

## **AFTERCARE**

**By Don Smarto**

**While evangelism and the “harvest moment” is very important to an offender, Jesus taught us about discipleship and growth. Ex-offenders need several factors to become stable upon release and when the factors missing, they often go back to the patterns and crimes that send them back to jail and prison.**

**I am currently working with a former meth addict as his mentor. Sadly, he strikes me as someone who will be in and out of jail most of his adult life. Why?**

**First, God gave him free will and he continues to make bad choices.**

- 1. He spends time with “old friends” who got him into trouble.**
- 2. He refuses to join a church because as he says “They are all hypocrites”**
- 3. He is bitter about people he says he has forgiven.**
- 4. He is not afraid to go back to jail. As he says “That’s were my real friends are”.**

**Now, do you see my point? When a person loses their fear of jail or prison, they become institutionalized in their thinking. This man needs the support and accountability of the local church but makes excuses for not going.**

**Ex-offenders need to avoid old friends and visiting old places. Without genuine repentance and forgiveness, the root of bitterness takes over. I can only give advice as a mentor and pray for him. He was arrested the first week he was released. You can probably guess he was drinking with an old friend and they made a bad decision. Aftercare is all about accountability and there is no better place for the ex-offender than a support group in the local church.**