

# MINISTRY TO JUVENILES

ENVIRONMENTAL ENTRAPMENTS/ JUVENILE DETENTION/  
SPIRITUAL REGENERATION/ RESTORATIVE SOCIALIZED DEVELOPMENT

**Adult Ministries Department  
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists**



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## **INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE**

Juvenile behavior is a systemic dilemma that warrants full scale intervention from individuals and groups who are concerned about the future of our youth.

Juveniles are victims of cultural, environmental and socialized issues of survival from a myriad of entrapping influences. Youth are often duped by a psychological misnomer called invincibility, wherein lies the opportunity for misguidance and annihilation resulting in behavioral inclinations to engage in social vices such as gangs, substance abuse and criminal activities.

The behavioral falling away from cultural norms and the rectification of such impasses suggest the tremendous need for youth outreach. This global conundrum cannot be legislated nor can it find resolution in mass criminalization and institutionalization, which does not result in resolution of the personal quandaries that plague the juvenile population, it incubates repeat offenders.

Juvenile delinquency is predicated upon various extenuating circumstances that range from poverty, fatherless homes, deficient parental supervision and a lack of spiritual, social and core values that serve as building blocks for healthy family relationships, human growth and development.

In situations mentioned above, mentors, spiritual leaders and concerned life coaches are tantamount in helping juveniles to transition from reckless behavior to a more positive lifestyle.

The objective of this Ministry to Juveniles Handbook is to aid you, to guide you, and to give you a broader understanding of the lives of the juveniles and at-risk youths to whom you will be ministering, and hopefully to give them the hope they need for a better and secure future in Jesus Christ their Lord and Saviour.

## HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

The Ministry to Juveniles Handbook serves as a guide for those who are already ministering to Juvenile Offenders and for those who will be ministering to Juvenile Offenders and At-Risk-Youth.

### THE CHAPTERS

- Working with Juvenile Offenders and At-Risk Youth
- Ministry to the Oppressed
- Absentee Fatherhood
- Factors of Juvenile Behavior
- Gangs
- Media and Music Influences on Behavior
- The Christian's Efforts to Reach Juveniles
- Ministering at a Juvenile Facility
- Methodology of Ministering to Juveniles
- A Suggested Worship Format
- Self-Helps for Juveniles
- Working With Juveniles – Do's and Don'ts
- Juvenile Court Chronology
- A Story: From the Crack House to God's House
- To Those Engaged in Ministry to Juveniles and At-Risk Youth
- Resources

## CHAPTER 1

### Working with Juvenile Offenders and At-Risk Youth

Working with juvenile offenders is not a new problem but an old problem that has plagued society over the chasm of the years. In 1899, the Juvenile Court System was established to deal with juvenile issues. It was the hope of the court system to create an aversion to incarceration.<sup>1</sup> This would be the catalyst for promoting a more civil way for at-risk youth to receive the help that they need. Additionally, the Juvenile Justice System also exercised the *Parents Patriae Doctrine*, which stipulates that the state can step in and take over the role of a parent on behalf of a troubled juvenile until he begins to exercise positive changes or becomes an adult.

Helping troubled youth to stay out of the system by an improved quality of life is the key for survival.

Many at-risk youth believe they are insignificant because society has minimized their significance. Consequently, the feeling of having no place in the community leaves them in a nomadic state, feeling discarded by society.

At-risk youth confined in juvenile custody have a tendency to adhere to an attitude of aggression and manipulative behavior. Stigmatic behavior patterns appear to be created in juveniles that transition with them as they reintegrate back into society. Youth who come out of institutions are more committed to crime and are further alienated from their families and society. The abuse that juveniles face in controlled systems creates holistic dysfunctionality, where mental partialism inhibits them from proper acclimation into their respected communities.

Steven Fraser, *Bell Curve Wars*, indicates troubled youth cannot be excluded because of social makeup and environment. He states that any genetic predisposition is not a reliable measurement of their value.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services attests to the proliferation of youth violence by observing that “Violent crime and property crime is a major cause for arrests for troubled youth between the ages of 10 and 17.” At-risk youth in this age category are impacted by behavioral adversities from dysfunctional home experiences, school behavior, and challenges in their communities. These challenges include childhood maltreatment, dysfunctional parenting, parental criminality, truancy and dropping out of school, exposure to community violence, and poverty. All of these characteristics point to the plight of the troubled teen.

Typically, at-risk teens find it difficult to manage the pressures of life. Hence, at-risk youth tend to transition from total respect for authority to no respect for authority. In their metamorphosis to adulthood, the lack of social development is an ongoing transition.

## CHAPTER 2

### Ministry to the Oppressed

William Jefferson Clinton, forty-second president of the United States said in 1995 that juvenile violent crime is the country's most serious crime problem. It is an undeniable fact that disguised behind these macho, hardened, angry faces lies America's biggest threat and the church's greatest opportunity to do ministry. In order to fulfill this mission the church must exhibit an attitude of humility, compassion, and empathy in its ministry to troubled youth. In removing the veil of oppression from the heads of youth, the church must be cognizant of the fact that many good intentions of well-meaning parishioners have been poorly executed and misdirected. Many troubled youth have become disillusioned with the hypocritical lifestyles of professed Christians.

The majority of troubled youth today are a full three generations removed from anything remotely Christian. Fathers have abandoned the home and the authenticity of the mother's faith is found weighing in the balance. Exposure to Christianity to the young mind occurs most often through the God fearing relationship of the grandmother rather than through the parents.

In custody situations, the overwhelming response to Christianity by troubled youth is because of the grandmother's relationship with God. Dr. Scott J. Lawson substantiates this by declaring that many youth want come to Bible study because they are broken, often times the main reason is the impact of their grandmothers faith.

## CHAPTER 3

### Absentee Fatherhood

When the father is absent from the home it is major cause of youth incarceration and recidivism.

The absence of fatherhood and the predominance of motherhood have created a serious need for the church to include troubled youth in their ministry outreach. The primary influence in the lives of troubled youth from childhood to adulthood has been driven by the women in their lives. Over 95% of educators are women and our churches are predominantly women, therefore the absence of fatherhood in the life of troubled youth results in little or no male interaction. One out of two children in the United States grows up without a father. Even more starkly, in our inner cities, one out of five youth live with their father. The oppression that emanates from the absence of fathers creates a whole new dynamic for ministry. Paul had it right in his letter in I Corinthians 4:15 when he addressed the absence of fathers, *“Even though ye have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. (NIV).”* Troubled youth need the presence of fathers in their lives.

Ministering to oppressed youth is not an attempt to replace their fathers or parents. Nor is it an attempt to degrade their parents, nor be caught up in an attempt to replace their parents. Its goal is to delve into their core issues and to translate negative behaviors into positive behaviors. The intent is to make a difference in their lives in assisting them to overcome lingering adversities. *US News and World Report* reporting in a story from *Resiliency in Action, What is Resiliency?* showed how resilient children are at successfully overcoming trauma.

The children’s resilience was attributed to these three factors:

1. Having a curfew.
2. Eating dinner together as a family.
3. Attending church.



Factors such as these suggest that troubled youth need to have boundaries, community, and a spiritual relationship.

## CHAPTER 4

### Factors of Juvenile Behavior

#### Poverty:

One of the most enigmatic factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency is poverty.

*Parenting Challenges on Juvenile delinquency; February 4, 2014* denotes “Children coming from poor families are two and a half times likely to fall into crimes as compared to kids from a rich or well to do background.”

Why poverty sets the trend for juvenile crimes:

- *Facts on Child Poverty in the US* states that “22% of the children in the USA live in poverty.”

- Hunger in children is an inherent by product of adverse behavioral characteristics. One out of every 7 people in USA is food insecure.

According to *Facts about Hunger in America*, 13 million children live in poverty.

- *Parenting Challenges* denotes “A child from low income between the ages of 6 to 11 is at a greater risk of becoming involved in violent crime, and becoming a juvenile delinquent than a 12 to 15 year old.”
- Poverty produces social isolation and economic stress. Environmental factors in disadvantaged neighborhoods, exacerbates the social isolation of poor families by income levels, employment, welfare dependency and few opportunities for community participation.

- Pervasive poverty undermines the relevancy of education and upward mobility. Juveniles from communities, where devastating poverty levels exist, and juvenile crime is elevated and education is discredited. Education becomes an allusive commodity. Youth who drop out of school because of pervasive poverty do not find education appealing. Eighty-two percent of males who drop out of school from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade back are incarcerated.

Poverty can be psychologically depressing and cause juveniles to commit crimes due to the fact that they have not found any means to liberate themselves from their depressing condition.

## CHAPTER 5

### Gangs

It is an undeniable fact that peer group pressure is one of the strongest risk factors for juvenile youth involvement in delinquent behavior and gang membership.

Juvenile gang involvement and substance abuse continues to have an impact on the behavior of the juvenile community. Street gangs have and will forever perpetrate a false sense of security and belonging to impressionable youth.

Gangs have powerful and enduring effects on the lives of adolescents who join them. Youth gang involvement is a universal phenomenon that attacks youth globally. The criminal and antisocial behavioral influences of youth gangs have adversely impacted local communities around the world.

Aggressive and antisocial youth commence childhood associations with each other and develops an aggressive pattern of delinquent behavior that continues through adolescence. Youth who incubate this behavioral mindset according to the *Juvenile Correction Facts, Gang History, Physical and Sexual Abuse, Substance Abuse and Psychological Disturbances* are “behaviorally influenced by several extenuating behavioral issues like PTSD, Cognitive defects, poor self-esteem, feelings of self-hatred, rejection, in school suspension, school expulsions are strong risk factors for gang involvement.”

Violent crime among juveniles is an international concern;

- Twenty-five percent (25%) of serious/violent crimes are committed by juveniles.
- The proliferation of juvenile crimes is fed by behavioral characteristics that are germane to the cause of all juvenile violence.
- Characteristics which include the juvenile having a poor education, low school attendance, low socioeconomic status and substance abuse are major causes of unrest among this clientele.
- *The Bureau of Justice Statistics* denoted that juveniles committed 475,000 crimes in 2017.

- According to the police department in Austin, Texas, most juvenile crimes are committed between 3pm and 6pm, involving auto theft and gun violence.

*Heather Ann Thompson, The Atlantic, Inner City Violence in the Age of Mass Incarceration, October 30, 2014* stated that “the level of gun violence in today’s inner city is the product of criminal justice policy.”

## CHAPTER 6

### Media and Music Influences on Behavior

Certainly, all media exposure should not fall under the scrutiny of adverse media exposure to the juvenile population. Wholesomely selected media consumption can be enhancing as well as developmental in the holistic development of youth who fall into this category. Media exposure used correctly will catapult young people in to an exploratory horizon that will annihilate distance and circumscribe time.

However, many studies conclude that adverse exposure to media increases the opportunity for violence in youth. There is a substantial increase in aggressive behavior that has a desensitizing affect upon youth who are readily exposed to media violence.

- By the time youth reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday they would have witnessed 40,000 murders on TV
- 200,000 acts of violence
- And witness 6 to 8 acts of violence every hour.
- Acts of violence occur in 70% of all TV episodes.
- Youth between 12 and 18 consume on average 7.5 hours of media exposure each a day.
- By the time they reach the 12<sup>th</sup> grade they would have watched 19,000 hours of TV.
- From the time a youth enters into the world until the cessation of life they would have watched 7.5 years of TV and would have spent more than five years on social media.
- It is estimated that if the five plus years spent on social media was properly utilized one could fly to the moon 32 times and climb Mt. Everest 32 times.

Media exposure through violent video games increases the likelihood of violent behavior in juveniles.

- Ninety percent (90%) of video games that juveniles play contain violence and other mature content.



According to *Media Violence Commission of the international Society for Research on Aggression*, “exposure to violent video games lower the attention span and emotion control in juveniles who engage in this caliber video games.”

Violence in music is more prone to elicit violence than violence in media. Violent lyrics conveyed by rappers and other hip hop, rock, heavy metal, etc., have degraded the mindset of many youth and propelled them into actual manifesting the dictates of the suggested lyrics in their lifestyles.

The rap song *Cop Killer* by 2 Pac which suggested anti-police lyrics influenced a juvenile to kill a Texas policeman. Moreover the same song influenced four juveniles to kill a Las Vegas policeman. Rap music has been detrimental to numerous policemen. In 1992, 144 police officers were killed because of lyrics from rap music.

Violent lyrics on many occasions suggest drug and alcohol abuse as well as other degrading words regarding sex, illusions and glamorous mirages of extravagance.

- *Busta Rhymes in Pass the Courvoisier* is strongly linked to alcohol addiction, drugs and violence among young people. The lyrics say, “What you going to say? Tell that brother to pass the Courvoisier. Tell that brother to pass the Courvoisier. Everybody singing pass the Courvoisier.” This song was released after the rapper “*Proof*” was gunned down in a Detroit night club after he had taken the life of another man. His blood alcohol level was four times the legal limit.
- *Darelle Brown* in an article entitled, *Doc’s Music to Influence People to Commit Crimes, October 17, 2013*, stated that, “The same people that control the music industry also own private prisons and work to use rap music fill the prisons.”

Music and money has adulterated the juvenile population and made them the farm league of continuous correctional growth. Not only have youth been exploited in the juvenile population but the music industry in general has contributed to juvenile exploitation.

Eighty to ninety percent (80 – 90%) of youth between the ages of 12 and 18, music captivates their mood and acts as a coping mechanism in the development

of their social identity. They seek peers with similar music taste to form friendships. Often music becomes the defining factor in their social or antisocial formation.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Christian's Efforts to Reach Juveniles

Christians in their efforts to reach juveniles must be cognizant of the fact that you cannot minister to juveniles in the same manner that you minister to adults.

- Juveniles may be confined to juvenile or adult correctional facilities for committing adult crimes but that does not mean that their comprehension level is equivalent to an adult.
- Despite the fact that juveniles who commit heinous crimes like adults, and being called “Short Adults” by law makers, does not increase their level of comprehension.
- Their cognition is in a process of development.
- They don't want to be an adolescent yet they are too young to be an adult, therefore, they are suspended between two entities searching for identity.
- Their identity search often leads to a behavior pattern that is erratic influenced heavily by street education.

Numerous Christian initiatives to reach juveniles have been misdirected. Often there has been a religious overreach wherein a misnomer has been influenced by the idea that this is a clientele that needs to be preached to.

Many juveniles because of the influence of mothers and grandmothers are not totally un-churched.

Preaching at them is a misdirected ministry approach. This concept does not coincide with the teaching of Christ. Jesus never tried to use an over religious approach when He ministered to people. He knew that they needed what He had but He met their needs first.

The confidence level of the juvenile must be reached if there is going to be any future meaningful dialogue. This is not to say that the gospel has to take a back seat in ministry efforts. Initially you are building community, enriching lives and uplifting Jesus.

Note: The apprehension that juveniles have about religion is not that they are not interested in knowing about God but the following:

- a. They are disillusioned with society.
- b. They are disenchanted with the prevalence of hypocrisy that exists among Christians and authority figures.
- c. It appears to them that what exists among those who wear the cloak of Christianity is Christian Behavior Modification and not Transformation.

The distrust that young people exhibit toward adults whose lives fall short of what they perceive as being what they call “*Straight Up*” is no indication that God is absent from their lives.

Many times it is the vessel that is chosen that has alienated them from mainstream religion due to lifestyles and communication techniques.

In spite of the disconnect between juveniles and adults, surveys show:

- a. The majority of juveniles/at-risk youth are vastly more spiritually aware than the general population of youth.

How do we make religion a more meaningful interest in their lives?

When an exploration is conducted into the background of youth in trouble, overwhelmingly the vast number of youth issues stem from:

- a. a deficiency of fatherhood
- b. divorce
- c. single parent homes
- d. family dysfunctionality
- e. the absence of spiritual nurturing

Restoring the breach is a perennial challenge that is prevalent in ministry to juveniles.

Patience: Ministry to juveniles requires a lot of patience. Patience helps you to:

- a. Tolerate the flaws in juveniles
- b. Allows you to be more compassionate, merciful and forgiving.

Research shows that patient people tend to be more empathetic, longsuffering, and kind. Patience helps the youth minister to recognize that transformation in the lives of juveniles may be a long journey. They are in God's workshop and the hand of the potter is shaping their character in accord with His will. In spite of the fact that it may seem like your labor is in vain, don't give up on them because God's Spirit works on His time and not ours.

Being patient with youthful offenders allows the youth minister:

- a. To develop a bond of communication between them and the offender
- b. To help them to overcome rejection and deep seated anger that has pained them from their childhood.

The rejection and abandonment of feeling unwanted often creates

- a. Low self-esteem
- b. Negative self-worth that incubates anger and unhealthy behavior during their youth.

Their life appears as if life is but a continuation of perennial suffering and dismay and their only response to such a dilemma is to act out.

The youth minister must give assurance to the youthful offender that God accepts them just as they are and He accepts them with open arms of love. Ever reminding them that God accepts us at our worst and loves us completely and He will reverse any situation in our lives. He is our reversing agent that can change anger to peace and rejection to acceptance.

## CHAPTER 8

### Ministering at A Juvenile Facility

Ministering to juveniles is conducted differently from ministry to adults in adult facilities, the underlining reason being most juvenile facilities are geared toward treatment rather than punishment. Many treatment directors and staff have concerns that religion may allow the youth to digress from dealing with and owning up to their real life issues. With this concern directors and staff members feel that when youth are introduced to God it provides an avenue of escape from being responsible for their actions.

Adversarial positions are taken such as:

- You are not allowed to come into the public school system to conduct Bible Studies, then,
- Why should we allow youth ministers to come into juvenile facilities and do Bible Studies?

Don't be surprised if the separation of church and state argument surfaces as a point of contention. Many juvenile facilities prohibit religious services from coming into their facilities due to their treatment modalities. However, this does not mean that an effective ministry cannot occur in a juvenile facility.

Ministry does not always have to take the form of worship services. Programs that address institutional needs can be an effective ministry tool and open up the door for the worship experience among the juvenile population.

When the opportunity is afforded to the youth ministers to lead Bible Studies at a juvenile facility, consider the fact that this is all God's and not man's devising, keeping in mind the institution requires that certain standards and protocols be obeyed. The following legitimate institutional concerns should be followed:

1. Avoid controversial doctrines.
2. Don't use religious jargon (the truth, mark of the beast, etc.).
3. Services are voluntary and not mandatory.



4. Don't criticize other denominations.
5. Services are open to all regardless of denominational persuasion.
6. Be positive.
7. Don't be judgmental nor condemn.
8. Be consistent in your ministry.
9. Use every day language. This does not mean for you to try to be "hip".

As you minister to juveniles, help the institution to be aware of the positive things that you do for the youth, the staff will appreciate the positive contributions that you make for the youth at their facility. Because of your positive contributions, the staff will be more apt to encourage them to participate in your program.

There was a sad commentary that implied that youth are "a paper plate generation – used up and discarded." Nothing could be further from the truth.

Prisons and Juvenile Detention Facilities are the Devil's play pen. They are dark, gloomy holes where the Devil tries to blot out the light of salvation. Unless offenders are exposed to the Source of Power, then nothing regarding their eternal salvation will transpire. We have to be like Nehemiah, we have to stand in the gap and try to make a difference.

The death rate among youth is increasing, suicides and depression are on the rise. Juveniles often feel insignificant and unimportant. The feeling of loneliness and hopelessness overshadows their perception that they are wanted and somebody cares about their total well-being. Juveniles need to know that God does not see them as paper plates but as "pearls of great price." Let them know that they are God's special gift to humanity.

Youth ministers have a big task that is tantamount in helping juveniles to experience where the power comes from. Many of them are in a spiritual valley of

disconnect. How do you teach them that prayer is essential and it is the connecting line, the power grid of heaven? Through prayer put forth a conscientious effort to create an environment where the Spirit of God can have full sway on the life of the youth. Through this encounter they will come to know God for themselves and not be dependent upon nor influenced by what their relatives believe. This will help them to know that their God is real and He wants to be real in their soul.

There is no greater ministry than ministering to youth who are detained in youth correctional facilities. It is much easier to bend the tree than it is to break it. They are hurting and need to be exposed to the Balm of Gilead who resolves their issues and heals their hurt.

Jesus has a natural affinity toward at least seven categories of people:

- The poor
- The sick
- The hungry
- The homeless
- The orphan
- The thirsty
- Those in prison.

You will always encounter one of these categories at juvenile facilities.

## CHAPTER 9

### Methodology of Ministering to Juveniles

#### The Discussion Based Format

What method should be used to encourage youth offenders to become more engaged in the worship experience?

- Should the worship experience be sermonic where an organized preaching service is conducted?
- Should the youth minister bring a set of Bible lessons offered by his church?
- Should the youth minister use a Discussion Based Format?
- Should the youth minister use a teaching method?

Of the four methods listed the Discussion Based Format is the most effective method in engaging youthful offenders in worship.

Not using the customary methods of preaching and teaching when communicating the love of Christ to youthful offenders, the Discussion Based Format provides:

- An opportunity for personal involvement
- Development of relationships
- Learning

The Discussion Based Format helps to develop communication skills and sidelines the remotes. Youth whether an offender or not, are part of the remote generation because excessive media exposure has hampered their communication skills which suggests their attention spans are abbreviated along with the lack of ability to concentrate on any one thing for an extended time.

The most productive arrangement for this type of involvement is to have participants sit in a circle. The circle approach gives each person a feeling of importance and whatever their contributions, they are recognized as being valuable.

## CHAPTER 10

### A Suggested Worship Format

The format for worship should incorporate subjects that are topical in nature. The following worship format is a suggested method to follow:

- A. Opening Prayer
- B. Subjects should be topical. It is important to discuss relevant topics that address the concerns and needs that the youth are encountering. Explore and entertain questions about issues that youthful offenders are struggling with and try not to waste time on questions they are not asking. The goal is to lead them to an experiential relationship with Christ and to create a hunger to satisfy the longing in their hearts with truth.
- C. Use an open discussion format. An open discussion format is nonthreatening which allows freedom of expression without reprisal. It assures the participants that their contributions to the discussion are welcomed and appreciated. This also will help the youth minister to discover problems and issues that are common among the youth in the group. The most essential intent in this type of discussion is to lead the youth to solutions and healthy conclusions with the issues under discussion. Impress upon their minds that trying to handle their situations by themselves is very difficult. Let them know there is a Power that is always ready and available to help them.
- D. Use illustrations and stories with the problems or issues that your group is discussing. Illustrations will be your magnifying glass for enlarging the issue at hand, challenging the minds of the youth, creating inquisitiveness that hopefully will lead the youth to want to arrive at a solution.

- E. Scripture. Here is where you introduce them to narratives that suggest that the solution to their problems is found in the Scriptures. Use scriptural examples to illustrate this point.
- F. Conclusion. Conclude by reminding the youth of the scriptural solutions to their problems and issues discussed in the group. Ask for prayer requests, ending the worship discussion with prayer for each youth in attendance.

## CHAPTER 11

### Self-Helps for Juveniles

Even if the juveniles have distorted reservations of who they are, celebrate with them that they are somebody, and the greatest gift that we can give to them is instilling the fact that they are blessed and not cursed, helping them to realize the power of God and to sense what He can do for them, This will revolutionize their lives.

1. Help them to realize that their situation is not a rite of passage.
2. They are not cursed.
3. There are no cultivated or inherited tendencies that cannot be overcome.
4. They are not inferior to anyone regardless of status.
5. Help them to overcome inferiority complexes.
6. Compliment them on their accomplishments.
7. Instill dreams and challenge them.
8. Teach them to believe that God will make a difference in their lives.
9. Teach them that making God first and last in all that they do, they can become the best.



## CHAPTER 12

### Working with Juveniles – Do's and Don'ts

Following rules, regulations and protocols at Detention Centers and Correctional Facilities is essential to the longevity of your institutional ministry. It is for your protection because the institution is liable for you as an unpaid staff member as long as you follow policy. Loyalty to the institution will open up other ministry opportunities for your ministry. All institutions appreciate good and faithful service that complies with their mission for its residents.

Listed below are some of the DO's and DON'Ts at Juvenile Facilities that will assist you in your ministry to juveniles:

Do:

1. Be yourself.
2. Be frank.
3. Be honest.
4. Be fair.
5. Be guided by the Holy Spirit.
6. Be sure of what you say.
7. Be genuine.
8. Be friendly but not overly friendly.
9. Be dependable.
10. Be open minded.
11. Be a good listener.

12. Keep your promises.
13. Do obey all the rules of the Institution.
14. Be trust worthy.
15. Be on time for ALL scheduled ministry activities.
16. Be confidential unless there are suicidal or homicidal threats. Report any of these occurrences to the Administration.
17. Do comply with all security mandates.
18. Do ask questions when you are not sure about something.
19. Do create an atmosphere for freedom of expression.
20. Do let Christ, who is The Answer, have the last word – not yourself.
21. Do pay attention and keep your mind on what the youth are saying.
22. Do confront manipulation.

Don't:

1. Don't carry items in or out of the facility, especially letters.
2. Don't exchange or give money to the youth at the Facility.
3. Don't bring medicine in and out of the Facility.
4. Don't make telephone calls. Institutional staff will take care of that request.
5. Don't give out your phone number or your address.

6. Don't expect to be well received if you confront the Administration about rules and protocols that pertain to the operation of the Institution.
7. Don't get lured into a compromising situation.
8. Don't talk about one youth to another youth.
9. Don't wear shorts, see through clothing, sun dresses, low cut dresses or tank tops.
10. Don't bring in hand bags, wallets or key rings.
11. Don't bring in cigarettes.
12. Don't expect to enter the Facility at unscheduled times.
13. Don't expect to bring in books, food or pictures without the approval of the Administration.
14. Don't bring drugs into the Facility unless you are looking for a new home.
15. Don't overstep your boundary lines in social interactions with youth that are inappropriate.
16. Don't be judgmental.
17. Don't be a defensive listener.
18. Don't be a phony, they can pick it up.
19. Don't make promises that you can't keep.
20. Don't criticize other church groups.

21. Don't use denominational jargon in your ministry to the youth at the facility, such as: SDAs, E.G. White, The Message, The Mission, Remnant, ABC, Elder, Spirit of Prophecy, etc.
22. Don't immediately interrupt if you think a statement is wrong, wait for the right moment to give a response.

## CHAPTER 13

### Juvenile Court Chronology

1. The arrest is made by the police.
2. The intake: The Intake Officer evaluates the case.
3. The Arraignment.
4. The juvenile is detained or released to the parent.
5. If the juvenile is detained, he/she is sent to a Youth Detention Center (YDC).
6. Probable cause for a hearing.
7. Trial.
8. Sentencing.

## CHAPTER 14

### A Story

#### “From the Crack House to God’s House”

On the east banks of the Cumberland River in Nashville, Tennessee, in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the hood, lived a young boy, Edwin Gerome Smith. He was full of adverse vitality and misguided energy. At an early age, Edwin found himself caught up in an environment that dictated the necessity of survival. He was a highly sensitive youth who wore a facade to protect his pseudo-macho image.

Edwin sought attention and acceptance from his peers by clowning and using any other means as a way of getting their attention. Warning him of the inevitable consequences of his behavior, his mother tried to steer him in a different direction, but Edwin was a know it all type of youth who thought his mother was out of touch with the current trends. He had a Burger King Philosophy, which suggested having it his way.

Even though his mother sent him to school every day, from childhood to adulthood education was something that did not interest Edwin. He was very disruptive in school, earning the reputation as being the class clown. It was not uncommon for him to stand on top of his desk and shoot spit balls across the room. He did not try to learn, and he did not want anyone else to learn. His mannerisms would best describe him as Mr. Goof Off.

By the time school dismissed for the day at 3:00 p.m., Edwin would have been home and changed clothes three times. Being popular was his main objective every day, life was just one big party for him. Hanging with the guys and having fun with his friends was more important than getting an education. Consequently, the streets, and the street corners became his habitation. His mother pleaded with him to stop from his course of action. She asked him, “Why are you hanging with those guys?” Once again, he maintained that she was old and stupid and did not know what she was talking about, little did he understand that his mother was trying to help her son avoid a disastrous future.



As fate would have it, Edwin got heavily into the drug business and firearm possession. At the age of sixteen, he shot a youth five times with a 22 caliber pistol. The reason was “he stepped on my shoes.” The youth died and Edwin was tried and sentenced to the Pikesville Juvenile Correction Center in Pikesville, Tennessee. His crime was so heinous that whenever a news documentary on juvenile crime was presented, Edwin’s name and picture would be at the top of the list. During his custody at Pikeville, he made little effort to mend his ways. In fact, a deeper criminal mindset was etched in his brain.

After spending less than two years in juvenile custody, Edwin was a free man running wild on the streets of Nashville, he was 18 years old. He united with some more of his friends got heavily involved in drugs and gun possessions. Edwin had a small arsenal of weapons, which included a 357 Magnum, several 9 Millimeter Uzis, Glocks, Ak 47s, and other hand guns. Every time the police pulled him over they knew they would find a gun or drugs on him. He had crack houses on both sides of town. His life was like the Wild West with shoot outs at the OK Corral. He was involved in five shoot outs and he never got hit by the opposing gunfire. At 19, Edwin was making \$5,000 a day selling drugs. Somehow, he thought that he had a reputation to uphold. He became the ultimate street pharmacist.

Because of his lifestyle, eventually, Edwin’s life was hurled into the quicksand of inevitable ruin. By 23 he would shoot and kill another man, resulting in his being sentenced to 4–10 years in the Tennessee Department of Corrections for Voluntary Manslaughter. His incarceration was another unproductive period in his life where reality failed to set up residency in his heart. Scheming and a desire to make quick, easy, risky money continued to be his focus.

Edwin knew how to convince the Administration that he had been rehabilitated, and with his ability to talk his way out of situations, this proved to be very advantageous in his seeking an early release. The chairperson of the Parole Board, despite opposition from the other board members, after serving only 2 years of the 4-10 year sentence, Edwin was released from prison back into the Nashville community.

Edwin joined a church, was baptized, and married a nice Christian young lady. He appeared to have changed his outlook on life. Edwin and his wife attended church and other religious functions religiously. It appeared that all was well with him.

However, his infidelity, and love for fame and materialism had a deeper influence upon him than his faithfulness to God and his wife. As destiny would dictate, his infidelity resulted in an additional offspring, which was the straw that broke the back of the camel in his marriage. This led to a divorce, and Edwin was back on the streets selling drugs, establishing crack houses, maintaining an arsenal of weapons in his possession, and living a wild debased life

It was not long before Edwin was arrested again and locked up. He was tried and sentenced to 25 years in the Tennessee Department of Corrections for the possession of drugs for resale. Sadly, during Edwin's wild living, three of his brothers, ages 26, 27, and 28 were killed. His oldest son, Edwin Jr., began selling drugs and carrying weapons. He was only sixteen. This was a devastating blow to Edwin, he concluded he could not expect a different outcome because that was all the type of life his son had been accustomed to seeing him do. What was more devastating was that Edwin Jr., would die a violent death from being shot in the head by an unfriendly assailant.

While incarcerated at the Middle Tennessee Reception Center, where new inmates are processed and assigned to other prison, once again Edwin tried to put his life back together. Edwin sent a message to the Chaplain at the Nashville Community Service Center, and the Work Release Division for the Tennessee Department of Corrections. Edwin, requested to be transferred to the Chaplain's facility, who in turn spoke to the Associate Warden. Edwin's request was granted.

The Warden told Edwin, anything that he needed, not to ask him, ask only the Chaplain. During the next four years, Edwin grew in stature and maturity. The Chaplain and Edwin worked together on several projects from religious programs to social outreach in the community. This time around a real change was seen in his life. Becoming involved in religious activities offered through Chaplain Services, he became a conscientious Bible student. Edwin was serious about his relationship with God.

After serving four years on a 25-year sentence, Edwin was granted parole. He got involved with a program called Don't Follow Me (DFM), which gave him a sense of self-worth and helped to transform him into the person he is today.

Edwin has dedicated his life to helping other young people avoid making the same mistakes that he made. DFM gave him the opportunity to share with others the

goodness and greatness of God, and how it helped him to be an asset and not a liability to society.

According to Edwin, DFM was the change agent in his life, and he is confident it can do the same for others.

Edwin said, “When I did not care about the direction in which my life was heading, there was one person that never gave up on me. I will ever be grateful for the life and ministry of the Chaplain. As a male figure and role model, the Chaplain has been the most influential person in my life.

“I know beyond a shadow of a doubt, if it had not been for the Chaplain and what he stands for, I would not be here today.”

Congratulations are in order for this man who has emerged from ‘hell with a story to tell.’ God sent the ‘blood hounds of heaven,’ rescued him from the salivating jaws of Satan, placed him in the gospel vineyard, watered him with grace, and electrified him with the Holy Spirit.

Today, Edwin is an active, devoted servant of God in his church, where he serves as the Men’s Ministry Leader, a Sabbath School teacher, and an Elder. He’s also involved with the homeless.

Edwin earned an Associate of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice. He has his own business, S&S Construction and Remodeling Company.

Note: If you would like further information on the story “From the Crack House to God’s House,” and on Don’t Follow Me (DFM), please contact Chaplain Cleveland Houser at the North American Division, Adult Ministries Department.

## To Those Engaged in Ministry to Juveniles and At-Risk Youth

The Purpose and Goal of the North American Division, is to place in your hands, a step-by-step user-friendly handbook that we are confident will assist and be a guide to you in one of the very sensitive areas of ministry, the Ministry to Juveniles and At-Risk Youth.

It is our prayer that this handbook will be beneficial to you as you minister to these young people, many who are not aware of the great love of God for them.

May God's blessings continue to be upon you.

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## **CHAPTERS 7-12**

Dr. Cleveland Houser, Ph.D.