

DEVOTIONAL

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As I was preparing to write this week's devotion about God's heart for those who are imprisoned, I found myself wondering how many people were in prison in the US. What I discovered was that, while the number is decreasing, a 2020 report from the US Department of Justice shows that, as of the end of 2020 "an estimated 1,430,800 prisoners were under state or federal jurisdiction." That's a lot of people. I can't help but wonder--Do they know that Jesus loves them?

That reminds me of Jesus' words in Matthew 25:36,39: 'I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'...When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

God's heart for those who are imprisoned is this: He cares about them so much that he identifies with them; he says when we're serving them, we're serving him. And he invites us to partake in the blessings that come from that, from living out our lives in service of others. As we go through our day today, let's remember in prayer those who are imprisoned and also those who are formerly incarcerated as they transition into their families and communities.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, As we go freely through our week, help us to remember those who are imprisoned. We know

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that all who are incarcerated are greatly loved by you. Help us to reflect this love in our words, actions, and prayers for them. Allow them to see your plan of redemption and forgiveness through Jesus.

And let us not forget those who were formerly imprisoned, as they adjust to this world that may not be as quick to share the forgiveness that you have so perfectly modeled for us. Help them to reconnect with their families and build new lives that are pleasing to you. Give us hearts for compassion and hands for kindnesses to show these brothers and sisters your love.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen

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