



## TIPS FOR PEN-PALS

### General Tips:

- ◆ To avoid having their letters to you returned, ask your “Insider” to address their envelopes:

Encouraging Word

Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

PO Box 371444

Denver, CO 80237

If “Encouraging Word” is not part of the address, the letter will be returned! Provide your “Insider” with your “Calling Card,” provided in your information packet, to ensure they have the complete, correct address.

- ◆ Ask their birthdate. Let Debbie Baird know ([EncourageWord444@gmail.com](mailto:EncourageWord444@gmail.com)) and a birthday card will be sent to them from Encouraging Word.
- ◆ Ask their baptism date. This will let you know if they are a “baby Christian” or longer established in their faith.
- ◆ Ask if they have a Bible. If not and they would like one, let Debbie Baird know ([EncourageWord444@gmail.com](mailto:EncourageWord444@gmail.com)) and one will be sent to them with a gift card from you enclosed. This is a Ministry expense.
- ◆ Ask if they have a “Jesus Calling” devotional. If not and they would like one, let Debbie Baird know ([EncourageWord444@gmail.com](mailto:EncourageWord444@gmail.com)) and one will be sent to them with a gift card from you enclosed. This is a Ministry expense.
- ◆ Use stationery if you like. “Insiders” love pictures of stars, ocean and other scenery that they never get to see. Pets are also a favorite.
- ◆ Send a snapshot of yourself, with a full smile, side-glance or titled head. Do **not** send professional ID-quality photos. All photos need to be printed on regular paper. Glossy photos are not allowed.
- ◆ Email rather than mail letters. Email is a quick and easy option that requires no handwriting or trips to the mailbox. It also allows easy tracking of your last correspondence. Go to [JPay.com](http://JPay.com) (JPay is a secure site) to set up an email account (cost: \$3.70, rate subject to change). Each email costs 50 cents that you buy as “stamps” via credit card. If you attach anything to your email, there is an additional 50-cent “stamp” charge. Only photos in .jpeg format can be attached. Word (.doc) files and PDFs (.pdf) are not allowed. To set up an account and buy 5 email “stamps,” you will pay a total of \$6.20 (rate subject to change). Note: Your “Insider” is not able to respond via email. They will answer via regular mail.

- ◆ If your “Insider” is not responding to your letters, we recommend our 2X2 policy. If you’ve sent 2 letters and have not heard back for 2 months, send a third letter emphasizing that you want to be a friend and encourage them. If there is still no response, let Debbie Baird know and that “Insider” will move to “card only” status and another “Insider” will be assigned to you.

For “Insiders” located In Colorado, you can check to see if they have been moved, which could mean your letters have not reached them. Go to [www.doc.state.co/oss](http://www.doc.state.co/oss) and enter their identification number to see their current location. If they have moved, contact Debbie Baird ([EncourageWord444@gmail.com](mailto:EncourageWord444@gmail.com)) for the new address. Finally, remember that cards do not count as letters. If you have been sending cards, instead write a letter to see if a letter is written to you in response.

- ◆ “Insiders” love personal prayers and Christian song lyrics! Also, if you have a favorite minister’s daily devotional to enclose in your letter, we find that they minister to one another and even to their families. Encouraging Word lets the ministers preach. We write prayers for them and encourage them.
- ◆ If you want to send your “Insider” a monthly or quarterly devotional booklet, remove the staples before sending.
- ◆ There is no set policy on personal visitations in this ministry, but it is not intended to be a visitation ministry. However, if you feel led to visit the prison in person to meet your “Insider,” you must first complete forms that can only come from your insider. He/She has to want it and initiate it. It takes about 1 month to be approved. Contact Debbie Baird ([EncourageWord444@gmail.com](mailto:EncourageWord444@gmail.com)) if you want more information or guidance.

### Letter Writing Tips:

- ◆ **Advice from a woman who has been in prison ministry a long time:** “Authenticity and honesty is key. Sometimes we go in with an agenda to try to be what we think these women may need. Ask God for a divine awareness of Him when you are writing and to be the heart of Christ.”
- ◆ **Go line by line** through their letter and then answer, comment or pray for each thing mentioned. This assures them that you truly care for them and are listening to them.
- ◆ **Be Real.** Be who you are. Answer questions clearly, directly, honestly and straightforwardly, humbly and with great transparency of the soul.
- ◆ **Be Positive.** Be encouraging! Be congratulating! Keep your letters light and upbeat as your relationship develops. You are *with* them. You are praying for their hopes and dreams, and families using the themes of God’s love, forgiveness, peace, protection, and reconciliation through scripture verses and inspiration from the Holy Spirit. Don’t be doom & gloom – there’s enough of that in prison already!
- ◆ **Be Respectful.** Explore and develop the spiritual part of lives, finding help and comfort in God in a safe and open respectful dialogue. It is not our job to judge or preach. Our focus is NOT doctrine, or disagreements or problems with other faiths. This is a faith journey. Although they may consider you to be a spiritual mentor, it may just be the Holy Spirit mentoring you!

- ◆ **Be Sensitive.** Don't write detailed descriptions of your vacations, family holidays or celebrations. Ask their permission if in doubt. These topics can be very hard memories in prison. Again, it's not about you!
- ◆ **Be Prepared.** Pray for guidance before writing and re-read the last correspondence received, so that you address each specific question, prayer request or concern. This lets your pen pal know that you genuinely care about their concerns.
- ◆ **Be Obedient.** Follow all mail regulations of the institution and respect all authority of the institution. Both incoming and outgoing mail is subject to censorship, confiscation, or return. The consequences will be borne by your "Insider."