

The Gift of Time

[REDACTED]
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Being incarcerated offers an unusual gift to those who find themselves behind bars: time. There is an abundance of it! Modern American life is hectic. There simply isn't enough time to do everything. There are demands on our time from work, family, and the community. When you are serving time, you receive the *gift* of time.

When you are incarcerated, there is no social media. You can't put off a task to check Twitter or Facebook. There are no cell phones for our bosses to call us on the weekend. The distractions of 21st century life evaporate behind prison walls. There could be a tremendous amount of idle time in an inmate's life, unless he or she appreciates the gift of time.

Outside these walls, we put off education or job training because we'd never find the time in our busy lives to concentrate on bettering ourselves. This is our chance. The time could be wasted playing card games, watching television, or sleeping away the hours. We have a choice to make. Incarceration can be catastrophic or it can be constructive.

When we are eventually released from prison, there will certainly be challenges. It is tough to find stable employment with a criminal history. How can we make the transition easier? How can we ease the stress of finding a job? By appreciating the gift of time and using it to our advantage.

We must recognize that time allows us to better ourselves. Time can be spent reading, learning, growing, and developing into the people we want to be. I've often wondered what the "corrections" system is "correcting" and I've come to the conclusion

that there isn't anything the system can do, it's our personal choices regarding the use of our time that make the difference between *servicing* time and enjoying the *gift* of time.

We have been given the opportunity to hit the "pause" and "reset" buttons on our lives. There are no work demands. No one needs to be picked up from school. There are no errands to run. There are no bills to pay. There is no diaper to change. There is simply a wide open expanse of time that demands to be filled. How we fill that time determines how likely we are to avoid returning to crime in the future.

In order to avoid returning to prison, we must use time to our advantage. This is the opportunity to earn a high school diploma, a college degree, or learn a trade. We are able to develop marketable skills that will make us productive members of society. There is nothing that the prison system can change within us to make less likely to return to a life behind bars. Only the way we use our time can determine how prepared we are for a successful return to society, without the risk of recidivism.

Our time on Earth is always limited. When some of it must be spent in prison, that time can feel like it is being wasted. The only way to fight back, to make the best of the situation, is to appreciate the time we have and use it to become men and women who are educated and prepared for life outside the walls. We must unwrap the gift of time and appreciate its tremendous value.