

Doing Time

I find it very amazing learning from people outside prison including penpal's perception of life inside prison. A certain naiveté is expected when they've never been to prison, or visited prison. Many haven't even known anyone that has gone to prison.

From my perception, prison is a microcosm of society. It is a community with institutional laws and restrictions, albeit to my taste, much too many restrictions. Inside or outside, the golden rule: do unto others as you'd have them do unto you benefits all.

Some think all we do is eat, sleep and watch TV. I can't speak for others, but that would be too boring for me. I like to keep busy doing constructive things, having good conversation, a few hearty laughs, then relax at the end of the day.

I have always been a goal oriented person. I remain so today. Setting goals, short term that leads to long term goals are a way of motivating me to work toward achieving something worth while. They can range from personal such as changing certain behaviors and attitudes that will make me a better, wiser or stronger person; or professional or vocational goals such as i.e. completing a course, G.E.D. (Highschool Equivalency Diploma) for those who lack one, Bible study, learning a foreign language, or improving reading and writing skills et. al.

It requires discipline and work to accomplish anything worth while in life. I happen to be a dreamer and a visionary who believes all things are possible with God. People outside of prison sometimes find it whimsical how busy a lot of women and guys are in prison. Especially those who write and read voraciously, which certainly describes me. Time flies for me and for all who keep busy making good use of their time.

My theory is the whole man/woman (being) needs to be exercised, engaged and stimulated. By that I mean the spiritual first. Also the physical, mental, emotional well being, and the intellectual.

The spiritual: I like to get up very early (3:00-4:00 am) before everyone else gets up and stirring around, while it's still quiet and spend my first 2-4 hours with God. In prayer, study of scriptures, writing spiritual pursuits, and meditation. Worship/sing to the Lord/praise. This sets the stage for a blessed day. I liken it to filling up one's (spiritual) gas tank for a long arduous journey. You certainly don't want to start out on empty. My joy, peace and love levels are filled. The anointing (Holy Spirit) is bubbling over.

Next is usually the physical. I work out different body parts on respective days. It's imperative to exercise, diet or eat as sensibly as possible to maintain good health. I see the body similar in many ways to a car. If you abuse them without performing maintenance, fluid levels etc. it will break down. They break down naturally as they or we age. It keeps the heart and lungs healthy.

The mental/intellectual, - challenge the brain to learn new subjects, your interests as well as areas you're not interested in. Reading, chess, crossword puzzles, anything that will stimulate learning. I indulge those things plus study Spanish and other disciplines and academic pursuits. That will stimulate and challenge my brain to think/concentrate.

The mental is closely connected with the emotional. The mind, what one thinks about, affects the emotional state. Therefore it's very important to think on the things that are positive, healthy, virtuous, true, lovely, good report and praise worthy as the apostle Paul teaches in Phillipians 4:4-9. This helps my

thinking to remain positive. Also avoid as much stress and stressful situations as possible. I realize some situations are impossible to avoid. Just being incarcerated on Death Row itself is very stressful. Nevertheless there are situations and circumstances we can control or avoid. Prayer helps me tremendously because I give my burdens, cares and worries to God and I no longer hold onto them. When I get up off my knees, I've given them to Him.

One of my mottos is: If I'm doing anything supposedly for fun and pleasure and it becomes too stressful, I don't need it. Stress and worrying not only adversely affects the mental/emotional well being but the body as well. It's been proven to cause heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure, weakened immune system and many other maladies in the body, even nervous (mental) breakdowns.

Meditation on scripture, on God or other pleasant things, helps also. Forgiveness to those who have mistreated, hurt, or did you wrong helps the mental/emotional as well, because it releases the hate, anger and vengeance in your own mind and heart and releases peace in your own heart/mind.

Last but not least, sharing joys and sorrows with those we love and care about helps, whether it's people on the outside or inside. Just human contact, a hug, touch on the shoulder. If you feel down, pray for and/or help encourage someone else; or do something kind for others. It helps lift my spirits immeasurably. Visits and letters from people who care about us, our supporters are an invaluable priceless asset. It instills hope. Love makes a man/woman know we're not alone in this world. Despite our trials ahead or the climate we live in, regardless how cold, it's a great comfort to know you are not alone. If you're loved, you're never alone. Love is the blanket that keeps me warm, levitates me over and above my circumstances. It's the most powerful energy source in the universe, stronger than hate, death, war and prison and transcends every ocean, sky, distance, time, and prison bars. If you will only embrace it and let her embrace you. She is healing balm for your troubles, she'll give you peace in war, joy in pain, extricate you from the doldrums of hate and set your mind at ease. God is Love.

In closing: bad things happen to the best of us, and good things happen to the worst of us.

The measure of a man/woman is not the negative things that befell us, but how we respond to adversity. Do you run, hide or blame the world, for not trying to overcome, repent, grow, be/do better, change, turn your situation around? Or do you look adversity in the face, face your fears, accept responsibility where applicable, and say: I was wrong, I'm sorry, what's done is done, I can't change the past, but I can change the present and the future by changing my attitude and mindset and doing better today. Today is all we have.

Tomorrow is not promised. Enjoy life, but live it responsibly. Think before you act. Keep love, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness in your heart. Treat people like you want to be treated. Be the best person you can be. Enjoy your life regardless of your lot. But don't forget to help and serve others. This is living life to the fullest, we all are doing time. Remember, the measure of a man is not the tragedy that befell him but how he responds to adversity. What is life? But a vapor. It appears and vanishes away.

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