

## **How to Start a Prison or Jail Ministry**

There are many reasons and ways to start a Prison or Jail Ministry

We can certainly have an understanding, that there is a scriptural prerogative in meeting and reaching those in Prison “I was in Prison and ye visited me” is certainly a scripture that comes to mind.

### **1. Prayer**

The “How To” answer may vary and each successful Ministry has a unique and God given testimony of how God answered prayer and how God helped.

So to begin; Pray and Ask God, though this seems basic, our approach is to present ourselves to God and prepare to pray with humility and in sincerity to our desire to minister to the “least of these”

Our reliance needs to be sincere and we need to find the time and place to enter this ministry with respect to prayer. So, in a moment of clarity Pray that this could not only change the lives we are reaching but our own lives as well.

### **2. Patience**

We have need of patience when approaching the “Start” of something as life changing and ministry defining as starting a prison and jail ministry. “In your patience possess ye your souls” Lk. 21:19

When we understand some of the basics then we can gain a perspective on why we need patience.

The specific place or location of ministry in a correctional environment will vary. Some facilities are Federal, State, County, City and even Private.

Because these are government entities or government funded there will be certain protocol to follow and ways each of these receives the request to bring a ministry into their facility.

Some facilities use Chaplains. Chaplains are tasked with managing request by many groups to minister in their facility. Your request may one of many they receive.

Please consider, if you are all about your request, have you taken the time and patience to understand the needs of the facility it's staff and how best to help the person you are asking? The statement “it is better to understand than to be understood” comes to mind.

Let your approach be as relational as possible. Be kind, considerate and caring. Perhaps the individuals you will meet in this stage will be people that may be instrumental in helping you later in your group's growth and ministries.

### **3. Persistence**

Because these ministries take time to develop, they also take time to start.

There will be the need to train yourself and others that will want to help. Just because someone wants to help doesn't preclude the process for proper training. Utilize the strength of Christian Prisoner Ministries volunteer training.

Ask someone locally or within your ministerial region that has experience to come and share their experiences and to do some basic training. By equipping we become prepared. This takes time and should be done annually.

There will also be specific training for the facility you are wanting to minister in. Seek the advice of those in charge of these trainings to understand how and when these happen.

IF you are told they are months away from their scheduled trainings, do NOT be deterred. Be persistent and patient, just keep your self open, willing and able to submit. Take this time to come together with those that have an interest in these ministries to prayer. You will truly be amazed to see how God works. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think..." Eph 3:20

The law of the harvest requires prayer, patience and persistence.

David Olsen, a capable CPM director and qualified soul winner put together a very basic step by step approach. Olsen spent years helping open and start ministries into facilities using these proven steps. This works and will save you time and resources in your efforts. These are used by permission and here they are:

#### **The Twelve-Steps in How to Make A Presentation**

The person desiring to start a prison ministry or work in one of the fields of the Correction Department, must be very much aware of the burden and responsibility it will take to see it through.

Dave Olsen shares a simple 12-step approach that he has used successfully when stepping into correctional ministry.

#### **First Step**

Contact the North American Missions Division or go on-line at [www.ChristianPrisonerFellowship.org](http://www.ChristianPrisonerFellowship.org)

and download any information that will help you in making your presentation effective.

We highly recommend the book "Breaking into Prison 2 (II)" by Michael Rickenbaker

## Second Step

Put together your presentation packet.

- Endorsement letters from any government agency or from any other local area church that currently has an effective ministry.
- Prison officials will want to know what you have to offer them.
- A. Ministry Services—Type of services you have, or what kind of Bible Study will you be presenting.
- B. C.P.F Resources and which ones.
- C. Are you certified with Christian Prisoner Fellowship, or in any of the programs which are offered by North American Missions.
- D. Do you have any secular certifications or training that would enhance your presentation.
- E. Some states are big on educational training or certification.
- F. Some states want to know if your program is State certified.
- G. These are important questions you must have answers for before making a presentation.
- Do you have any professional training or secular education?
  - A. Secular Education
  - B. Religious Education
  - C. Training Certificates
- Ministerial resumes if possible.
- A. If you have experience in prison ministry have a written dossier of your prior experience and what institutions and in which states. [Most officials understand and respect “chain of command” whose authority are you under? If you are not under authority you may want to reconsider becoming involved in this ministry.](#)

## Third Step

Who to contact at the facility you want to minister to.

- Depending on the type of ministry/volunteer you are, it is important to know whom to contact.
- To hold a religious service—contact Religious Services, or the Chaplain’s office.
- If it is a secular program such as Drug/Alcohol Education, Anger Management, or any other of the C.P.F. programs that is available through North American Mission Division, you will need to contact the program director, or acting supervisor. This will be either at the correctional institute you are going into or the Department of Correction, Probation and Parole at the local level or State level.

## Fourth Step

Do research in whom you are contacting. [Relationship building](#)

- Find out the name and title of the individual(s) for the facility at which you wish to hold services or provide a secular program.
- Whether over the phone or in person, it is important to always recognize the person in charge and their title before beginning your presentation.
- If other churches in your state have similar ministries find out who your counterpart is at other facilities so you can mention his name as a reference.

- If a program has a good response in a given institution, the program director for that facility will share that information with other correctional facilities at various meetings. Program directors from other facilities will meet from time to time and share what they are doing and what is working for them. If a certain program is successful, others will want it in their facility also; this can be very helpful to you.
  - You may need to speak with numerous individuals before finding the correct individual to speak with.
- A. Give basic information while asking pertinent questions as to whom you should speak.

### **Fifth Step**

- Contact the appropriate individual that you will be making the presentation to.
- Once you have learned to whom you should speak, make a phone call, first, in order to set up an appointment to meet with them.
  - The individual with whom you will meet is very busy, calling first is the most professional way.
  - Calling early in the morning is usually the best time to call. They usually set aside time at the beginning of their day to organize what they will accomplish during the day. If they cannot meet with you that day, find out when they can meet with you. If they are not available to meet with you for some time, find out who they suggest you meet with, and set up a time to meet with them ASAP.
  - It is usually best to make the presentation with them as soon as possible while the idea is still fresh in their minds.

### **Six Step**

- Setting up the Appointment
- Early mornings or late afternoons are usually the best time. It is my experience that the middle of the day is usually planned for interoffice meetings, high octane situations, out of office or conference calls.
  - Set up the meeting day and time, the person and where it will be held.
  - Find out if anyone else will be attending and how many.

### **Seventh Step**

- The Presentation Packet
- This packet contains the information that you want presented.
- A. Endorsement letters from other agencies presently using the program or ministry, in and around your state.
- B. Forms that the agency, as well as the program, will be using to facilitate the program.
- C. Forms are documented evidence of the individuals attending your program. These are considered confidential and are to be kept in a secure place. Forms may be considered as court documented evidence.
- D. Programs/classes that you will be conducting and an outline of the curriculum you will be teaching.
- E. Proof of certification or where you received your training.

F. Business cards with your name and number.

Programs available through Christian Prisoner Fellowship:

- “Recovery & Beyond”, teacher and student workbook
- “Reclaiming Reality”—(Healing the scars of addiction) is a twelve week course dealing with Chemical Addiction.
- “Reclaiming Reality II”—Emotions and Anger, Anger Management course and training book.
- CPF Mentoring Initiative
- CPF Resources (“Breaking-In” Newsletter, “Born to Lose,” Grief Recovery Resources, “Redeeming the Time While Doing Time” Series, “A Word in Due Season,” and “Lighten Up,” Basic and Advanced. Correspondence Certificate Course and much more.
- CPF R.A.I.N Project
- Personal & Spiritual development
- Relationship Development
- Financial Management
- Fatherhood Initiative
- The New You—Reformation of Identity

[Anger Management by David R. Olsen](#)

### **Eighth Step**

Bring enough presentation packets for all involved for each meeting you will be conducting.

### **Ninth Step**

- The Presentation
- Explain who you are.
  - A. Your name, who/what you represent
  - Personal experience in the field.
  - A. Explain your field experience and how many years you have been involved and any certifications.
    - What is it you want to do—goals?
    - A. Before going to a meeting, you must know what program you are going to present.
    - B. During the presentation, it is your goal to get them to add your programs/resources to what they are already doing.
    - C. Getting them to accept your program is done by completely answering their questions.
      - When are you available to start?
      - A. Give them the date and locations where you will be able to hold the classes
      - B. Days and times you are available.
      - Personalize the packet.
      - A. Business cards with the name of your organization.
      - Cost
      - A. Anger management class is free within the institution, for the probation and

parole departments you will establish the price for each class based on a twelve week program, and the participant will have to purchase a workbook.

Here are some of the questions you may be asked!

- Can a participant start any time or do they have to wait for the first lesson to start?
  - A. The courses are open ended - the participant can start any time.
- How many hours are participant assigned?
  - A. The length of the course is determined by you or the agency and depends upon the need of each individual. Minimum course length is twelve weeks.
- How much does your program cost?
  - A. The Anger Management classes are not free. The cost should be based on the going price in your state, because of your certification.
  - B. Most other programs are free, unless the agency using your programs requires a fee.
- Where do your volunteers come from?
  - A. The community—your Church

### **Tenth Step**

What not to say during a presentation.

- Don't offer them any services you are not able to perform.
- Don't fake it - if you don't know, be honest and tell them.
- When presenting a substance abuse program there are different concepts that people believe in - be careful what approach you take.
  - A. The Disease Model—Alcoholism is a disease.
  - B. The Cognitive Model—The idea that how we think has a controlling effect on how we act.
  - C. The Sin Model—Substance abuse is a moral/Biblical issue
  - D. I personally believe in the "Sin Model," but when making a presentation it is best not to mention any of these if you do not have to.

### **Eleventh Step**

Work with other facilities and churches in your district/state to get any information needed in making your presentation. You may also ask one of the other more experienced churches to help you with your presentation. [If possible have someone from established ministries come with you. This adds a 3<sup>rd</sup> party endorsement which does carry some credibility.](#)

### **Twelfth Step**

Working with the institution or agency

- If your program is accepted work with the institution or agency as you stated.
  - Be prompt, professional, and accountable.
  - Maintain positive communication with all officials, including positive reports if attitude changes, class participation, responses, and evaluations of the class.
- [Never ever challenge the authority, remember you are in their "Caesar's house"](#)

Resources:

\* Michael Rickenbaker, *Breaking Into Prison II*. Nashville: Spirit & Truth Publications, 2008