



“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God.”

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 18:10

Compassion for Those Affected by Crime and Incarceration

A woman in her 20s pulled her long hair into a tight ponytail. Across the back of her shirt was stamped the word *Inmate*. Upon introduction, she warmly invited me to call her Ella (name has been changed). As the prison Church services began, I wondered why she was in prison and why she decided to come to a Church meeting today. Over the next few hours I learned the answers to my questions.

Ella was incarcerated for selling drugs. Addicted at the age of 15 and arrested several times over the next five years, she was now serving a seven-year term. As a group we talked about our faith in Jesus Christ. I asked Ella why she had come to worship services today.

Her reply came quickly: "Sisterhood," she said. "I'm a daughter of God, these are my sisters, and this is my Relief Society group."

Ella's words brought tears to my eyes as I reflected upon the strength of her testimony and the love God has for her.

Over the years, I have visited with many people who are or who have been incarcerated. Many are trying to change and rebuild their lives upon the teachings of Jesus Christ. Through these visits, I have learned that anyone can discover God's eternal plan and feel inspired to grow.

In this issue, you can read how the gospel can still bless the lives of incarcerated members (see pages 32, 36). The digital version of this issue also includes a few personal stories on this topic.

As you read, I hope you will feel the love God has for all His children and discover for yourself how you can increase in your compassion for those who are in prison, their families, and others affected by crime.

Sincerely,



Doug Richens

Church Manager of Prison Ministry