



## **Prison Fellowship and Restorative Justice**

A Christian reading of the Hebrew scriptures, the life and ministry of Jesus, and the overall witness of the New Testament point to what can be called a restorative justice model for understanding and responding to crime. The essence of this consists in God's love for humankind, such that he came to humanity in the person of Jesus (i.e., the incarnation). Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God demonstrated his merciful and suffering love in response to our wrongdoing, thus making forgiveness and restoration fundamental to how we should respond to human wrongdoing.

One needs look no further than the Gospel reading from Matthew 25 to find proof that God intends that we be involved with ministry to prisoners and with the work of restorative justice. Jesus said that when we visit the prisoner, we visit Him and when we turn our backs on the prisoner we turn our backs on Him, something for which a heavy penalty is to be demanded. WE remember that the first saint in Heaven was a thief--the thief who cried out to Jesus from the cross "Remember me when you enter to your kingdom". Jesus did not just remember him, he took him along. "Today you will be with me in paradise."