a participant in the program decides to dedicate his or her life to God, the inmate's name or information specific to the inmate may not be shared with the sponsoring church. Prayers must remain general.

It is common for volunteers to share inmate prayer concerns with volunteers who were absent for a meeting via email. Even though the prayer list is shared only with members of the prison ministry, this too is a violation of the Privacy Act because the danger of the list being seen by others is too great.

» After you have discussed each scenario with your small group and located the appropriate responses in the materials, come back together as a class to discuss your responses, and any questions you may have.

FACILITATOR: You may play Q&A on Session One from the DVD at this time.





**SESSION TWO:
THE EFFECTS OF INCARCERATION**

Session 2 Group Activity Facilitator's Notes

Group Activity: Picture Pyramid Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Activity overview

Session Two aims to help participants understand some of the difficulties of incarceration and how the prison environment affects inmates. Additionally, many inmates are already bringing with them to prison bad coping skills and a background of dysfunctional sociological and psychological conditions. It is important for prison ministry volunteers to consider these issues when working with inmates.

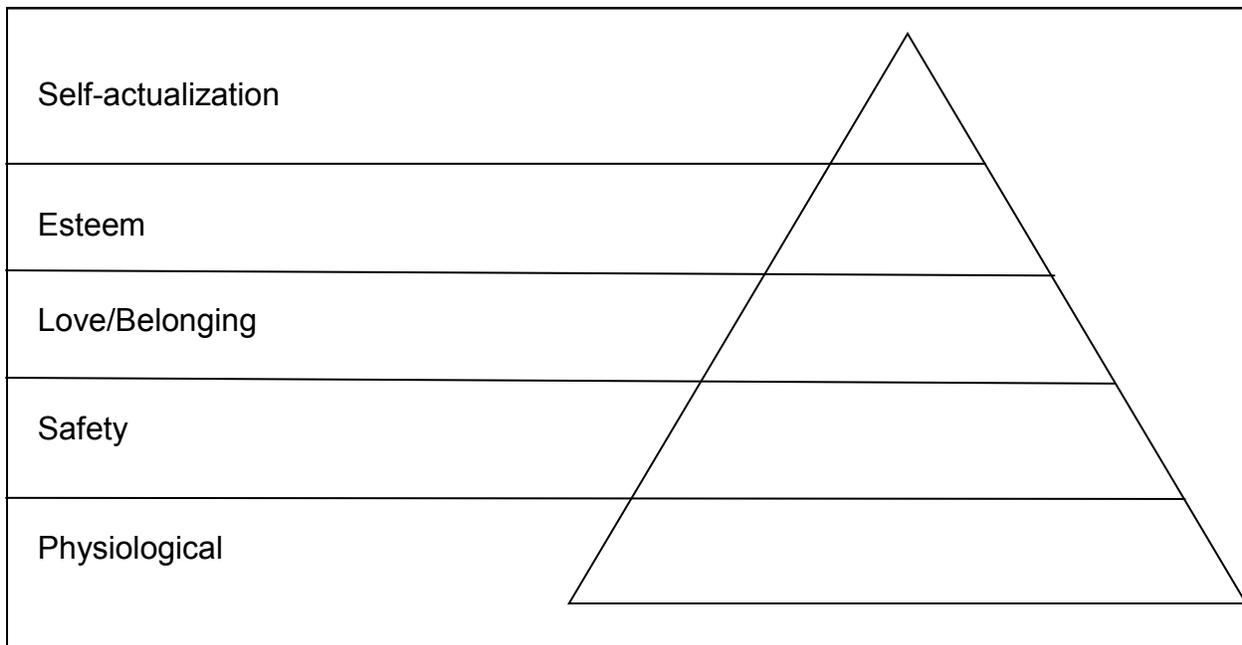
This activity explores human needs and motivations, and is one way to think about how people achieve emotional maturity and personal responsibility. Performing this activity at the beginning of the session will provide a useful framework for the rest of the session. **Allow about 20-25 minutes to do this activity.**

Preparation

To set up for this activity, you will need:

- A large sheet of flip chart paper, poster-board or white-board
- A marker
- The pictures on the following pages, printed out and cut along the lines
- Tape or poster putty

On your writing surface, copy the diagram below in marker and post it where it is visible to the entire class. Participants will post the picture squares on the following pages within each section of the pyramid, so be sure to draw the diagram large enough. (A detailed Maslow Hierarchy pyramid is depicted on page 24 of the manual.)



Get Started

Text for what you can say during this activity is provided below, but feel free to adapt the material to your own voice and style.

» *Introduce Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (2-3 min.)*

We're going to kick off this session with a group activity called Picture Pyramid. You can see that we have a pyramid up front, and each section of this pyramid has a different label. Has anyone seen this diagram before? (*Allow for responses.*)

This pyramid was developed by influential American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, and this diagram is called the hierarchy of needs. Maslow believed that people basically function on five or so need levels, beginning with very base needs of food, oxygen and so on. At the top of his hierarchy is what he called self-actualization. This is a level where people aim to live out their full potential. This is a level for the most emotionally mature of people. According to Maslow, a person can't really work his or her way up the steps of the pyramid if the lower needs are not adequately met.

Now Maslow's theories and this hierarchy are not without detractors or critiques, but this pyramid still gives us a bit of insight into the things that people need both to survive and to thrive as emotionally mature and responsible human beings. Keep this activity in mind as we're going through the rest of session two. You may find it a useful framework in your ministry with inmates.

» *Name the levels of the pyramid (2-3 min.)*

Physiological—At the bottom of the hierarchy pyramid are the basic physiological needs that a person must have in order to survive. They include things like breathing, food, sleep and rest, avoidance of pain and so on. Maslow also included sex in this category, as a basic human motivator and need.

Safety—The next step up is the category of safety and security needs. Once your base needs are met, Maslow contends, you'll begin to concern yourself with security issues. Adequate and reliable shelter, a safe neighborhood, job security, and health insurance are some examples of how people meet safety needs. Additionally, in order to feel secure, a person will prefer some amount of routine or pattern over the unexpected and unfamiliar.

Love and Belongingness—The need for affection and relationship with others fall into this category. Joining a group or an organization, the desire to get married and raise a family, or nurturing a friendship are on the love and belongingness level.

Esteem—On the esteem level, a person begins to look for leadership positions. He or she wants to receive respect from peers, to master or accomplish something. Seeking status or fame can be a part of this need category, as can confidence, dignity, and independence.

Self-actualization—The peak level of the hierarchy, and the trickiest to describe, is self-actualization. Maslow believed that once a person has fulfilled and mastered the lower needs, she can seek out her full potential. He identified several characteristics of self-actualizing people, such as a deep empathy and sympathy for others. Self-actualizers are concerned with the world and the big issues of justice and ethics and issues of right and wrong. They feel a need to contribute to the greater good. Self-actualizers are open and accepting to their own human flaws and quirks and accept these things about others as well. They are okay with solitude and fewer, but deeper, relationships with people. They are creative and inventive in their own ways, and often find wonder and awe in the everyday.

»*Picture pyramid game (10 min.)*

Let's split up into smaller groups of two to four people. I'm going to hand out several pieces of paper with pictures on them to each group. Each picture represents a need or motivation that fits a level on our pyramid. Together with your group, discuss where you think each picture should go on the pyramid. Then have one group member tape the pictures to the appropriate level.

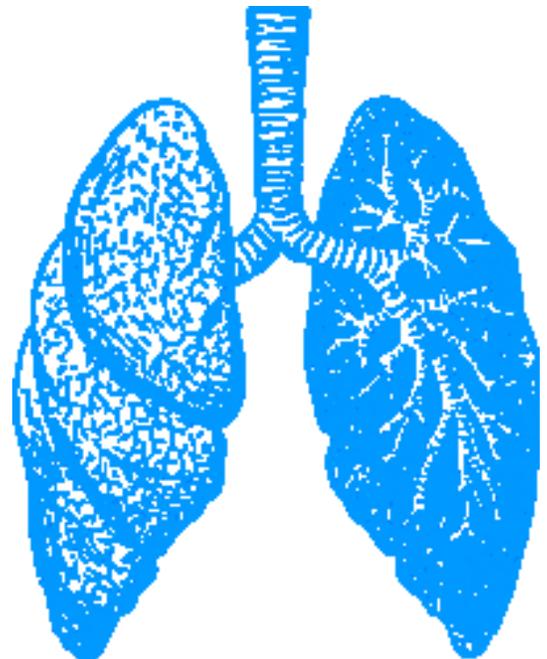
We'll have a chance to discuss the placement of pictures after they all have been posted. Some of these may be kind of tricky or even debatable as to where they belong, and that's okay. Our top priority isn't getting all of the answers right, per se, but about thinking about these different sorts of needs and what they mean for a person and their life.

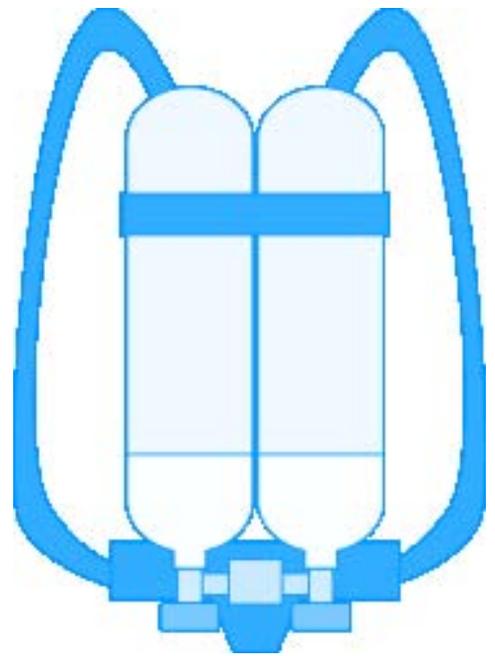
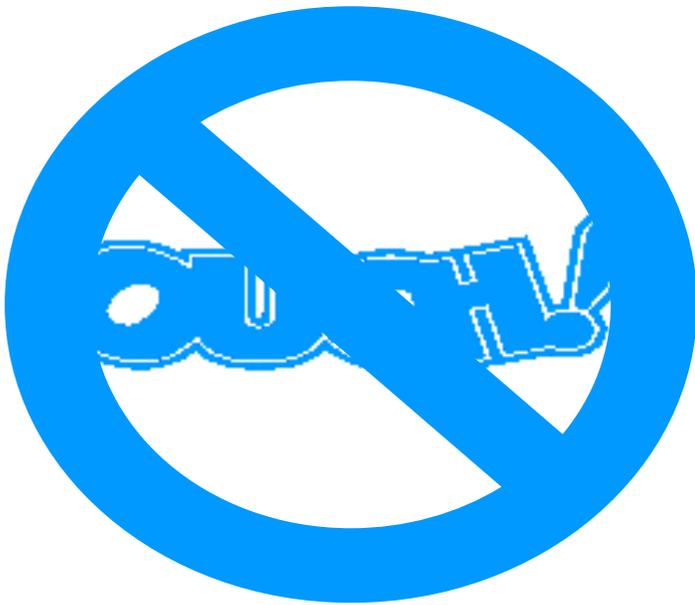
Tip: Make sure you mix up the order of the pictures a bit before you hand them out so a group does not receive photos from all one needs category.

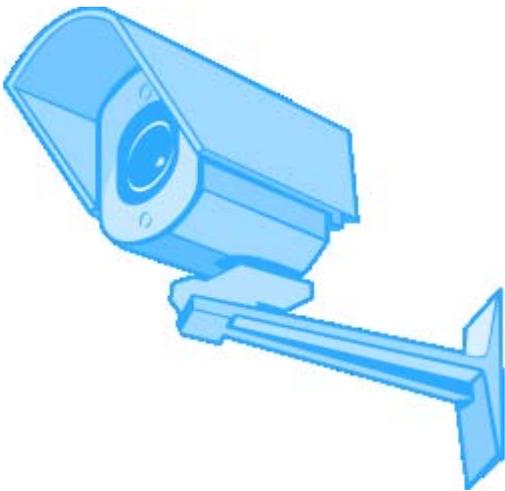
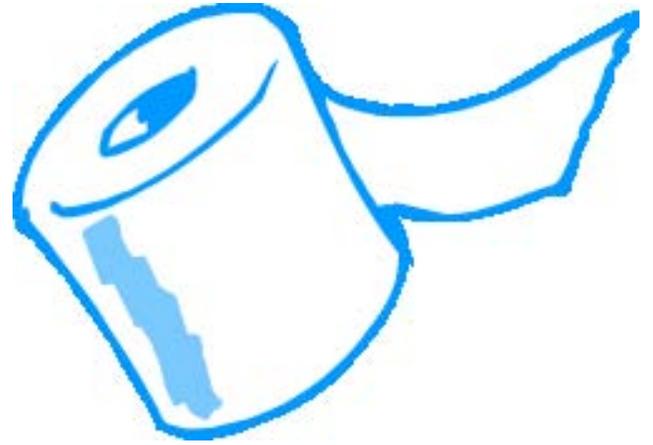
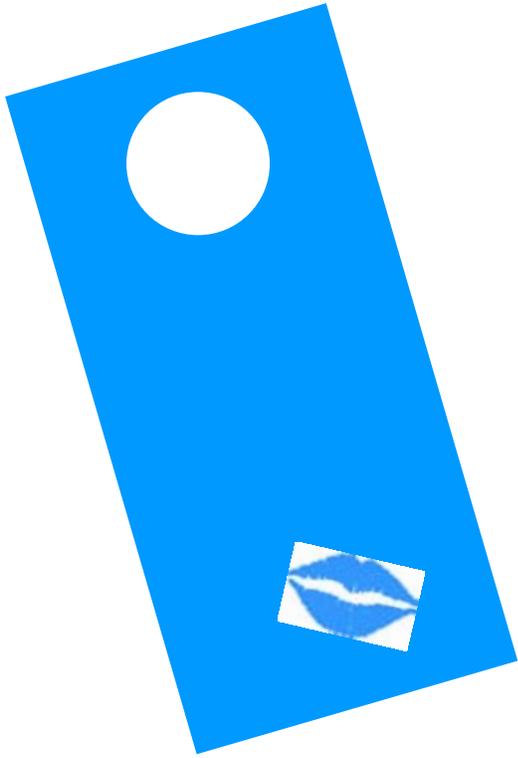
»*Discussion (5-10 min.)*

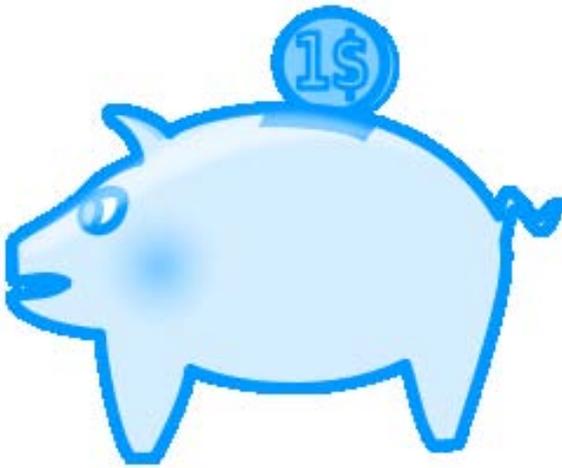
Once all groups have posted their pictures, give everyone a chance to discuss the activity and the hierarchy and any questions or observations.

We're going to begin session two now, which looks at how incarceration affects a person. Keep these needs we talked about in mind. What need levels do you think inmates are operating on? What need levels are not being reached? And what does that mean for the inmate? What does it mean for society when an inmate is released? What does that mean for your ministry?

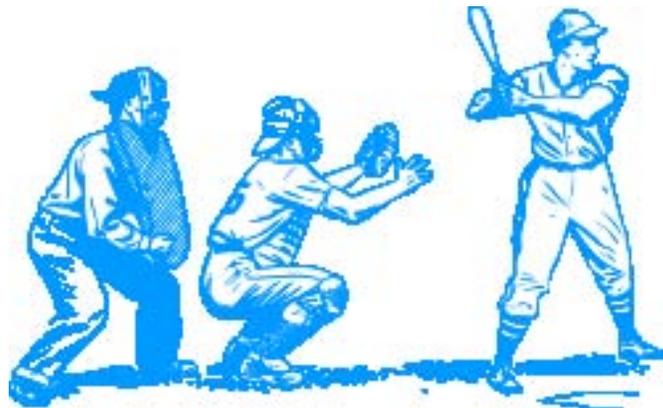


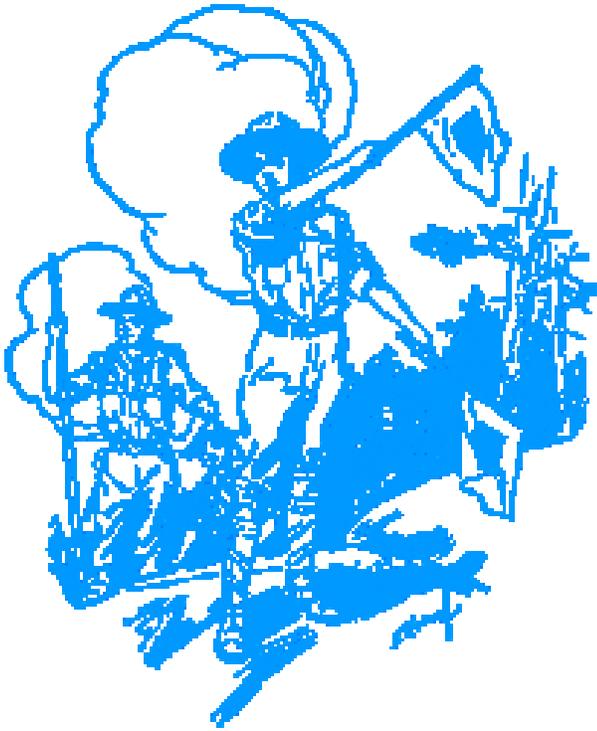


















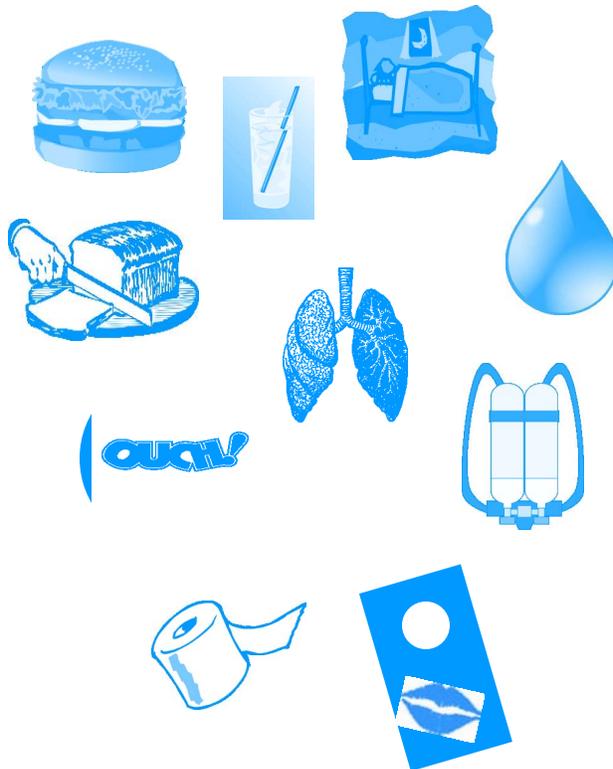
innovation



Facilitator's Answer Key

(Groups may interpret and place photos on the pyramid at different levels –feel free to discuss!)

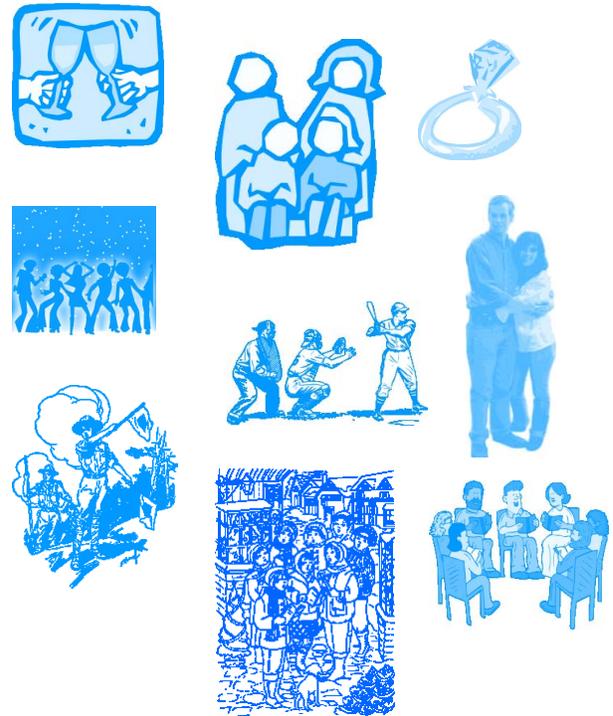
Level One—Physiological



Level Two—Safety



Level Three—Love and Belongingness



Level Four—Esteem



Level Five—Self-actualization





SESSION TWO: THE EFFECTS OF INCARCERATION

It is difficult for anyone to understand the impact of incarceration on the psyche of inmates. This is true for those who have never visited a prison, but it is true even for volunteers who spend several hours a week ministering to inmates.

This session aims to introduce you to some of the challenges an inmate faces in prison, and to consider how those challenges would affect an inmate's personal growth. In addition, we will consider who makes up the prison population, and finally, we will look at how volunteers can take steps to create a trusting and hope-filled environment for people who are often ruled by shame and hopelessness.

Learning objectives:

- At the end of this session, you will be able to name some specific challenges of incarceration and their affect on inmates, and by extension, your ministry.
- You will have a better understanding of the make-up of the prison population and why this is important in your ministry.
- You will know how to take practical steps in your ministry to create an emotionally safe environment for inmates.

» GROUP ACTIVITY (20-25 minutes): Before beginning this session, your facilitator will lead you in an activity called Picture Pyramid (see figure on page 24). This exercise will help get us thinking about the kinds of things that people need in order to survive and thrive.

Group Activity: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

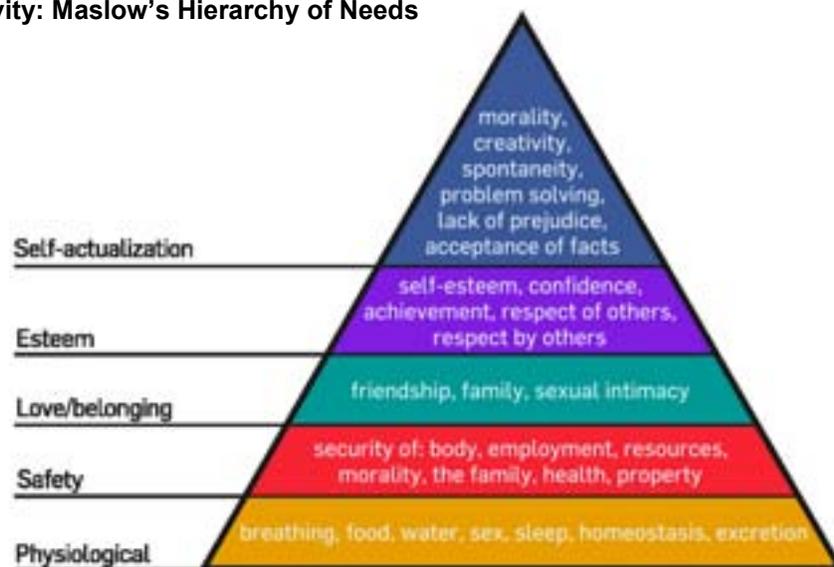


Image: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs.svg

Part ONE: WHO IS IN PRISON?

More than two million people in the United States are incarcerated, but these inmates are far from a socio-economic cross section of society. Consider these statistics:

- 70 percent of all prisoners function at the lowest literacy levels.
- Less than 32% of state prison inmates have a high school diploma or higher level of education, compared to 82% of the general population.
- About 38% of inmates who completed 11 years or less of school were not working before entry into prison.
- 57% of federal and 70% of state inmates used drugs regularly before going to prison.
- Over 1/3 of jail inmates have some physical or mental disability and 25% have been treated at some time for a mental or emotional problem.*

(*Stats reported in the Second Chance Act, signed into law in 2008.)

Some additional facts from the Federal Bureau of Prisons regarding federal inmates:

- Nearly 52% of inmates are incarcerated on drug offenses.
- Almost 12% are incarcerated on immigration offenses.
- 27% of federal prisoners are not U.S. citizens, with 18.2% being from Mexico.
- Though the majority of inmates are white, the percentage of minorities in prison is disproportionately higher than in the general population.*

(*Stats from Bureau of Prisons, March 27, 2010.)

Incarceration and Mental Illness

Especially with budgeting and programming cuts and the warehousing of more and more inmates, prisons are simply not equipped to deal with prisoners with mental health issues. And yet, a large segment of the inmate population has struggled or is struggling with serious mental health problems. It has not always been this way.

In the late 1960s and into the 1980s, the large psychiatric institutions used for many years to house mentally ill patients began to shut their doors. Some patients ended up with their families or in group homes, but many ended up homeless, unable to cope effectively with living on their own. Many patients ended up drifting into lives of crime and serving time.

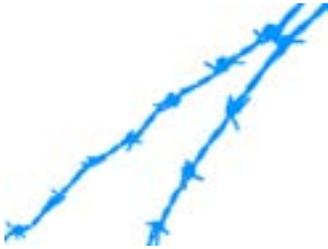
The deinstitutionalization of psychiatric hospitals mean more people with mental health issues in prison and the lack of adequate programming or treatment means those with mental health issues often go untreated.

About 24% of state prisoners, 21% of jail inmates and 14% of federal prisoners had a recent history of mental health problems.

-“Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates,” Bureau of Justice Statistics report 2006

» *GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes): How do you respond to the statistics on the previous page? What do they tell you about the population in prisons? Recall the needs hierarchy exercise we just did. What does this information about the prison population tell you about the needs levels where inmates may be operating? Are you surprised to learn about the rate of mental health problems in prisons?*

Part TWO: INMATES AND DEPRIVATION



In his work, *Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*, Gresham Sykes identified several deprivations which contribute to the pains of incarceration. We'll examine some of those deprivations here and consider the effect they might have on an inmate.

» Divide into 5 small groups. Each group will take one of the deprivations listed below and discuss the questions provided (5-10 minutes). Designate one group member to act as reporter (there is a space to jot notes on page 29). The reporter will share your group's responses with the whole class.

GROUP 1: Deprivation of Liberty

When an individual is convicted, he or she is removed from society and sentenced to prison where the institution has nearly total control over the inmate's life. The prison is surrounded by a wall or fence and reinforced with many security devices. Inmates must wear the prison clothing, and eat, sleep, work, recreate, and attend programs when the institution schedules such activities. There is no possibility of getting away from the prison or those who are in it.

Discussion:

- Try to imagine this loss of freedom. Your movements and activities are restricted in almost every way. You cannot step away from the situation to "get a break." What do you think your mindset would become after a week, a month, a year? How would you cope with this loss?

GROUP 2: Deprivation of Autonomy

Inmates must cope with the paradox that they are expected to behave and relate as adults, while at the same time they are reduced to the dependent status of helpless children. Inmates must depend upon staff to meet their needs, every movement about the institution is limited and controlled, and they engage all in activities during times prescribed by others.

Discussion:

- How did you feel as a teenager when you were told what to do, where and when to do it, but you felt mature enough to make such decisions on your own? How did you respond? How would it feel to be told what to do as an adult? How do you think you would respond?

Lending to the sense of helplessness and frustration is the fact that not all staff members are responsive to the needs and requests of inmates. Inmate questions may go unanswered or important paperwork ignored. Sometimes, staff members are not cooperative in processing inmate requests to relocate closer to family. All this compounds an inmate's sense of helplessness.



GROUP 3: Deprivation of Property

When inmates arrive at an institution for the first time, almost all of their personal belongings are sent home and the inmates are issued institution clothing. Any personal item that may be important to the inmate or makes him or her feel unique is not permitted and is sent home.

If an inmate is transferred to another institution, every item of personal property is again itemized and documented, and anything that was altered or in some way unauthorized is discarded or sent home. Usually, an inmate will only have two to four boxes of personal property, which are mailed to the new institution where the property is re-itemized and documented yet again. The new institution may have different rules about what personal property is allowed, and additional items may be sent home.

Discussion:

- Our society, for better or worse, places importance on what a person owns or does not own. What if you had almost nothing to your name? How do you think this would affect you? Would you care about how society would view you? What about biblical passages about possessions? How would you feel about those passages if you had nothing?

GROUP 4: Deprivation of Relationships

All people need relationships, both emotional and physical. Our bonds with others help us to understand who we are. For an inmate, the deprivation of relationships chips away at his or her self-image and self-worth; the identity grows dim.

Inmates will look for substitutions to meet physiological and psychological needs. Sometimes inmates will engage in homosexual relationships, with the accompanying guilt if they are married. In men's prisons, exercise often becomes a substitute for physical relationships. An inmate's size and muscular development become affirmations of his manhood.

Discussion:

- Imagine the most important relationship in your life. How does that relationship complement who you are? Imagine you must be without that person for years at a time. How do you think this would affect you? Would your sense of self change?

Us vs. Them: The Staff and Inmate Relationship

Staff members have power over inmates. They are the keepers, and inmates are the kept. Though the Bureau of Prisons is clear about the consequences for staff, the potential for staff to abuse their power is very real. On the other hand, some inmates have taken advantage of staff kindness and have conned them.

Mutual distrust creates an "us vs. them" situation. Inmates don't want to appear too friendly with staff so as not to raise suspicion with other inmates, and staff assume all inmates, based on the actions of a few, are considered untrustworthy. This makes for a difficult work environment for staff members and a dehumanizing environment for inmates.

Several years ago, I ran across a former inmate in a department store. He told me that he started to panic when he went to the checkout line. There were customers in front of and behind him and each of the cash registers had a partition along one side, so he felt trapped and without an escape. Even though he had been out of prison for many years and was simply doing some shopping, the feeling of being cornered with no way out filled him with fear. –JL

GROUP 5: Deprivation of Security

When persons are incarcerated, their physical safety can be endangered. Though it may seem backwards, the higher the security level of a facility, the more dangerous the environment may be inside. Fights are common; sometimes weapons are used and inmates can be seriously injured, maimed or killed by other inmates. Inmates can easily become involved in violent actions even as bystanders. This constant threat of danger puts inmates on edge, as they never know if something unexpected and violent will happen.

Riots can occur due to problems both within and outside the institution, and the aftermath of such a disturbance is extremely difficult for both staff and inmates alike. The vast majority of inmates do not want riots to occur and do not participate in them, yet are very much impacted when they happen.

Discussion:

- Was there a time when you felt your physical safety was threatened? What if those heightened feelings followed you around all the time? What would you do to avoid danger? How would you try to protect yourself? How would you respond to any situation – good or bad – if you were always on edge?

Riots

Riots can occur due to problems both within and outside the institution, and the aftermath of such a disturbance is extremely difficult for both staff and inmates alike. The vast majority of inmates do not want riots to occur and do not participate in them, yet are very much impacted when they happen.

In 1995, a riot took place at the institution where I worked, resulting in a lock-down. An institution will remain in lock-down status until the administration believes it is safe to gradually resume normal activities.

All programming stopped and no religious services were permitted. The phone system inmates used to call home was shut off, visiting was not allowed and inmates were to remain in their cells where they received sack-lunches instead of a hot meal in the dining room. There was opportunity for significant ministry to take place during this difficult time, but church ministry programs did not resume until much later. It was a bleak experience.

Riots do not occur frequently, but when they do, they are corrosive to the psyche of inmates. Staff members are debriefed after a serious disturbance, but inmates are not. It is not uncommon for inmates to experience post traumatic stress disorders, even years after incarceration. The trauma experienced by inmates in prison makes adjusting to institutional life – and to freedom outside the institution – more difficult. –JL

» After small group discussion, come back together as a class. Each reporter will have a chance to introduce the deprivation their group discussed and how the group responded to the discussion questions (10 minutes).

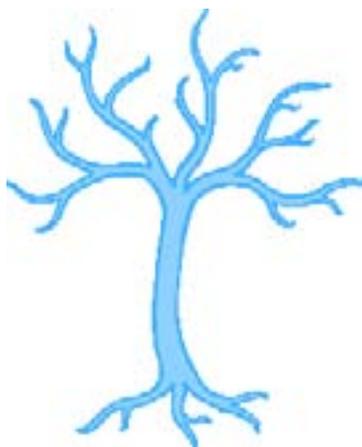
» GROUP DISCUSSION: As a class, share any further observations, thoughts and questions (5 minutes).

Reporter Notes:

Part THREE: INMATES, HOPELESSNESS AND HOPE

“...the most common effect of the prison experience is a slow, water-drip disfigurement of the human spirit. The greatest tragedy is that those who adjust to it best are damaged most.”

-Charles Campbell



Living under institutional conditions for years, many inmates give up hope. Even in the most optimum of prison environments and with great individual motivation, the senses of hopelessness and helplessness among the inmate population are among the most difficult feelings to combat.

Based on my own experience, I believe that over the last few decades life in prison has become more difficult for inmates to make adjustments and develop healthy coping skills. Adapting to prison life comes with emotional, psychological and spiritual costs. Some adapt to these settings better than others, but all are negatively impacted in some way.

Shame

Many inmates have grown up in an environment where they are put down regularly, constantly, and at times violently. They carry with them a deep sense of shame, believing that they are mistakes, rather than people who make mistakes. In prison, this searing pain of toxic shame is reinforced. Society, many inmates feel, has incarcerated them because they *are* mistakes.

Many inmates who participate in the ministry programs are looking for something – anything – that will provide them with some hope in a hopeless place. Yet the shame that inmates carry often prevents them from integrating scripture knowledge with their life walk.

This is where relationship-building between mature volunteers and inmate participants can change inmates' lives. Through your ministry, inmates find a safe place where they can begin to release the shame that has hindered their growth and maturity.

“Severe emotional, physical and sexual childhood abuse are the training ground for becoming an offender. At the root of most offender behavior is the unhealed anger, rage, grief, guilt and shame from childhood violence.”

*-Robin Casarjian, **Houses of Healing***

Volunteer Tips: How to Create a “Safe” Environment for Inmates

In prison, an inmate faces emotional and mental distress and even physical threats. In such an environment, one rarely, if ever, feels truly safe. Your ministry, however, can be a time when inmates feel comfortable enough to let their defenses down—at least a little bit and for a little while. It’s a welcome relief for inmates, and an opportunity for you to nurture their spiritual and emotional growth.

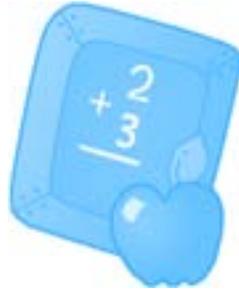
- Unconditionally accept the inmate. Inmates will probably try to test you in small ways in order to see how you will react. When they say something negative about themselves, their case or environment, will you flinch at the information? Will you judge or try to correct them? Or will you simply receive what is said? If you accept the information, the inmate may trust you enough to share something more personal.
- Be genuinely interested in the inmate, not as a potential convert, but as a human being. Really listen to what they say and consider it important. Take a “no-strings attached” interest in their lives.
- Care about the inmate. In an inhospitable environment, your prison ministry can be a place where inmates can let down their guard for a short while, and they shouldn’t have to fear manipulation – even “biblical manipulation” – from volunteers.



These tips are really just different ways of saying the same thing: accept the inmates for who they are and where they are in their lives and journey. For people who have long considered themselves un-acceptable, who have been repeatedly rejected and who reject others, this acceptance creates an open, safe and potentially healing place for inmates.

FACILITATOR: You may play Q&A Session Two on the DVD at this point.

Session Two Homework Suggestions



#1: Total Institutions

American sociologist Erving Goffman explored what he called “total institutions” and their affect on the people operating within them. Read the paragraph below that describes some characteristics of the total institution, and record your thoughts in a journal.

“First, all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second, each phase of the member’s daily activity is carried on in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. Third, all phases of the day’s activities are tightly scheduled, with one activity leading at a prearranged time into the next, the whole sequence of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials. Finally, the various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution.”

-Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*

#2: Stanford Prison Experiment

In 1971, Phillip Zimbardo, a Stanford University psychology professor, designed and ran an experiment in order to study the impact of incarceration and the interaction between guards and inmates. The experiment was flawed, both in concept and implementation, yet even this imperfect study has a lot to tell us about what happens to people when placed in an institution.

There is an extensive official website that explores the Stanford Prison Experiment and what happened over the course of one notorious week. For your homework, visit the Stanford Prison Experiment website at www.prisonexp.org and take the slide show tour (click on “Take the Slide Show” at the top of the homepage.)

The slide show details the experiment, and includes photos, short clips from a documentary covering the experiment, and discussion questions for you to consider as you read. After you have gone through the slide show, take some time to reflect on what you read and viewed and write a response in your journal.

#3: Rapid Growth of Inmate Population and New Prison Construction (thoughts from Rev. John Lamsma)

With 2.3 million people in jails and prisons, the United States has more people imprisoned than in any other nation in the world.

When I began my career with the Bureau of Prisons in 1978, there were approximately 23,000 inmates. By the time I retired in 2003, over 157,000 inmates were incarcerated in the Bureau of Prisons. Today, there are more than 200,000 inmates in federal custody, and there are similar increases in inmate populations experienced by all states in their respective Departments of Corrections. What has caused such a large increase in the numbers of incarcerated people?

Drug policy

Changes in drug policies resulted in the greatest increase in the rate of incarceration. By the turn of the century, more than half of convictions were drug-related.

Comprehensive Crime Control Act

In 1984, Congress passed the Comprehensive Crime Control Act, which essentially eliminated parole and standardized sentences across the country for those charged and convicted of federal crimes. Before the Act went into effect in 1987, inmates were eligible for parole typically after one-third to two-thirds of their sentence was served. After 1987, however, inmates remained in prison longer, and more people were convicted and sentenced. The inmate population grew rapidly.

“..it is questionable whether lengthy sentences will resolve the issue. The benefits of long-term incarceration will be out-weighed by the costs under any analysis, given that it serves no deterrence purpose, increased societal costs, and leaves offenders who might otherwise be productive members of society without that ability.”

-Darren Bush, “Law and Economics of Restorative Justice,”
Utah Law Review 2003

Decrease in rehabilitation

As the inmate population began to increase and as financial resources were directed to building new prisons to house the growing prison population, emphasis on rehabilitation of prisoners began to decrease. Rehabilitative programs such as mental health and social services were reduced or completely eliminated from prisons.

What happens as the inmate population increases? More inmates means less space, and overcrowded institutions have become a problem. More prisons are built to house the increasing number of inmates, and more staff is hired to deal with the rapid expansion of institutions, but a less experienced staff means a less safe institution environment. An increase of inmate population is difficult for everyone involved: inmates, staff and the communities where institutions are located.

Drug policy, the Crime Control Act, and the de-emphasis of rehabilitation have all led to the vast increase of inmates and the need for places to house them. Additionally, the “tough on crime” rhetoric of politicians and the demands of the public have assisted the tremendous growth of correction systems over the past few decades.

We all know, however, that what goes up must come down, and the financial crisis that began in 2007 illustrates this all too well. With bank and business failures, home foreclosures and high unemployment, Federal and state governments face severe budget short-falls. The prisons that once were sprouting up everywhere are now closing, forcing still-operating prisons to take in inmates for which they don’t actually have room. Along with closing institutions, prison staff and programs are being cut back even further. The result: too large of an inmate population with too few resources and not enough staff to deal with them. This is the current state of corrections.

Take some time to consider this article and record any responses you have in your journal.



**SESSION THREE:
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN PRISON MINISTRY**



SESSION THREE: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN PRISON MINISTRY

Restorative justice is a different way of looking at and responding to the problem of crime— a way that can lead to healing and transformation for victims and offenders alike.

At its heart, restorative justice is about relationships. It asks who has been harmed, and what needs to happen to repair that harm. When used in prison ministry, restorative justice can help inmates to take responsibility for their actions and understand the impact of their behavior.

This session will look at restorative justice in comparison to our current retributive criminal justice system, examine how it is connected to our faith, and provide several restorative principles that can be applied to your ministry with inmates.

Learning objectives:

- After completing this session, you will be able to explain the differences between retributive and restorative justice approaches.
- You will be able to articulate a theological perspective of restorative justice.
- You will have identified several ideas for applying restorative justice principles to your own ministry with inmates.

Part ONE: An INTRODUCTION to RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

FACILITATOR: Please play the DVD section on Restorative Justice before beginning this portion of the workshop.

Retributive and Restorative Justice: Different Answers to Different Questions

Our criminal justice system essentially operates within a retributive understanding of crime, punishment and justice. Over the last twenty years in particular, as laws and practices informed by **retributive justice** have been firmly established on both the Federal and State levels, our justice system is now propelled by retributive justice. But what is it?



Retributive Justice

Restorative Justice

» As your facilitator or volunteers read the following section, jot down a few notes about the differences between retributive and restorative justice in the space above.



In a retributive justice system, the first questions asked when a crime is committed are: what law was broken and what is the punishment for breaking that law? The offender has violated the law and must pay a price. The cost of that payment is determined by the severity of the offense. Notice that the offense is against the state. It is the law of the state that has been violated, thus punishment is merited.

Punishment is the primary goal of a retributive system. It is given because the law has been violated, and is not meted out in the hopes of reforming the criminal or providing assurance to a victim. The law was broken, a crime committed against the state, therefore punishment is given. No other objective is pursued. Such a view of criminal justice has been heavily informed by thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel.

“Juridical punishment can never be administered merely as a means for promoting another good, either with regard to the criminal himself or to civil society, but must in all cases be imposed only because the individual on whom it is inflicted has committed a crime.”

*-Immanuel Kant, **The Philosophy of Law**, p. 144*

Our current system has adopted this retributive viewpoint; therefore, our incarceration rate has grown to be the highest in the world, recidivism remains high, and the needs of victims – and offenders – are not always met.

Restorative justice provides another way.

When it comes to the problem of crime, **restorative justice** provides different answers to different questions. Rather than first asking what law was broken and what punishment should be given, restorative justice instead asks: who was harmed, and what must be done to repair that harm?

Where retributive justice is concerned with violation against the state, restorative justice is first and foremost concerned with the person or people who were harmed in a crime. It is a victim-centered process, and in restorative justice practices, victims play a primary role in the unfolding process of determining restitution, reparation of the harm done, and community service involvement.

Where retributive justice focuses on the past event of violation and present punishment for that event, restorative justice instead focuses on the present of repairing the harm and influencing the future behavior of the offender. Thus, punishment is not the only or end-all-be-all objective of restorative justice. Restorative justice aims for healing of victims, for the communities affected, and even for offenders, in the hopes that a cycle of destructive behavior will be broken.

Though our criminal justice system primarily operates under a retributive model, some courts (particularly in juvenile cases) have used the restorative justice model in sentencing, and it is also used in many communities throughout the world.

» As a group, briefly discuss your notes. (1-5 min.)





Author's note:

Though restorative justice can be described as arising out of many different religious and wisdom traditions, I believe that it is best understood from and finds its most natural home in a biblical perspective.

For more exploration of restorative justice from a faith perspective, read the Christian Reformed Church's 2005 report to synod found at www.crcna.org.

Restorative justice and the Bible

There are many biblical themes we could explore and expand upon when thinking about restorative justice: shalom—the idea of right relationships between all people, things and God; peace and peacemaking; love, grace, and so on. For the purposes of this brief session we'll consider the perspective proposed by theologian and restorative justice author, Christopher D. Marshall as put forward in his article, "Grounding Justice in Reality: Theological Reflections on Overcoming Violence in the Criminal Justice System."

Marshall emphasizes two points of Christian faith that he believes lead naturally to restorative justice:

- 1) God is made known to us most fully in the person of Jesus.
- 2) God has worked through Jesus' life, death and resurrection to restore the world to its original state.

It is in Christ that God is most fully revealed to us. So what can we learn about God and what God wants for us through the life, death and resurrection of Christ? Marshall submits the following:

*"All things have been created for, they are sustained by, and they find their ultimate meaning in, the crucified and risen Christ. From this it follows that the central principle of creation is not naked power or control or order, but vulnerable, passionate, forgiving, reconciling, self-giving, triumphant love – a love which subverts evil, not by an overwhelming display of coercive force, but by acting in amazing grace to redeem offenders and to heal sin's victims, and at great cost to itself. In short, *restoring love is the ground of the universe.*" (p. 5)*

"...and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of the cross." 1 Col. 1:20

The God made known in Christ is one who turns on their heads our expectations about justice and love and power. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is a challenge of love to all of us. Again, from Marshall's article:

“Retributive justice seeks to check and punish evil, believing that the pain of punishment compensates for the pain of wrongdoing, and that somehow by achieving an equity of suffering the moral order is upheld. Restorative justice focuses on the relational consequences of evil, believing that the moral order turns on *relationships*, so that when relationships are violated by crime, ultimately it is only healing and reconciliation that can affirm what the world is really all about. Punishment may be necessary in the process (for a variety of good reasons), but it is not the pain of punishment itself but the restoration of peace to human experience that truly vindicates justice.” (p. 5)

» *GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes): In small groups of three or four people, discuss Christopher Marshall's theological perspective of restorative justice. Does anything resonate with you? Trouble you? Raise questions? Give answers?*

Part TWO: APPLYING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRINCIPLES TO PRISON MINISTRY

Though restorative justice models are not widely applied in our current criminal justice system, as prison ministry volunteers, we have a unique opportunity to use the practices and principles of restorative justice in our work with inmates.

Guidelines in use for prison ministry

The information provided about restorative justice in this session is really only a brief introduction. There are volumes written about restorative justice and we cannot provide a comprehensive overview in this workshop. Below, however, are six restorative principles to keep in mind as you minister to inmates.

Six general principles:

- Personal Responsibility and Accountability
- Participation is to be completely voluntary, without implied or real rewards
- Inclusion of offender, victim and community—possible even in a prison setting
- Reparation of broken relationships, instead of responses to broken legal codes
- Forgiveness
- Restitution*

*Thanks to Professor Lana McDowell, professor of Criminal Justice at Georgia College and State University, for her input in identifying these principles.

FACILITATOR: At this point you may play the DVD section on Forgiveness.

GROUP ACTIVITY (20 min.): Divide into six small groups. Each group will discuss one of the principles described below and come up with one to five suggestions for how you, as a prison ministry or as an individual volunteer, can apply this principle to your ministry. Use the worksheet on the next page to write down your ideas.



We will then come back together as a large group and discuss our suggestions.

Session 3 Worksheet

Using Restorative Justice in Your Ministry

Read your assigned section with your small group and brainstorm together how you might apply the principle to your ministry.

Your ideas can be anything from certain questions you can ask an inmate to books or articles an inmate might find beneficial, to program ideas, such as guest speakers or topics to discuss during your program time.

Take about 20 minutes with your small group. We will then come back together as a class and share suggestions with everyone. Feel free to ask questions and share other ideas on each principle.

Group 1 Suggestions

Group 2 Suggestions

Group 3 Suggestions

Group 4 Suggestions

Group 5 Suggestions

Group 6 Suggestions

GROUP 1: Personal responsibility and accountability

Around 95% of criminal cases do not end in trial but are decided instead by plea bargaining. It is not far-fetched for the accused to see him or herself as a victim of the system and real, acknowledged personal responsibility for an offense is pushed into the background. Admitting guilt through a plea bargain is much different from taking personal responsibility for criminal behavior. As discussed in session 2, conditions inside prison do not generally encourage a person to reflect upon his or her own guilt.

In order for change to take place, offenders must truly acknowledge personal responsibility and accountability for their own behavior.

How can you and your ministry help inmates understand the importance of accountability and to take personal responsibility? Discuss this principle with your group and list one to five ideas on your worksheet.

"I am equally amazed by the inmate volunteers, who get no credit or advantage from their efforts other than the intrinsic value of their participation. They arrive with heads and hearts in many different places: some with extreme feelings of guilt and remorse, others in denial of what they have done or of its effects; some sincere, some aiming to do another con job, some acknowledging, some blaming, some with great hope, others seemingly beyond hope. But all [are] in search of something."

-Kirk Blackard, Restoring Peace

GROUP 2: Voluntary participation

If your ministry decides to engage in Victim-Offender Reconciliation (VOR) or "surrogate victim" programs, it is imperative that an offender is there without the promise of any reward for participating. If there is any perceived benefit to the inmate (such as time off of a sentence or a letter sent to a case worker or parole board on behalf of the participant) then the danger exists that the inmate will not be honest. Only when no perceived benefits are present will the inmate have a chance to approach the meeting with an openness and honesty necessary for change to occur.

How can you and your ministry work to ensure that participation in victim-offender mediation or other similar programs is without external motivations? Discuss this principle with your group and list one to five ideas on your worksheet.

GROUP 3: Inclusion of offender, victim and community

In a restorative justice process, the involvement of victims, offenders and the affected communities is essential to illuminating harm done and pathways to repairing that harm. Some prison ministry programs have brought together surrogate victims (victims of crimes that were not committed by the participants in the program), inmates and mediators for extended periods of time. These programs have had great results, giving victims a space to make their voices heard, and offenders an opportunity to confront the harm they have caused and what must be done to make things right. Such an arrangement, however, is not always easy to adapt for all ministry programs.

Though some prison systems do not allow victims to enter an institution, your ministry can still share victims' voices with inmates through recorded materials. The Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) of the Department of Justice has many victim stories recorded to DVD and available on their web site (www.ovc.gov, click on Publications.) Most of these resources are free of charge unless otherwise indicated.

Community involvement, in particular, is a difficult element to include in ministry programs. Often, the communities from which inmates come are themselves dysfunctional, or an inmate may be several states away from their community, making participation impossible.

Prison ministry programs can help to cultivate a healthy, participative community for an offender by connecting with religious communities in the release destination of the inmate. Sometimes communities created inside the institution (such as AA or other religious programs) help provide the support an inmate needs, especially when release is not scheduled for many years, or at all.



How can you and your ministry help bring together a willing and supportive community for an inmate? How can your program engage victims and offenders in restorative processes? Discuss this principle with your group and list one to five ideas on your worksheet.



GROUP 4: Reparation of broken relationships

Reparation of broken relationships is one of the critical aspects of the restorative justice process. In the process, the offender is required to work diligently towards rebuilding relationships with individuals as well as the community affected by the crime. Among the relationships that often need rebuilding are those with spouses and children, as they are terribly impacted by the criminal act.

Depending on the nature of the offense and the location of the prison, it may be difficult for families to visit the incarcerated person. It is especially difficult when mothers are sent to prison, as they were often the primary caregivers of their children and a whole new set of problems arises within the immediate and extended family.

In the Bureau of Prisons, parenting programs are available in each institution in the hopes of improving the parent/child relationship and breaking the cycle of incarceration. Children of incarcerated parents are more likely to become incarcerated themselves.

In the Bureau of Prisons, some inmates were able to work through a program called Federal Prison Industries and send money they earned home to their families. Congress passed legislation that greatly reduced this program's ability to sell its products to other government agencies, thus fewer inmates are now able to provide financial support to their families or participate in voluntary restitution while incarcerated.

How can you and your ministry help inmates to repair and strengthen broken relationships, including parental, spousal and community relationships? Discuss this principle with your group and list one to five ideas on your worksheet.



GROUP 5: Forgiveness

Forgiveness, especially in a restorative justice process, is a delicate thing. It is imperative that victims are never “forced” or coerced into forgiveness of the person who has victimized them. Indeed, forgiveness may never come. Yet forgiveness can positively transform the lives of both the victim and the offender.

In prison ministry, it may be beneficial to discuss what forgiveness means. What makes for an authentic apology, and what impact could that have on both offender and victim? How could an inmate prepare for the possibility of forgiveness granted, or not granted?

How can you and your ministry assist inmates in exploring the issue of forgiveness? How can you help lay the groundwork for repentance? Discuss this principle with your group and list one to five ideas on your worksheet

GROUP 6: Restitution

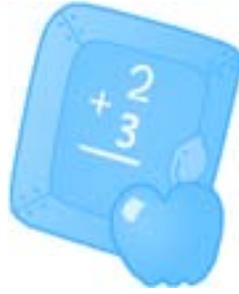
Restitution is a formal and restorative way to pay for the harm done to the victim. Complicating the issue of restitution is that there are often others besides the primary victim who have been harmed in a crime. How does one determine the value owed to primary and secondary victims? When restitution has been made on as many fronts as possible, the offenders may find relief and clear their conscience of the moral debt they owe the victim and/or society.

How can you and your ministry help inmates to think about restitution? How can you encourage inmates to consider restitution as a means of working to make amends for their behavior? Not all restitution is financial in nature: what activities can inmates perform so that they are “paying back” some of the damage done to the community? Discuss this principle with your group and write one to five ideas on your worksheet.



» After small group work, come back together with the whole group. A representative from each small group will read aloud the principle they discussed and share some of the ideas for incorporating that principle into prison ministry. Allow time for questions and further discussion (20-25 minutes.)

Session Three Homework Suggestions



#1 Criminal Justice Reform

Wilma Derkson, a Canadian mother who lost a child to a crime of violence, compares the change needed in the courtroom to the change which occurred in the delivery room three decades ago when fathers were allowed for the first time into the delivery room to participate in the delivery process. Consider her argument below, then write any responses you have in your journal:

I think the same scenario is happening in our courts today. In our attempt to create and deliver justice, we have concentrated only on determining guilt. We have given the courtroom entirely [over] to the professionals who have made it into a sterile room of law and order. They have banned the fainting father from the room and silenced the screaming mother. More and more they are whisking the difficult decision-making process away from the public into the realm of plea bargaining, with the same intentions as the doctors in keeping the baby clean and safe, out of the weak mother's arms. Consequently, we now have offenders and victims experiencing the trauma of the courtroom. We need the same delivery room revolution to happen in the courtroom.

Justice is not only about determining guilt, but also about creating peace and harmony between the victim and offender so that they can meet in the grocery store and not kill each other. Yet the courtroom is designed to keep them apart. More often than not, it enhances the anger between them, creates more friction, and heightens the conflictYet to create justice we will need a certain amount of blood, emotion, chaos and choice. Justice making should be messy. Victims and offenders are stakeholders in the justice making. They have to take center stage again. It is where they belong. Just as we learned to customize the delivery room for the patients, we need to customize the courtroom. (Pierre Allard, ed., **A little Manual of Restorative Justice**, p. 6)

#2 Restorative Justice Report to Synod 2005

The Christian Reformed Church has available on its website an extensive report on restorative justice that includes biblical and theological perspectives, and recommendations for churches in applying restorative justice principles to their ministries. Download the report and consider sharing it and the recommendations with your church. (Visit http://www.crcna.org/pages/osj_rjsynod.cfm)

#3 Different Types of Restorative Justice Programs

There are several different types of established restorative justice practices used in communities around the world. One of the first of these practices is victim-offender mediation, which is designed to let offenders truly know the impact of their crimes on victims. In this practice, a trained mediator ensures that both sides are heard, and that no victimization occurs again in the process. The emphasis in this form of mediation is the relational impact on both offenders and victims.

Conferencing, or family group conferencing, is another restorative justice process adapted from Maori communities in New Zealand. In this process, which is used most often in juvenile settings, family members of both the victim and offender participate. The main focus of conferencing is on repairing the harm done, although punishment of the offender may be a part of the process.

A sentencing circle (also called a peacemaking circle) is a restorative justice process adapted from First Nations people in Canada and Native American communities in the United States. In addition to the offender, the victim and their families, members of the affected community also participate. If the offense is serious enough the courts may also be represented. All parties attempt to come to a consensus and agree to ensure that all provisions of the agreement are met. Circles are the most inclusive of restorative justice processes.

Within the “circle,” crime victims, offenders, family and friends of both, justice and social service personnel, and interested community residents speak from the heart in a shared search for an understanding of the event. Together they identify the steps necessary to assist in healing all affected parties and prevent future crimes. The significance of the circle is more than symbolic: all members—police officers, lawyers, judges, victims, offenders, and community residents—participate in deliberations to arrive at a consensus for a sentencing plan that addresses the concerns of all interested parties. (Robert Weisberg, “Restorative Justice and the Danger of Community”)

The circles then continue to function in several ways: they act as places of healing, and as monitors to ensure the follow-up of the provisions are made.

These circles have been adapted for other uses as well. Circles of Support and Accountability have been established to work with high risk inmates upon their release from prison. In Canada such circles work with sexual offenders and provide support and assistance as the offenders try to reintegrate into their communities. These circles are often used by faith communities in their work with ex-offenders.

#4 Thoughts on Forgiveness

One of the restorative justice principles mentioned in this session is forgiveness, and it is one of the trickiest principles to navigate. What happens when an inmate has anger against someone who has wronged them? What happens when an inmate craves forgiveness from those they have wronged? What happens if an inmate cannot ask for forgiveness from God? Or if they cannot forgive themselves? And what does it even mean to forgive?

These are deep and difficult questions, but there are ways of thinking about what forgiveness means, its role in our lives and in the work of restoration and healing. In his book *Forgive and Forget*, theologian Lewis Smedes offers some helpful ways of thinking about forgiveness. **For your homework, locate a copy of *Forgive and Forget* at your library or bookseller and work through the book. Journal as you read.** What questions do you have? How can you apply what you're reading to your ministry with inmates? Think about the role of forgiveness in your own life. You may wish to read this book with others and form a study group in which you can work through these questions together.

As noted previously in this session, it is important that victims never feel forced into forgiving those who have wronged them. Indeed, many victims do not forgive offenders. Studies conducted by criminologists Heather Strang and Lawrence Sherman found that less than half (39%) of the victims in their study had forgiven their offenders. But they also found that when victims did forgive an offender, it was to find peace. The victim no longer wanted the past event to influence their life. They needed release, and forgiveness of the person who wronged them was a way forward in healing.

Knowing that forgiveness can be a major part of a victim's healing means that the offender has work to do in order to make forgiveness possible. A useful question to consider as a prison ministry volunteer is: how can you help an inmate find out what needs to be done in order to make forgiveness a possibility? How can you help an inmate lay the groundwork towards forgiveness?

JOURNAL/NOTES

