



# MERCY UNLEASHED

compassion ministries

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*One organization; Many opportunities.*

*Mercy Unleashed Prison Ministry*

*Eden Unleashed Wesleyan Church*

*Mercy Unleashed Prayer Ministry*

*Beyond Bars Podcast & YouTube Channel*

*Mercy Unleashed Reentry Center*

'Who the Son sets free is free indeed.'  
(John 8:36)



## A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR BERNIE

Welcome and thank you for volunteering with Mercy Unleashed Compassion Ministries! I am Pastor Bernie Haddad and I am the Founder and Executive Director of Mercy Unleashed. When God first gave me the vision for this ministry, I really did not know what to think. I had never stepped foot inside a prison.

What I did not expect was to be so deeply touched by the blessings I received from working with the offenders. I learned quickly that for every blessing I thought I was bestowing upon the men, I was receiving three times the blessings in return. The only difference between “them” and “us”, is they got caught. We have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory... and there is always a consequence. The people beyond the prison walls are no less worthy than we are; they are no less loved by God than we are. In fact, the book of Hebrews tells us to, *“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you are also in the body.” (Hebrews 13:3, ESV)*

As pastor and leader, it is my role to equip more people to pastor and lead! Each correctional facility has its own culture and personality and needs its own leadership group to connect with the population. We have to remember that discipleship is not a “one size fits all” program and that building appropriate, Christ-like relationships are the key to a successful prison discipleship ministry.

I appreciate your time and your willingness to share the light of Christ inside the darkness of the prison walls. We should always remember to go inside with a posture of humility. Leave the legalism and piety at home, please. We are not there to condemn or bring judgement to the offenders; trust me when I tell you that they receive their share of condemnation. Instead, remember that Jesus calls us to love all people. We do much harm when we take the liberty of sorting the prison population as worthy and unworthy of our love, or even worse... of God’s love. Lastly, be genuine. When we are authentic and genuine, people can tell... people can also tell when we are “faking it”. Authentic relationships open the doors of trust and conversation that in turn, will lead to opportunities to disciple and share the hope of Christ.

I am so excited to be working beside you and I am excited to see how God uses us together to grow His Kingdom! Thank you for loving the prisoner!

In Him,

*Pastor Bernie*

## WELCOME TO MERCY UNLEASHED

As a volunteer for Mercy Unleashed, you will serve one of the largest, untapped missions field in this country. At any given time, there are over 7 million people under the control of correctional facilities in the United States. When we send teams inside the prisons, we encourage the volunteers to not simply think of themselves as volunteers... *rather, think of yourselves as missionaries!* Not unlike traditional missionary teams, at Mercy Unleashed we have needs in many areas. Not everyone who volunteers wants to be on the inside of the prison; some people would rather focus on reentry. Other team members would rather use their talents behind the scenes. You are encouraged to use your spiritual gifts in partnership with Mercy Unleashed, in the best way that will glorify God!

## MISSION STATEMENT

Love God – Love Each Other – Make Jesus Famous

## VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Mercy Unleashed is to make disciples who will make disciples. We do this by going inside correctional facilities and reentry centers and seek out those who are followers of Jesus. We believe that true discipleship will have a transformative impact on the lives of not only the offenders, but on the lives of their families and communities for generations to come.

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## MERCY UNLEASHED VALUES

### SCRIPTURAL TEACHING

At Mercy Unleashed we believe that all Scripture is true. We believe that Scripture was given to us by God as direction for how we should live. The Bible tells us that “all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16

### GENUINE

At Mercy Unleashed, we believe the best way to show the love of God is to genuinely love His people. We believe that through bold relationships and intentional discipleship, we will be recognized as followers of Christ who authentically live to serve Jesus.

### SECOND CHANCES

God loved us with such compassion that he sent his son Jesus to die for us and save us from our sins. We all sin and fall short of God’s glory, and yet we are still forgiven and covered by His grace. Our God is a god of second chances and we believe that His people are called to give that same mercy and compassion to our fellow man.

### FAITH

At Mercy Unleashed we are followers of Jesus and we know that if we have faith in him, even faith the size of a mustard seed, we can move a mountain. God has called us to move mountains as we minister to his people and our faith in Him gives us strength.

### HOSPITALITY

At Mercy Unleashed we believe that hospitality is the foundation of relationships. We humbly welcome everyone to take part in our services and discipleship groups. The hospitality that Jesus gave all of us is sewn into the fabric of our culture. We love and welcome all, because Jesus loves and welcomes all.

### COMMUNITY

At Mercy Unleashed we value every person who is part of the Mercy Unleashed network. We know that we were designed to be in a relationship with God, but he also created us to be in community with one another because we are better together. We believe an important part of a community is family. We value transformed lives through discipleship and pray that the new life that Christ has given will be passed onto future generations.

### INTEGRITY

At Mercy Unleashed we value honesty and strong moral principles. We believe that it is essential to the growth and the reputation of the ministry for all leadership and volunteers to have a Biblical worldview. We also believe in creating a culture that invites honesty and openness.

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## STATEMENT OF FAITH

- We believe the Bible to be the inspired and only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
- We believe in one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe that Jesus Christ is the one and only way to the Father and that those who put their faith in Him alone, will have eternal life.
- We believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ; in His sinless life; in His miracles; in His sacrificial death; in His bodily resurrection; in His ascension to the right hand of the Father; and that one day our Lord Jesus Christ will return at which time, every knee will bow to Him and declare Him, Lord.
- We believe those who receive new life in Christ are called to live a holy life, and that the way to live in holiness is by being filled with the Holy Spirit.
- We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost to either eternal life or eternal separation from God.
- We believe God wants people everywhere to know Him and that the purpose of His church is to be the hands and feet of Jesus.
- We believe in the Great Commission and that Jesus clearly directed us to go and make disciple of all people.

## TERMS TO KNOW

- **Offender** - a person who has been convicted of a crime and is currently serving time inside a correctional facility.
- **Returning citizen** - a person who was serving time inside a correctional facility, but has been released.
- **Trafficking\*** - giving anything to or receiving anything from an offender. This includes something as small as a piece of paper or a pencil. Trafficking is a felony and is taken very seriously by prison staff.
- **Manipulation** - a method, often used by offenders, to gain control over an unsuspecting individual.
- **S.O.A.P.** - (*Scripture. Observation. Application. Prayer*) the method of discipleship journaling used by Mercy Unleashed.
- **P.L.U.S. Program** - (*Purposeful Living Units Serve*) a dorm in correctional facilities for offenders who desire to enrich their lives.
- **Sentence modification** - when an offender petitions the court to lessen their original sentencing time.
- **Reentry** - the time period immediately following release from prison.
- **Parole** - the early release of an offender on good behavior, with stipulations of behavior and standards on the outside.
- **Probation** - the release of an offender who remains under supervision of the state.
- **House Arrest** - being a prisoner in one's own residence.
- **Work release** - the ability to leave prison and work normal employment, with the understanding that the offender returns to prison at the end of the work day.
- **Faith-based dorm** – a dorm within a correctional facility where the offender must declare and actively live according to their faith.

***\*If you choose to commit a trafficking offense or break any laws while volunteering with Mercy Unleashed, you are responsible for your own legal expenses.***

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## MASS INCARCERATION RESOURCES

Would it surprise you to hear that the United States counts for only 4% of the world's population, but 25% of the world's prison population? In simpler terms, one in every four prisoners, in the world... are locked up in the United States of America. Another sobering statistic is that African Americans account for 11% of our country's population and 33% of the prison population.

Although we could discuss the many political and systemic injustices that account for these staggering statistics, at Mercy Unleashed we choose to put our effort into bringing hope and light to the people that make up these staggering statistics. At Mercy Unleashed, we do not identify as Democrats or Republicans... No, our identity comes from God. We are followers of Jesus.

As a Mercy Unleashed volunteer, you are strongly encouraged to learn more about mass incarceration and the impact mass incarceration has on families and communities. There are many resources available. A few that are recommended by our Executive Director are:

- *The New Jim Crow - Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness* by Michelle Alexander
- *"More God, Less Crime: Why Faith Matters and How it Could Matter More"* by Byron R. Johnson
- Fwd.us <https://everysecond.fwd.us/>
- The Marshall Project <https://www.themarshallproject.org/>
- The Sentencing Project <https://www.sentencingproject.org/>
- Prison Fellowship <https://www.prisonfellowship.org/>
- 13th, Documentary <https://www.netflix.com/title/80091741>

## MERCY UNLEASHED PRISON MINISTRY

When Mercy Unleashed began in January of 2019, our first programming began inside one prison. We would go inside the prisons and facilitate weekly discipleship groups. The vision was to find the offenders who were already followers of Jesus and to teach them how to become disciplemakers. Through God's grace, word spread to other prisons and we had active ministry inside three correctional facilities in Indiana.

Every prison has a different culture and different needs. As we learned this, Mercy Unleashed was able to enlist more volunteers to better serve the offenders inside the different facilities. Mercy Unleashed currently serves offenders in the following capacity:

1. Weekly discipleship groups. This happens inside the cell blocks of the prisons. We give each offender a discipleship journal and teach them how to SOAP through the Bible. Each week, a different offender is given the opportunity to lead the group. The purpose of these groups is to teach the offenders how to become disciplemakers.
2. Plant churches inside the facility. Mercy Unleashed has successfully planted a church inside a correctional facility. Eden Unleashed Wesleyan Church is an active church with an active congregation, inside the prison walls.
3. Teach PLUS classes.
4. Preach at chapel services
5. Volunteer chaplain services
6. Spiritual Gift Testing
7. Connection Forms for Reentry
8. Prayer

### Post COVID-19

It is still unclear what prison ministry will look like in a post COVID world. The only thing we know for sure is that the "new normal" has yet to be defined. When we are permitted to reenter the prisons, following facility guidelines will be more important than ever.

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## EDEN UNLEASHED WESLEYAN CHURCH

Eden Unleashed is a church plant inside New Castle Correctional Facility. It is the vision and goal of Mercy Unleashed to plant churches inside all correctional facilities where we serve. The presence of a defined church inside correctional facilities gives offenders a sense of community that they otherwise lack.

1. Weekly church service
2. Worship music
3. Prayer
4. Church leadership made up of offenders

## MERCY UNLEASHED PRAYER MINISTRY

This program is still under development. If you are interested in joining the prayer ministry, please let us know.

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## BEYOND BARS PODCAST AND YOUTUBE CHANNEL

This program is still under development. God has recently revealed an opportunity for Mercy Unleashed to share videos inside the prison system.

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## MERCY UNLEASHED REENTRY CENTER

This is an exciting venture that Mercy Unleashed is just beginning! We welcome you to join us in prayer as we watch God work!

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## RULES AND BEHAVIOR

In most ministries there is a code of conduct that must be adhered to, and Mercy Unleashed is no different. However, the difference between other ministries and Mercy Unleashed is that our code of conduct has very little room for error. It should never be forgotten that we work inside prisons, with convicted felons. We also must remember that we serve at the pleasure of the Department of Corrections. At any time, they could decide to no longer allow our volunteers inside the facilities and they are not required to give us any reasoning for their decision. Also, unlike other ministries, there are rules inside prisons that could result in a felony conviction if they are broken.

### Training

From time to time, all volunteers will have to attend mandatory training events held by the Department of Corrections and/or Mercy Unleashed. You will always have ample notice for training events. If for some reason you

### Conduct Standards

- Respect all authority inside the prisons. Do not get overly comfortable with the employees of the correctional facility. Do not ask for special permissions or favors. Do not ask questions. If you have a question while inside the facility, ask the leader of your group.
- Remember that the correctional facility is the home of the offenders. We are guests.
- Remember you are **always** under surveillance when inside a correctional facility. Everything you do can and will be seen by officers who are always monitoring the cameras.
- Everything you hear or see at the prison is confidential. The business of the offenders is not your business to share. Remember these are real people with real lives, real families, and real stories.
- **Nothing in. Nothing out.** If you give anything to an offender, or take anything from an offender... it is called trafficking. Trafficking is a felony and you will do time in prison.\*
- Each facility will have their own dress code. Standard dress code rules include no open toed shoes, no leggings or tight fit clothing, no shirts or clothing that depicts any brand name or words.
- Offenders will attempt to manipulate you. Know the signs.
- You are not allowed to give money to offenders. You may not put money on their books or give money to their families. Not only does this cross a boundary line for your safety, but it crosses a legal line for the ministry.
- You may not contact the offender's families. They may ask you to call a family member and pass on a message. This is not permitted.
- Do not give personal information to offenders. There is a fine line between forming discipleship relationships and divulging personal information. Be careful.
- Each facility may have different rules. If you are asked to follow a rule, even if you have never heard of the rule or you don't agree with the rule... you must follow the rule.
- There may be times when the facility goes on lockdown while you are there. Remain calm and follow the directions of the correctional officers. Do as you are told and be patient. They will likely not tell you anything about the situation. **Most importantly: Remain calm and do as you are told.**

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## PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

### Personal relationships

As Christians, we are naturally loving and empathetic and we want to help. It is not illegal to help an offender's family, deposit money in an offender's account, or to want to personally correspond with an offender that you meet through Mercy Unleashed... **however, IT IS NOT RECOMMENDED AND IT DOES EXCLUDE YOU FROM VOLUNTEERING WITH MERCY UNLEASHED.**

In order to maintain the safety of our volunteers and the integrity of the ministry, we must **insist** that all volunteer/offender relationships stay in the discipleship realm. We do this for a number of reasons:

- First and foremost, your safety as a volunteer is our utmost concern. Although we love the offenders as brothers and sisters in Christ, we cannot forget that they are in prison because they committed crimes.
- Some offenders will play on your kindness and attempt to manipulate you into giving them money or other resources.
- What could start out as a simple gesture of kindness could quickly turn into trafficking information to outside sources on behalf of the offender. **TRAFFICKING IS A FELONY.\***
- Even though we walk inside the prison knowing that there is always a chance something could happen that puts us in danger, you increase your chances of becoming a victim by crossing the boundaries that both the Department of Corrections and Mercy Unleashed put in place to protect you.

Although it is strongly discouraged to develop relationships with offenders that go beyond the boundary of ministry, we understand that it does happen from time to time and that people can feel as if though God is leading them to be a more personal advocate for a particular offender. If you find that you have developed a level of interest in an offender or their family that goes beyond the boundary of this ministry, it is your responsibility to tell the Executive Director immediately so we can terminate your volunteer status with the correctional facility.

If you do not comply, unfortunately it is the obligation of the Executive Director to notify the facility's chaplain of your noncompliance with Mercy Unleashed protocol and of your relationship with the offender. Please do not put the Executive Director in this position.

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## NEXT STEPS

Thank you for attending our virtual training class! Next steps:

1. Complete Volunteer Application – [www.mercyunleashed.org](http://www.mercyunleashed.org), email completed form to [bhaddad@mercyunleashed.org](mailto:bhaddad@mercyunleashed.org)
2. Complete Spiritual Gift Test - <http://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/>
3. Annual TB test – send completed test to [bhaddad@mercyunleashed.org](mailto:bhaddad@mercyunleashed.org)
4. Take picture of front and back of driver’s license. Send pictures to [bhaddad@mercyunleashed.org](mailto:bhaddad@mercyunleashed.org)