



“Managing Attitudes Toward Returning Citizens”

Pastor Bryan Hudson, D.Min.

New Covenant Church

The Words of Jesus

Matthew 25:31 *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

Matthew 25:34, *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of 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 took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; **I was in prison** and you came to Me.'*

Matthew 25:37, *"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these **My brethren**, you did it to Me.'*

Maintain a Kingdom Perspective

- Jesus spent time with people society avoided and marginalized
- Jesus brings restoration and new beginnings.
- Jesus changed lives and expected people to do better, *“Go, and sin no more.”* (John 8:11)
- Our attitudes and actions should reflect Christ’s heart.

See Their Humanity

- All people are “Imago Dei” —made in the image of God.
- One’s past does not define ones value, identity, or future potential.
- Avoid labels as identity

Believe in Redemption

- Scripture teaches new creation reality (2 Cor. 5:17). Expect transformation—don't assume failure. The grace of God is real for people have genuine faith, with works
- Extend grace as God extended grace to us.

Practice Compassion, Not Suspicion

- Avoid default fear or distrust.
- Ask how you can support rather than question motives.
- Walk with people, not watch from a distance.

Walk With the Willing

- Re-integration is hard—That's why it cannot be done without help.
- Be patient; change takes time.
- Many returning citizens are highly motivated to do better, like
- **Luke 7:47**, *Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for **she loved much**. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."*

Don't Hold Their Past Over Them

– Practice the Golden Rule

- Avoid referencing past mistakes. There are obvious challenges with past sins/crimes, but don't make it harder for people.
- Don't assume past actions define who they are now.
- Allow people to begin again without stigma.

Help Remove Barriers, Not Create Them

- Encourage opportunities for housing, employment, and community. Provide information and access.
- Churches can advocate for fairness and second chances if forgiveness and redemption are understood.

Help People Recover “Agency”

- It is important for people to develop and maintain something called **agency**.
- **Agency** is the ability or power to act, make decisions, choose, and make things happen—to influence your own life and environment rather than being controlled by others or by circumstances.
- Incarceration takes away agency, so it takes effort and help to recover it.

Model Forgiveness

- Forgiveness isn't excusing wrong—it's refusing to label by past sin.
- Your forgiveness helps people forgive themselves.

Be a Safe Place

- Provide an environment free from judgment.
- A safe space promotes accountability and growth.

Encourage Responsibility and Growth

- Support people, but also expect maturity and accountability.
- Healthy boundaries help people thrive.