



P.O. Box 1052
Caddo Mills, TX 75135

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A Coalition of Ministries and Church Partnerships

Pen Pal - Do's and Don'ts

Who Should Be A Pen Pal?

What is the profile of an ideal pen-pal candidate?

1. Someone who is stable, emotionally and spiritually. The volatile environment of prisons means that prisoners often have roller-coaster emotions and experiences. The pen pal needs to be able to rise above the volatility and stick to the original purpose of spiritual encouragement.
2. A pen pal must be motivated for ministry. There is little public glory attached to this ministry, but there can be great personal reward and treasures in heaven. "Doing unto the least of these" has its own particular brand of encouragement and satisfaction that comes only from being obedient to God and His Word.
3. It is important to commit. Follow-through is vital. It can be emotionally devastating for a prisoner to take the risk of writing and then not to hear back, or to be rejected without good reason. Some pen-pal relationships continue for a decade or more, and some volunteers write to many prisoners simultaneously. This is a long-term friendship and discipleship ministry, not a short-range or "one-time" ministry.
4. Buoyancy is required. The pen pal must not easily be discouraged. There may be months when the prisoner doesn't respond. Gifts may return unopened or just disappear. You may be disappointed—prisoners often relapse or tire if their personal agenda isn't being filled. You may be assigned to 2 or 3 prisoners before finding one who results in a satisfying relationship. Stay at it. Do not be discouraged.

Now that you are motivated to minister and understand the commitment necessary, it's time to look at how to get started.

Getting Started

Your First Letter

1. Start in prayer instead of ending in prayer.
2. Always use a safe return address never use your physical address. If you don't have a post office box then use your church's address or you can use the ministries:
Disciples 4 Christ
P. O. Box 1052
Caddo Mills, Tx 75135
3. When addressing your envelope, always include your pen pal's name and Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) number. Be careful to be accurate, or your letter will be returned.
4. Use blank or lined paper, stationery, note cards, or greeting cards. DO NOT tape, paste or stick anything to the paper, nor can you use cards with layers of paper or glued-on attachments.
5. There is a chance that your pen pal has been released or transferred since requesting someone to write, so keep your first letter short.
6. Include the following information in your first note to your pen pal. Please use your own words.
 - Introduce yourself as a volunteer: with Disciples 4 Christ Ministry.
 - Explain that you have chosen him/her as your pen pal and would like to write on a regular bases.
 - Tell the offender you will pray for him/her regularly and ask her/him to let you know if she/he has a prayer request.
 - Share on of your favorite scriptures.
 - Remind your pen pal that God loves them.



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How Often And What To Write?

1. In the beginning mail a card or letter to your pen pal every two weeks or so. Do not wait on a response before you write your next letter.
2. Remember that you are not doing this to receive mail; you are doing this because God has called you to serve as a spiritual mentor to a woman/man who desperately needs the love of Christ in her/his life.
3. The following are suggestions of things you may want to include in your letter.

Ask your pen pal to describe what her/his day is like (wait until you have established a relationship with the offender before asking this).

Send a prayer — either write scripture as a prayer or write your own prayer for your pen pal.

Share favorite scriptures verses or a scripture that addresses something she has shared with you

The DO NOTS

1. DO NOT enclose stamps, return envelopes, or bookmarks. These are considered "contraband".
2. DO NOT send money, no matter how reasonable the request may sound. If an offender has less than \$5.00 on their prison account, she/he will be classified as "indigent" and can request up to five stamps per week.
3. DO NOT use staples or paper clips. These are considered "contraband".
4. DO NOT probe into your pen pal's personal life. It's ok if she/he chooses to share personal details with you, but don't inquire.
5. DO NOT try to fix your pen pal's problems _ you are not her/his counselor! Your job is to encourage her/his spiritual growth and to pray for the offender. Let scripture references from the Bible be her/his "counselor".
6. DO NOT share information about yourself —where you live, work, or about your family. If you believe a circumstance or happening in your life can be used as part of your testimony or ministry and the pen pal may benefit from knowing then ask God's direction in sharing.
7. DO NOT ask what you can do for your pen pal. Instead, ask what you can pray for him/her.
8. DO NOT offer any legal assistance or advice.
9. DO NOT share confidential details with others about your pen pal. Respect the offender's privacy.
10. DO NOT wait for a response to your letter before you write again. It is more important that you write regularly and consistently.



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The DO'S

1. Do keep copies of your letters or a written record of what you write to your pen pal for your own reference.
2. Do be supportive and encouraging of your pen pal's spiritual growth. Include appropriate scripture verses
3. Do write consistently. You may be the only constant and reliable person in her life.
4. Do be yourself in your letters. Appropriate humor is great!
5. Do expect manipulation. This is not a personal insult to you; many of the offenders have had to use this to survive, and it is a way of life for them.
6. Do be assertive. Say a clear and simple "NO" if you are asked to do something that is against TDCJ rules and regulations: Example (send money, contact an attorney, etc.). You set a good example when you follow rules.
7. Do remain neutral about complaints regarding the treatment offenders or their living conditions.
8. Do accept your pen all as a beloved child of God.
9. Do contact the ministry office if you need help answering a difficult question. 214-230-3426.
10. Do pray for your pen pal on a regular basis.





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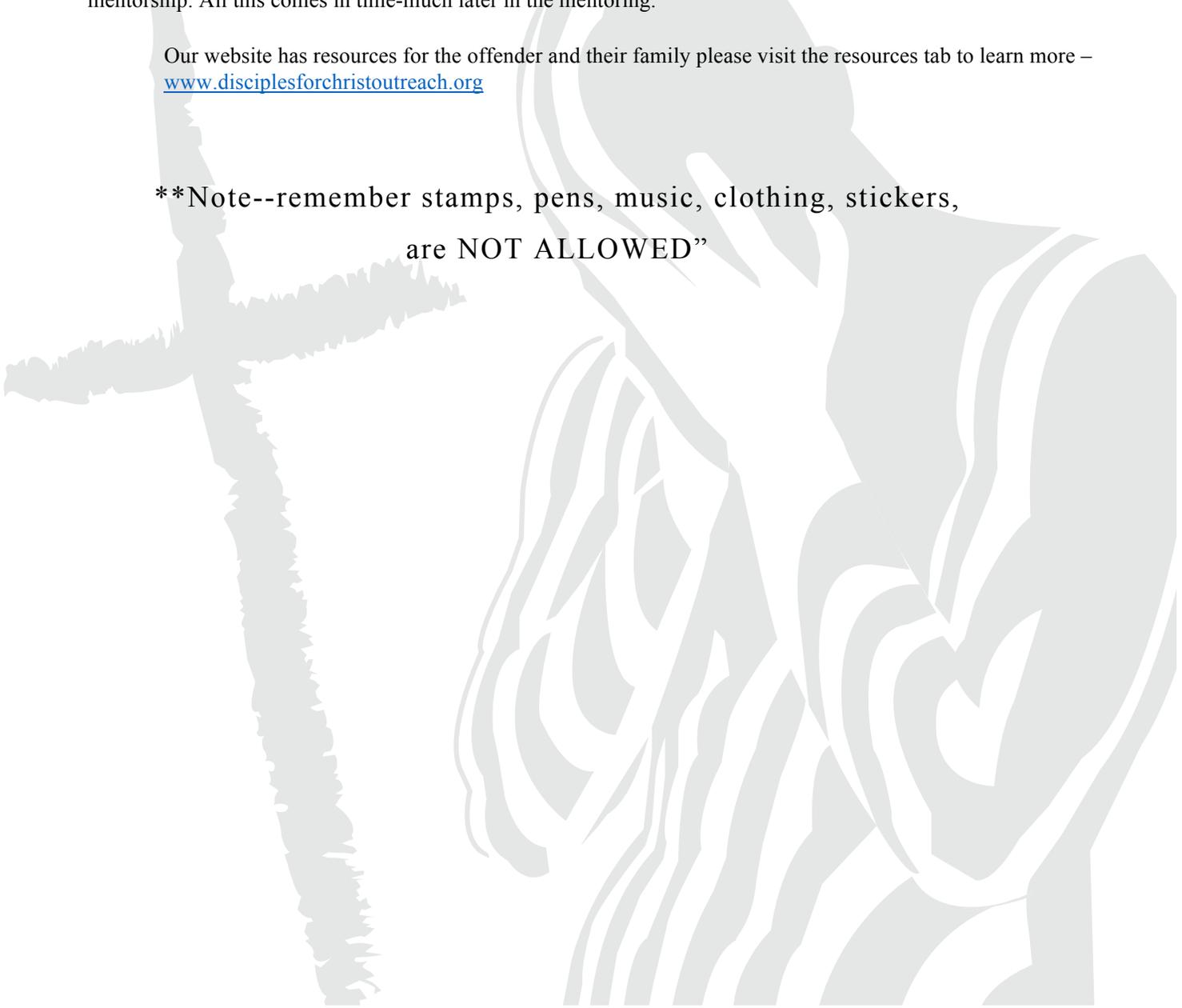
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Gifts You Can Send

1. Include a handwritten or typed copy of an inspirational poem or story (include source).
2. Decorative note cards. When your time is limited, note cards take less time to write than a letter.
3. Remember holidays and special occasions, such as Valentine's Day, Christmas, Mother's Day, etc. And send a special card. Holiday's and special occasions can be depressing to your pen pal, and she will appreciate knowing that you thought of her.
4. You may send Bibles, Bible Studies, other Christian books, but they must be mailed directly from the store. TDCJ will reject any item/s that is mailed from an individual.
5. Magazines and newspapers subscriptions can be ordered for the offender
Sending things to an offender should be limited to special occasions (Birthday, Christmas, etc.) and it should be after you've gotten to know them. Starting a relationship with "What can I do for you" isn't the way to establish a mentorship. All this comes in time-much later in the mentoring.

Our website has resources for the offender and their family please visit the resources tab to learn more – www.disciplesforchristoutreach.org

****Note--remember stamps, pens, music, clothing, stickers,
are NOT ALLOWED****





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