

Evangel Prison Ministries

"Go ye into all the world." Mark 16:15



Dear Pen Pal Volunteer,

Thank you so much for all of the time and concern you put into this ministry! The inmates very much appreciate your compassion and prayer. As of February 2002, we are dealing with nearly 2,000 inmates in 29 states in over 260 different facilities - and the number is ever increasing! Praise God! You have chosen to be a part of a ministry that God is using in a mighty way! If you are just beginning in this ministry or are just finding it hard to know what to write (and NOT to write), we thought we would offer a few guidelines to help.

1. **Always pray for wisdom for the situation before writing your letter.** Jesus knows all about that inmate and what he or she needs. We're not here to solve their problems, but to point them to Jesus through prayer and the Word of God -- and to encourage them in whatever way we can. Some inmates have no friends and their families have forsaken them. It means a lot to them just to know that someone on the outside is praying for them and caring enough to write.
2. We now have them fill out an application in order to be put on the waiting list. We started this procedure in order to eliminate those inmates that weren't sincere about *Christian fellowship*, but in truth only wanted a romantic relationship. This seems to be working fine. Now, when you start writing a new inmate, the application will be included for your benefit, as it has their birthday (so you could send them a card), their hobbies, things they CANNOT receive in their particular facility, and their testimony. Then at the very bottom, the statement they read and sign should make it clear that we are not a romantic link. **Anything they have requested on the application or in their original letter (such as a Bible, correspondence courses, or salvation information) has already been taken care of before you receive it. Also, if they addressed their original letter to "Linda" or "Alice" - don't worry about it. Those are the names of 2 of our office workers who handle correspondence courses.**
3. Remember, they're not in prison for *being good*, so try not to be shocked at things they might write in their letters. Usually, the circumstances surrounding their lives weren't good either. However, we need to remember that the same WORD applies to a murderer as well as someone who wrote bad checks - God loves them both equally. (If you ever have a question or problem with anything that has been written to you, don't hesitate to give us a call.)
4. After writing, if you don't get a response within a couple of weeks, *don't be discouraged*. Maybe they don't have any stamps, got transferred to another facility, or are just depressed about something. If you feel led to write a second letter, please do so.
5. If, **for any reason**, you decide you no longer want to be a part of this ministry, **please let us know**. (We know that God has people in some ministries *just for a season*). Be courteous and give us a call (that's the Christian thing to do!) Or, if we've sent a new inmate to you and you can't get to them within a week or two - **please let us know**. We understand that situations can arise at times that keep us from doing things that we would like to do. HOWEVER, we in the office will have no way of knowing that inmate hasn't received a letter - we think he's being taken care of. **We won't mind reassigning them - but we have to know**. Remember that the inmates have feelings, too. Some have had no mail for years and have waited months *with us*.

PEN PAL RULES:

- Be sure to use (Your first name), Evangel Prison Ministry, PO Box 19229, Louisville, KY 40259.

ADDRESS YOUR ENVELOPE LIKE THIS:

Attn: Your Name (no last name)
EVANGEL PRISON MINISTRIES
PO Box 19229
Louisville, KY 40259

Inmate Name, #0000000 ← **Do not omit this!**
Inmate's Facility, location (example A-147 low)
PO Box 0000 or Street address
City, State and zip

- **Make sure to tell them to put your name (or nickname) on their envelope.** When the inmate replies to your letter, they will address it to the church and we will put it in another envelope and send it on to you. NEVER use your last name. Use your first, middle, or nickname only. *We in the office need to know what you are calling yourself - it makes it much easier for us.* Also, if you decide to change the name you are using later, please let us know.
- **Every part of the inmate's address is important.** (Letters come back to us *frequently* because they were addressed wrong and we go ahead, correct them, and mail them again). This is a reminder to you. DON'T LEAVE OFF THEIR ID#. The inmate WILL NOT RECEIVE YOUR LETTER without this number on the envelope. *If any part of the inmate's name or address is unclear to you - please call us first and we can find out for you.*
- **Never ask them what they are in prison for.** (If they volunteer that information, that's okay).
- **Be careful about giving hope** concerning things such as their time of release, marital situation, etc. We can always pray God's will to be done in their lives. However, as badly as they want to be out of their situation, God may not be ready for them to be released. *His timing is perfect,* though they may not yet understand or believe that. Maybe share with them how you were able to feel God's love and Presence in the midst of a bad time in your own life.
- **This ministry offers 3 Bible courses, and 1 in Spanish.** ONE OF THE GOALS OF THIS MINISTRY IS TO HELP THE INMATES BECOME STRONG MEN AND WOMEN OF GOD, so that when they get released - they will be able to stand firm in their faith. (Some may never be released, but God still can use them where they are!). Therefore, we ask you to encourage them to pray daily, read the Word daily, and to take our Bible courses (if they're not already doing so). This will especially help those that don't have church services regularly (in their facility). We want them to learn to put God's Word first in their lives. Our Bible courses consist of: **"90 Days of Change"** (Prison version) - this teaches the basics of Christian life, how to pray, how to have a personal relationship with the Lord, why we should tithe, etc. We also have our **5-part Correspondence course**, which deals with "Your New Life in Christ", "You, Your Marriage and Family", "Your Best Friend--The Holy Spirit", "The Church" and "How to Pray Effectively". Our

third course is called "**TOTAL VICTORY--Ephesians and the Armor of God**". It deals with putting on the whole armor of God. (This course is also offered in Spanish). We also have a variety of literature available to you to send to your inmate, such as: Literature on the Holy Spirit, How to Have Peace with God, How to Be Sure of Your Salvation, explanations about the King James and the NIV versions of the Bible, and information about receiving free monthly magazines from proven ministries.

- **Be careful how you end your letter.** Instead of using the word "Love", say instead, "God bless you", "Yours in Christ", "Your brother or sister in Christ" or something like that (for a lonely inmate, the word "Love" can mean much more than you intended).
- **We can't send them anything** (this includes photos, money or money orders, stamps or gifts of any kind). If it is indicated on their application that they CAN receive tapes or Christian paperback books and you decide to send them either, PLEASE give us a call first. Some inmates *think* they can receive these things when in reality their facility says "no". We will call and double check with the facility for you.
- **We cannot make any phone calls for them or write any letters for them.** (You may be asked at some point to write a letter to the Parole Board or to a Judge to help secure their release.) Tell them *gently but firmly* that you are sorry, but you have strict rules you must go by. At times, we are asked to write to a family member to encourage them or even for us to send the family member a Bible course (because it blessed the inmate SO MUCH). Before you write or send anything to a family member, give us a call, and we will judge on that particular situation.

THESE RULES ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!!! **You must obey them!** Please understand - this Ministry is *allowed* to minister by *privilege* and not by "*right*" in these facilities. AT ANY TIME, *the ministry itself* can be barred from doing any kind of ministry work - INCLUDING PEN PALS - within any facility. THIS HAS HAPPENED. We have no legal recourse to argue with them. Believe us - the inmate's mail is opened and inspected for contraband! So, thank you for obeying the rules.

If you have any questions concerning anything we've mentioned or failed to mention, don't hesitate to call us at (502) 964-3304, ext. 108.

We love and appreciate each of you, and God will truly bless you for your efforts in this ministry.

Thank you!

EVANGEL PRISON MINISTRIES