

Summary of Biblical Rationale for Prison Ministry

- I. **Obedience to the Great Commission: Matthew 28:** *Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

- II. **The Gospel is for everyone:** *Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to EVERYONE who believes. . .Rom. 3:20 For by works of the law NO human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. 21 BUT NOW the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for ALL who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.*

- III. **It is an act of mercy to visit those in prison. . .and we who are debtors to God’s mercy should be eager to show mercy to others.**
 - A. *Titus 3:4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.*
 - B. **In Resources for Deacons: Love Expressed Through Mercy Ministries, Tim Keller writes,** “In the crowded, brutal, lonely and impersonal setting of a prison, where murders and suicides are routine, inmates experience a number of crying needs:
 1. The need for **friendship.**
 2. The need for **family bridge-building**
 3. The need for **dignity**
 4. The need for **preparation for re-entry into society**
 5. The need for **advocates**
 6. The need for **reconciliation with God**
 - C. **Jesus tells us to visit those in prison:** *Matthew 25:31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me*

*drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, **I was in prison and you came to me.***

D. Hebrews 13:3 *3 Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.*

E. The Bible speaks of Jesus' ministry in terms of "preaching liberty/freedom to prisoners: *Luke 4:16-19: 16 And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. 17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives [i.e. freedom/release to prisoners]*

F. And so, in light of the fact that God visited us in our bondage and mercifully redeemed us we are called to visit, remember and preach freedom in Christ to prisoners.