

A
MESSAGE OF HOPE,
comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ

Do's & Don'ts for Regular Volunteers

The following is a list of DOs and DON'Ts for people who serve in jail and prison ministry. It is not meant to be an inclusive list, but is a guideline.

Dos:

- Be prepared. You cannot talk to men for God until you have talked to God for men. Know what you plan to do, and have your material ready.
- Be on time, both going in and coming out. Our friends inside will expect you to be on time arriving, and the administration will expect you to be on time going out.
- Always pray with our friends inside.
- If at all possible, always work through the chaplain or assigned coordinator.
- Dress appropriately. Women need to be especially careful to dress in a modest manner.
- Know and follow the rules of the institution.
- Develop the trust and confidence of the staff and administration as well as our friends inside.
- Be yourself.
- Be an understanding friend and a good listener.
- Be honest.
- Be consistent and dependable and honor your commitments.
- Be cautious. Some individuals will try to con you or manipulate you.
- Be willing to learn.
- Speak in a clear, simple manner. Do not use big words or theological terms without explaining them.
Do not speak down to anyone.
- Use wisdom about counseling, especially with members of the opposite sex.

- Make sure that you have permission to distribute Bibles and Christian literature before doing so.
- Work at remembering the names of our friends inside, both for follow-up visits and for prayer.
- Encourage our friends inside to study the Bible and to enroll in correspondence courses.
- Share Christ with the staff as well as our friends inside. Always bring enough tracts for them as well.
- Share how you became a Christian, and your relationship with Christ.
- Ask about their relationship with Christ, and their beliefs. Be sure to pay attention to their answers.
- Be careful about using the word “love.” Specify that you are talking about the love of one Christian for another, NOT ROMANTIC LOVE.
- Remember that our friends inside are human beings first, and prisoners second. They have personal needs, frustrations, and weaknesses just like you. God loves them just as much as He loves you.
- Be supportive of the chaplain and respectful to the administration.
- When confidential information is shared with you, keep it confidential.

Don'ts:

- Do not give out your personal address or telephone number.
- Do not do errands for anyone.
- Do not make promises that you cannot or will not keep.
- Do not become involved in an ego trip. If your purpose in this work is to receive earthly glory, or to get stories to share, get out. You will only hurt the work.
- Do not send money or expensive gifts to anyone.
- Do not bring anything to an inmate or out from an inmate without checking with the authorities first.
- Do not bring in contraband.
- Do not ask about anyone's crime.
- Do not go in as a prison expert or reformer. We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ, period.
- Do not write letters of recommendation for a friend inside unless you have personally known him for a reasonable period of time, and can personally attest to the things you are saying.
- Do not say that you understand how a prisoner feels, unless you have been in prison yourself.

- Do not act shocked or surprised by anything a friend inside says or does.
- Do not argue with our friends inside.
- Do not call our friends inside boys or girls.
- Do not give unasked for advice or try to tell a friend inside how he should do something.
- Do not get involved in legal matters.
- Do not go in discouraged. Our friends inside do not need to hear about all of your problems, except if you use the total experience as an example of how God has helped you deal with the problem.
- Do not offer something to one individual that you are not willing and able to give to every individual in the facility.
- Do not talk about unnecessary controversial subjects. If they get into something about another preacher or denomination and some problem related to them, get back on track by reminding them that God will hold that person accountable for his actions, but that He will also hold them responsible for theirs as well. Do not criticize the administration. Some points that you should consider:
 - It is the administration that allows you access to “their” prison.
 - If you talk poorly about the administration and officers in front of our friends inside, they will wonder what you say about them when meeting with security.
 - God tells us that we are subject to, and must respect civil authority. They are God’s anointed leaders of that facility.

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Do's & Don'ts for Outreach Volunteers

- Do use only your first name and last initial, and address as follows:
Kyle M
Message of Hope
PO Box 221
Washington, MI 48094
- Do encourage and pray for your friend inside regularly.
- Do always pray for wisdom and guidance.
- Do seek prayer support from others.
- Do write at least once a month if possible.
- Do be a good listener and give hope through God's word.
- Do be aware than your friend inside may have emotional ups and downs. You may be able to provide some emotional stability.
- Do be aware of con games.
- Do be prepared for romantic overtures.
- Do check prison regulations before sending anything other than your letter.
- Do remember that the only responsibility a Pen Pal has is to be a friend through correspondence.
- Do be a good listener.
- Do be very kind and courteous.
- Do pray about the positive influence for Christ's kingdom you will have on your friend inside.
- Do seek to love and serve as God would.
- Do be yourself. Share your life – your joys and concerns.
- Do be patient. You may not always see the results, but you are making a difference in someone's life.

- Do be accepting of the person, even if you disagree with his or her thoughts or actions.
- Do allow the other person to serve you. Don't feel that you always have to be the "giver" in the relationship.
- Do call upon others members of Message of Hope for help when you need it.
- Do learn to say "No" to the person as needed.
- Do be aware of physical contact when you are visiting.
- Do try to build self-esteem by finding ways to encourage and give hope.
- Do be kind and courteous to all prison personnel when visiting.
- Don't give legal advice.
- Don't send money for financial support or legal fees.
- Don't send stamps of anything of value.
- Don't co-sign for loans, or process money orders.
- Don't ask why a person is incarcerated.
- Don't provide other names for your friend inside to write to.
- Don't send photos, except for group shots.
- Don't ask for gifts or money.
- Don't express a desire for romance or marriage.
- Don't give your friend inside your last name, home address, or telephone number.
- Don't criticize the prison staff, an institution, other races, countries, or religions.
- Don't be "preachy" or push people into a decision for Christ.
- Don't contact anyone if asked to by your friend inside.

If you aren't sure of something or need further explanation please don't hesitate to contact Kyle by text, phone, or email!