

Transforming the Incarcerated Through Family Integrity Training (FIT)

Russell Yoon

Just over two years ago, I was in the process of moving my family to rural Northeast Thailand to serve as a fulltime missionary. Without going into a lot of detail several events occurred and God closed this door. I was devastated as I truly believed this was my calling. I wanted to serve God in some capacity, but I had no idea as to how.

One day a gentleman who lives in my community shared his experiences as a FIT Facilitator and Leader Trainer. I was so inspired by what he had to say I immediately took the facilitator training course. I realized I needed this training as much as the inmates. This gentleman started his ministry at the Taylor Correctional Institution in Perry, FL, and had trained approximately 20 peer facilitators. He is now in his mid-eighties and has been physically unable to visit the facility for the past five years. But since then, the ministry continued on its own and all courses have been facilitated exclusively by peer facilitators in both English and Spanish. I recently had the privilege of training eight new peer facilitators at Taylor CI.

In July 2022, our FIT ministry began at Suwannee Correctional Institution in Live Oak, FL. We had just one participant at the time. My goal was to model the ministry after Taylor CI. Participants are constantly asked if they are interested in becoming peer facilitators. I attend chapel events to tell inmates about FIT and pass out trifold brochures. Today Suwannee CI offers four FIT courses per week and we recently began facilitating an Anger Dynamics course as a pilot program in a "Close Management" dormitory. We have received the support of the warden, corrections officers in charge, as well as the entire chaplaincy.

Through FIT's courses inmates learn to rehabilitate themselves using faith-based self-improvement material. Not only do they improve life skills and become better citizens, but they transform their lives by experiencing God's love in a safe, positive and encouraging environment. The inmates have the incentive of earning certificates of completion.

Praise God for using an unexpected person like me to generate movement within our FIT ministry at Suwannee CI to transform the lives of the incarcerated. Lord willing our peer facilitators will eventually reach members of communities outside of the institution as well.

God Is Moving in the Lives of Florida Inmates

Norine Hodder

As a pastor, one inmate's grandfather taught him about the Bible. However, he chose to live a "worldly" life. Sentenced to prison for the ninth time, he began attending our FIT (Family Integrity Training) classes. Now he is reconnecting with the faith of his relatives and the Bible teaching he received as a child.

In the jail, we recently completed the Dating and Marriage Family Integrity Training (FIT) course. One of the women in my class commented that she could now see why a couple should get married. Previously, she could see no reason to get married. Another woman told me she decided not to return to living with her boyfriend. I thank God He helped me instill biblical values in the women's lives.

Share with Us Your Stories!

Email them to me at: john@100hour.org

Houston, We Have A Conundrum!

John Ringleb

A conundrum has a few definitions. It could be because it usually has complex implications. Here they come: “a difficult or impossible to solve problem or puzzle”, or “a confusing and difficult problem or question”, or, “an intricate and difficult problem”. I think you get the picture. It is a challenge that is not easily solved.

We have some praise reports and some conundrums.

We have passed 160 Facilitators and Peer Facilitators! You may ask, “What are Peer Facilitators?”

Peer Facilitators are inmates who have received their 100 Hour certificates, have been recommended by their leadership (a Chaplain or official overseeing the program), and have been trained by a Facilitator Trainer. Our Peer Facilitators need our support in many ways. Because they are in prison, they are unable to pay annual membership fees and the needed materials are provided to them free of charge.

Peer Facilitators have been instrumental in our prisons. When we went through the COVID period, our facilitators were unable to get into the prisons, but in several instances training continued through our dedicated Peer Facilitators! That was such a blessing knowing that in the midst of health challenges our Peer Facilitators were speaking into the lives of the inmates they served.

So, where is the conundrum? We aren't in all the prisons yet! We don't have enough volunteers to work with and encourage our Peer Facilitators! Facilitators bring something else to the table. They come in from the outside and represent God's love for those in front of them! Almost daily the inmates either open or close in prayer and they thank God that we came! It gets to me! I am speaking and sharing God's love, acceptance and encouragement. I represent a God who cares no matter where we are and what we have done!

I believe we can grow our facilitator force to 200 by this time next year. How we do it is our challenge. When looking back to my entrance into FIT, I was asked by two facilitators to become a part of this ministry. We need to continue that tradition. Another avenue would be to ask our Prison Chaplains or leaders to be on the lookout for others. They certainly know about our ministry and how important it is to the inmates. They could provide excellent support for those applying to become prison volunteers. So, let's be vigilant! Look and ask! Talk to the prison leaders!

In a song that one of my favorite groups sang, they sing that the cross started it, and then each one told one until now there are many Christians almost two centuries later. Christianity not only increased in numbers, but grew through time! Conundrums aren't real in God's world, just ours. So let's roll up our sleeves and get more into this amazing ministry. Let's get 250!

Course Completions
January - June
881