

sojourners

Mass Incarceration

Prayer Guide

Pray for those who are incarcerated and for our society that has fallen into this devaluing pattern.

- The U.S. has less than 5% of the world's total population, but holds 25% of the world's prisoner population.
- The U.S. currently incarcerates 2.3 million people.

Pray for the men and women living behind bars, that they may be transformed by the renewing of their minds and come to know the transformative power of the cross.

- Recidivism among repeat offenders has dropped in some states by 33% among inmates who earned a GED while incarcerated.
- Only 18% of inmates feel supported in their academic journey.

Pray for the perseverance and discernment to do what the Lord has commanded the church to do.

"I, the Lord, have called you and given you power to see that justice is done on earth. Through you I will make a covenant with all peoples; through you I will bring light to the nations. You will open the eyes of the blind and set free those who sit in dark prisons."

Isaiah 42:6-7

Pray for racial equity in arrests and sentencing.

- More African Americans are in the criminal justice system than there were slaves in the 1850s.
- Two-thirds of inmates arrested for drug offenses are Hispanic or black, even though whites and minorities use drugs at the same rate.
- It is predicted that one in every three black males will serve time in jail or prison in their lifetime.

"Then God said, 'Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.'"

Genesis 1:26

Pray for at-risk youth, that God brings adult mentors into their lives; that they recognize the importance of education and relationships; and that they always know their own value and dignity.

- 7.3 million children have at least one incarcerated parent.
- Approximately 70% of these children will end up in the criminal justice system in their lifetime.
- Children of incarcerated parents are five times more likely to commit crimes than their peers.

"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'"

Matthew 19:14

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Luke 4:18-19

The Lord says...

"When the time comes to save you, I will show you favor and answer your cries for help. I will guard and protect you and through you make a covenant with all peoples. I will let you settle once again in your land that is now laid waste. I will say to the prisoners, 'Go free!' and to those who are in darkness, 'Come out to the light!' They will be like sheep that graze on the hills; they will never be hungry or thirsty. Sun and desert heat will not hurt them, for they will be led by one who loves them..."

Isaiah 49:8-10

Pray that mandatory minimums and harsh drug sentencing laws may be changed. Pray for those who have been sentenced to life without parole for nonviolent drug offenses.

- The amount of people incarcerated for drug offenses increased 1,412% between 1980 and 2006.
- There are approximately 3,278 people serving life without parole for nonviolent offenses.

Pray that God may end private prison corporations and the business of making money off of inmates. Pray that God will use stockholders to protect the image of the Lord in each inmate.

- The average minimum wage for inmates working in private prisons is \$0.93 per hour. Some inmates receive \$0 per hour.
- In 2011, the Corrections Corporation of America reported \$1.7 billion in revenue.
- In 2011, the Geo Group reported \$1.6 billion in total revenue.

Pray for those suffering from mental illness or addiction, that they may receive medical treatment and rehabilitation, for they are worthy and deserving of medical care.

- About 56% of state prisoners, 45% of federal prisoners, and 64% of inmates suffer from mental illness.
- Nearly 76% of inmates who have a mental health problem are dependent on or abuse alcohol or drugs.

"News about [Jesus] spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease...he healed them all."

Matthew 4:24

Pray for our nation's leaders and decision makers that they may govern in support of all people, including returning citizens.

"First of all, I encourage you to make petitions, prayers, intercessions, and prayers of thanks for all people, for rulers, and for everyone who has authority over us. Pray for these people so that we can have a quiet and peaceful life always lived in a godly and reverent way. This is good and pleases God..."

1 Timothy 2:1-3

Pray for the church that we may humble ourselves, show no judgment to those incarcerated, and treat all members of the body equally.

"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

Romans 12:3-5