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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Baylor University Research Provides Evidence:  
Prison Fellowship International Faith-Based Program Transforms Prisoners, Prisons  
PFI In-Prison Course in Vanguard of Emerging Field of ‘Positive Criminology’**

**WASHINGTON (Sept. 21, 2021)** – A groundbreaking Baylor University study of a Prison Fellowship International (PFI) in-prison program provides evidence that the faith-based course transforms prisoners – and leads to culture change in prisons.

“PFI is providing innovative prison programs that are quickly becoming one of the centerpieces of the emerging field of positive criminology,” said Dr. Byron Johnson, founding director of the Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR) at Baylor University.

Johnson leads the Baylor ISR research team conducting a **longitudinal evaluation of PFI’s “The Prisoner’s Journey” (TPJ) course** – which has already graduated more than 460,000 inmates worldwide. The research team conducted the first phase of the study in prisons in South Africa and Colombia during a 40-month period from January, 2018 to April, 2021. (They plan to continue the study and expand to more countries.)

Researchers are finding ample evidence to say empirically that participation in the TPJ course measurably increases prisoners’ motivation for identity transformation (new meaning and purpose in life despite criminal past and incarceration) and growth of virtues. The program also reduces negative feelings and the risk of aggressive behaviors among participants. These changes in attitudes and beliefs are key indicators of a prisoner’s successful rehabilitation.

“Our study of TPJ provides empirical evidence that prisoner rehabilitation needs more than risk management – specifically, a positive criminology approach to help prisoners achieve life goals of human flourishing, such as meaning and purpose; character and virtue; and emotional well-being,” said Dr. Sung Joon Jang, research professor of criminology, co-director of the Program on Prosocial Behavior at ISR and co-author with Johnson of “*The Restorative Prison*,” released this month.

**“The Prisoner’s Journey” (TPJ)**

TPJ is an in-prison, structured course designed to “transform the lives of prisoners, from the inside out, by introducing them to restorative principles taught by Jesus, who was also a prisoner.” It is centered on the book of Mark in the Bible, facilitated by trained inmates or volunteers.

Since its inception in 2014, more than 460,000 inmates worldwide have graduated from the eight-week TPJ course. More than 70% of these graduates have continued in a follow-on discipleship program. Currently, TPJ runs in 39 countries spanning the globe, including Africa, Asia Pacific, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

## **Global Prison Ministry**

Fifteen million people around the world are imprisoned annually. Problem-ridden correctional systems and high recidivism demonstrate that prisons alone are ill-equipped to rehabilitate inmates. The steadily growing rate of imprisonment and the massive impact imprisonment has on society form a vicious cycle that is difficult to break.

PFI's Bible-based prison course and unparalleled access to prisons worldwide – through indigenous ministry affiliates and partners – make it uniquely prepared for the challenge. Now, with the Baylor research that proves this program works, PFI is gearing up to continue expanding ministry activities that have carried on during the pandemic lockdowns and limitations on visitations by the empowering of Christian prisoners to run PFI courses.

"The Baylor research findings couldn't come at a better time," said David Van Patten, chief operating officer of PFI. "We are at the front end of a major push to engage 20% of the world's prison population with transformative programs like TPJ. We believe that at 20% we will trigger cultural change in prisons. This Baylor research is evidence that we are on the right track."

"We could not be more excited about the work (and the results) that this study represents," said Andrew Corley, president and chief executive officer of PFI. "Breaking cycles of crime and the restoring of lives for those who have been in prison is a complex issue. Ignoring the 'body, spirit, soul' tripartite nature of what is necessary for successful reintegration and rehabilitation will result in continued disappointing outcomes. But this study provides proof positive that better outcomes are possible."

"Programs like TPJ yield empirical validation of the reality that much of the truly innovative work being done in the name of prison reform is coming from faith-based programs operated by organizations like Prison Fellowship International," said Johnson. "These remarkable programs – led by faith-motivated volunteers -- are doing a lot to transform individuals and prisons across the world. I hate to think where we would be without these ministries that are dedicated to serving the least of these."

###

**About Prison Fellowship International:** Since 1979, PFI has helped prisoners experience transformation from the inside out through the healing power of the Gospel. Its mission is to transform the lives of prisoners, their families and victims through a global network of ministry partners.

**Learn more at [pfi.org](http://pfi.org).**



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## Baylor University Study of the Prisoner's Journey (TPJ) Program

### Frequently Asked Questions

*Since 2014, “The Prisoner’s Journey” (TPJ) course has been changing prisoners’ lives. The eight-week in-prison course is an initiative of Prison Fellowship International (PFI). As of August, 2021, more than 460,000 inmates have graduated from the program, which runs in 39 countries spanning the globe, including Africa, Asia Pacific, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.*

**What is this study?** A longitudinal evaluation of the impact of PFI’s The Prisoner’s Journey® (TPJ) program on prisoner rehabilitation, conducted by researchers at the Baylor University Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR).

#### Why is this study important or unique?

- This is the first study of its kind to examine faith-based programming in prisons on a multinational basis.
- Very few studies exist about prison populations in developing countries.
- PFI’s commissioning, cooperation and funding this university research is a major contribution to the global study of prisoners and rehabilitation.

**When was the study conducted?** The first phase was conducted during a 40-month period from January, 2018 to April, 2021.

**Where did the research take place?** Seven prisons in South Africa and Colombia.

**Who was studied?** Nearly 900 prisoners. The average participant age was 35. Their charges were distributed across violent, property, sex, drug and other offenses in both experimental and control groups. Most participants were from Christian backgrounds, but positive outcomes emerged for participants from other faiths or without faith.

#### Does the study show anything about TPJ’s impact on non-Christian populations?

- Participants in this first phase of the study were largely Christian (more than 80% identified as either Catholic or Protestant).
- Participants who identified as “no” or “other” religion comprised more than 10%.

#### What were the key findings?

- Participation in TPJ increased religious engagement among prisoners.
- This increased religious engagement contributed to:
  - crystallization of discontent (which motivates self-change)
  - sense of meaning and purpose in life
  - development of forgiveness, gratitude and self-control
  - increased motivation for new meaning and purpose in life, i.e., identity transformation
  - decreased negative emotional states and less interpersonal aggression
  - growth in willingness to take responsibility for their behaviors

**What is the significance of TPJ and this study?** This groundbreaking study provides evidence that the faith-based TPJ course transforms prisoners – and leads to culture change in prisons. TPJ outcomes are uniformly positive: for prisoners, prison officials and the community at large.

**How will PFI use the findings from the study in the future?**

- Identify best practices, develop benchmarks and build the material into PFI trainings.
- Researchers are submitting data and crafting articles for publication in 2021 and 2022.

**What is the next phase of this study?**

- PFI and the Baylor research team have planned this as a longitudinal study. They are working to extend and expand the study to more countries and increase diversity among participants.
- Researchers plan a component in which they can follow prisoners outside of prisons.

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### The Prisoner's Journey:

#### Assessing the Effectiveness of a Faith-Based Program in South African and Colombian Prisons

*Matthew Lee Anderson, Jason Burtt, Sung Joon Jang, Karen Booyens, Byron R. Johnson, and Michael Joseph.*

One of PFI's signature programs is *The Prisoner's Journey* (TPJ), a curriculum designed to "transform the lives of prisoners, from the inside out, by introducing them to a restorative relationship with the person of Jesus."<sup>1</sup> An eight-week Bible study, TPJ is facilitated by volunteers from local churches or inmates trained to lead the study. TPJ invites prisoners to reflect upon their own responsibility for wrongdoings, and emphasizes that the "reason there's something wrong with the world is because there's something wrong with us."<sup>2</sup> This narrative of sin and responsibility intensifies the sense of wrongdoing and anticipates the "solution" that TPJ offers in highlighting the forgiving grace of Jesus.

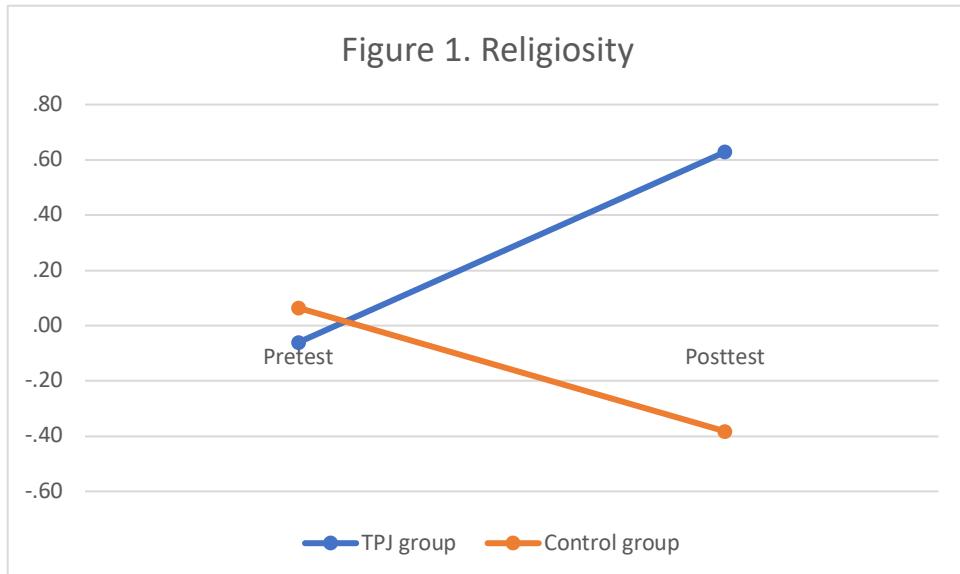
### Methodology

A quasi-experimental study was conducted in South Africa<sup>3</sup> and Colombia, South America,<sup>4</sup> to assess whether TPJ contributes to prosocial changes in self-identity, existential belief, and moral character by increasing involvement in religion among prisoners who completed the program, compared to those who did not participate. We also wanted to know if TPJ can help address emotional maladjustment and misconduct by decreasing the negative emotional states and aggression toward other inmates that are so common among prisoners.

Finally, we conducted a series of face-to-face interviews with randomly selected participants in a baseline survey. Interviews sought to capture the offender's narrative about their life before prison, during prison, and what they hoped would come after prison. By asking similar questions before and after their participation in TPJ, we were able to assess the differences that participation in TPJ made in how offenders spoke about their responsibility for their wrongs, their religious participation, and their lives more broadly. With a few exceptions due to prison limitations, interviews were recorded and then transcribed. In Colombia, interviews were both conducted with a translator present, and audio files were subsequently reviewed for accuracy.<sup>5</sup>

### Findings

In Colombia, we found inmates who completed the Bible study (TPJ group) increased their religious involvement (see Figure 1), measured both objectively (i.e., how frequently they attended religious services, prayed outside of religious services, and spent private time to read the Bible) and subjectively (i.e., how close they felt to God and how important religion was to them). On the other hand, there was no significant change among those who did not participate in the program (control group). We then examined whether TPJ-increased religiosity helped inmates experience a transformation through the development of prosocial changes in self-identity, existential belief, and moral character.

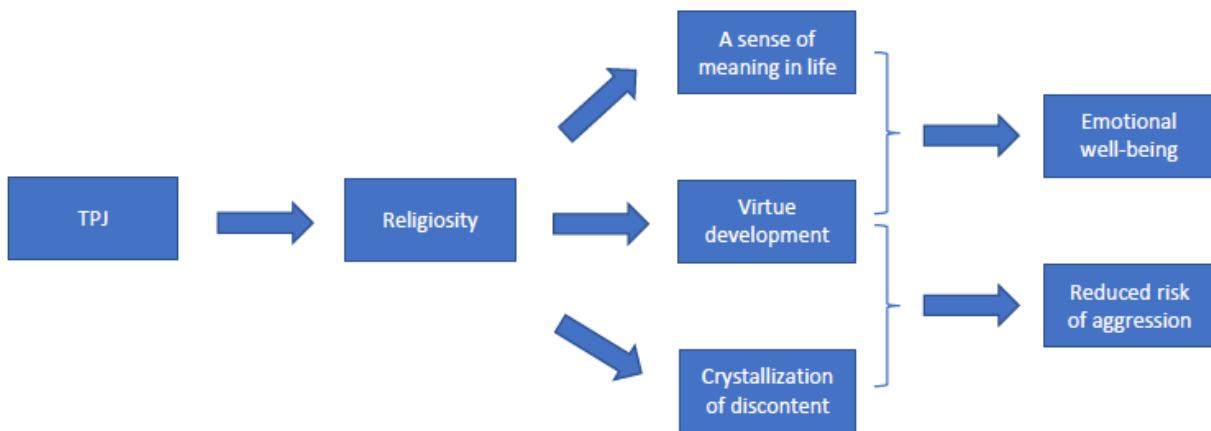


First, we found that religious involvement increased by the Bible study helped program participants to engage in a cognitive process called “crystallization of discontent.” This process allowed TPJ inmates see their failures (e.g., not being a good parent) or dissatisfaction in life (including their current incarceration) as linked to their criminal identity. This cognitive linking weakens attachment to the one’s negative identity and provides inmates with the initial motivation to break from crime and to engage in a deliberate act of intentional self-change.

Second, increased religiosity as a result of TPJ participation was found to significantly enhance an existential belief in meaning and purpose in life among participating inmates. If prisoners believe God has a purpose for their lives, we find they are more likely to find new meaning in life and become motivated to change themselves for the better.

Third, we examined whether TPJ-increased religiosity contributed to the development of moral character among inmates. We found that it did: the Bible study increased inmate’s forgiveness, accountability, gratitude, and self-control via religiosity. That is, inmates reported higher levels of these virtues after they completed TPJ compared to when they signed up for the program.

Finally, we also examined whether TPJ reduced inmate’s negative emotional states and risk of interpersonal aggression by increasing religiosity and its resultant identity transformation, existential belief in meaning and purpose in life, and virtue development. Results showed that the Bible study contributed to a reduction in the feelings of depression, anxiety, and anger via religiosity and its increased crystallization of discontent, perceived presence of meaning in life, gratitude, and self-control. Participation in TPJ also decreased the likelihood of interpersonal aggression through religiosity-fostered crystallization of discontent, gratitude, and self-control. In sum, TPJ was found to help address two major issues among prison inmates in Colombia —emotional maladjustment and misconduct—by increasing religiosity that subsequently enhanced identity transformation, a sense of meaning and purpose, and virtues (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2. The prosocial effects of TPJ on prisoner rehabilitation, emotional well-being, and in-prison behavior**

In South Africa, increased religiosity contributed to inmate transformation through the development of prosocial changes in self-identity and moral character.<sup>6</sup> Specifically, religiosity significantly increased an inmate's cognitive and emotional identity transformations as well as the virtues of forgiveness, empathy, and self-control, which in turn reduced inmate's negative emotional states (i.e., state depression, state anxiety, and state anger). Besides these indirect effects, religiosity had the direct effect of lessening negative emotional states. Religiosity also reduced the likelihood of inmate's engaging in interpersonal aggression as well by fostering the virtues of forgiveness and self-control.

In addition, we found that TPJ increased gratitude among South African participating inmates: specifically, they became more thankful for a wide variety of people as well as what they have after completing the Bible study compared to baseline measures before the onset of the program. The TPJ-increased gratitude then decreased the risk of prison misconduct, and particularly, interpersonal aggression: that is, the more grateful inmates became, the less likely they were to behave aggressively toward others, whether inmates or correctional officers.

Turning to our qualitative findings, there is some evidence within the literature that high levels of religiosity correlate with a refusal to take responsibility for criminal conduct, as offenders sometimes use religious reasons to excuse or rationalize their wrongdoing. However, our research contradicts this, and gives reason to think that participation in TPJ is conducive to active responsibility-taking. These findings occurred at two levels.

First, religiosity across our control prisons and the TPJ prisons positively correlated with responsibility-taking. Offenders who described themselves as actively religious or who unreflectively used religious vocabulary were highly likely to say that they only blamed themselves for ending up in prison, or to take responsibility in other ways, regardless of the prison they were in. Additionally, such offenders in general had sophisticated and subtle accounts of their own responsibility. They could, and frequently would, acknowledge that they did something wrong and accept the blame for it while also pointing to social conditions like poverty, gang activity, missing family members, or other deprivations as mitigating factors.

Additionally, religious inmates were very likely to frame their time in prison as a benefit to themselves. Sometimes that was comparative: they would point to the alternative of ending up dead, and express gratitude to God that they were not. At other times, such benefits were directly tied to their

opportunities to learn more about the Bible, go to church, and so on. In those cases, though, such religious post-hoc explanations for their crime went hand-in-hand with strong assertions of their own responsibility.

Second, while religiosity correlated with active responsibility-taking, participation in TPJ seems to have shifted some offenders' into taking more responsibility for their offenses. In one striking case, an offender who had initially insisted that they had been framed mentioned themselves only to blame when interviewed after he completed the Bible study. In other cases, offenders globalized their sense of responsibility: they maintained their innocence regarding the crime for which they were convicted, but eagerly took responsibility for other wrongs. This heightened sense of responsibility-taking was accompanied by efforts to rebuild their agency through curbing drug use, changing speech patterns, avoiding fights, or other forms of self-control. In essence, interview data indicated both that religion fostered responsibility-taking, and that participation in TPJ is especially conducive to it.

### **Conclusion**

Our findings in Colombia indicate that not all inmates who participated in TPJ experience the same positive outcomes. For example, inmates who signed up for TPJ primarily because it would increase their chance of early release may not necessarily reap the benefit of the program, especially if they are less likely to increase their involvement in religion more generally. However, TPJ participants who did become more religious tend to experience prosocial changes.

Our findings in South Africa confirmed the importance of religious involvement in relation to inmate transformation through the development of prosocial changes in self-identity and moral character. Specifically, increased religiosity contributed to an inmate's cognitive and emotional identity transformations as well as the virtues of forgiveness, empathy, and self-control, which in turn reduced inmate's negative emotional states. In addition, TPJ decreased the risk of prison misconduct both directly and indirectly by fostering gratitude among participating inmates.

Finally, our qualitative findings tend to complement our quantitative findings. Though the breadth of our sample was constrained by attrition within the study, our findings are also both interesting and salient to better understanding the difference that programs like TPJ can make *even for* offenders who identify as religious at the outset of the program. Offenders who participate are given the opportunity to hear constructive responsibility-taking in the context of forgiveness modeled. We suspect that this makes responsibility-taking seem less risky to offenders. In sum, we find that TPJ is likely to have a rehabilitative impact on inmates by increasing their involvement in religion, which in turn contributes to identity transformation and virtue development.

Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Prison Fellowship International (<https://pfi.org/what-we-do/spreading-the-gospel/>)

<sup>2</sup> The Prisoner's Journey Leader's Guide, 91.

<sup>3</sup> In South Africa, a survey was conducted with 437 inmates (267 males and 170 females) housed in six prisons—312 (189 males and 123 females) who completed TPJ in three prisons (two male and one female prisons) and 125 (78 males and 47 females) who did not participate in the program in another three prisons (two male and one female prisons) from 2018 to 2019. While the survey was conducted three times—a pretest (before TPJ started), a posttest (after TPJ ended), and a follow-up (about 10 to 12 months after the posttest), this brief report is based on data from the first two surveys. The study participants were, on average, about 37 years old with the youngest and oldest being 20 and 70, respectively. The average education (grade passed) was 5.60, and about eight out of 10 (79.0%) inmates were single, with most of the remainder (16.2%) being married. Almost nine out of 10 (85.3%) were Christian (77.5% Protestant and 7.8% Catholic), and only three percent (3.1%) said they had no religion; thus, our sample

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consisted mostly of religious inmates. The largest ethnic group was African (79.0%), followed by European (15.2%), Coloured (7.6%), Immigrant Black (5.7%) and Asian (1.9%). The TPJ inmates reported lower education than the non-TPJ inmates (3.50 vs. 8.45) and were more likely to be African in ethnicity (78.0% vs. 58.7%) and single (89.8% vs. 65.2%). While they were not different in religious affiliation, the program participants tended to be more religious compared to the non-participants.

<sup>4</sup> We also conducted the same survey in Colombia with 424 male inmates housed in two prisons—212 who completed TPJ in one prison (TPJ inmates) and 212 who did not participate in the program in another prison (non-TPJ inmates)—in Colombia, South America, from 2018 to 2019. While the survey was conducted three times—a pretest (before TPJ started), a posttest (after TPJ ended), and a follow-up (about 10 to 12 months after the posttest), this brief report is based on data from the first two surveys. The study participants were, on average, about 35 years old with the youngest and oldest being 19 and 72, respectively. Almost two thirds (64.9%) of the sample had completed Secondary School (Grades 6 to 9), and slightly more than a half (53.7%) of them were married or in common law marriages, with the second largest group (44.6%) being never married. Almost nine out of 10 (88.5%) identified as Christian (58.1% Catholic and 30.4% Protestant), whereas about eight percent (7.7%) said they had no religion. The sample consisted of inmates charged for violent (19.4%), property (22.5%), sex (13.3%), drug (21.8%), and other offenses (22.8%). Before participating in the Bible study, the TPJ inmates were not significantly different from the non-TPJ inmates in sociodemographic and criminal justice-related backgrounds except that the TPJ participants were more likely to have no religion than the non-participants (10.3% vs. 5.0%).

<sup>5</sup> While offenders were asked whether they blamed anyone for the “bad things” that had happened to them, they were not asked directly about their offenses. The sample size decreased on every visit, owing to offender releases, movement, and other challenges. We conducted a pretest interview with a total of 91 offenders—43 in Colombia (15 in TPJ prison and 28 in non-TPJ prison) and 48 in South Africa (31 in TPJ prison and 17 in non-TPJ prison), and about a quarter (24) of them were reinterviewed after the program was completed (posttest), 12 (7 in TPJ prison and 5 in non-TPJ prison) in each country. About 10-12 months later, a final, follow-up interview was conducted only with 10 TPJ graduates: four in Colombia and six in South Africa.

<sup>6</sup> However, in South Africa, TPJ did not increase religious involvement among participating inmates. Given the relatively high religiosity observed among South African TPJ inmates before the program started, we suspected that the null finding was because many TPJ inmates had been highly involved in religion before they attended the Bible study. Specifically, TPJ inmates who were already high on religiosity were less likely to increase their religious involvement as a result of the Bible study than those initially scoring lower on religiosity. We found empirical evidence consistent with this conjecture: TPJ inmates who had below-average religiosity (particularly, the bottom 25%) before they attended the Bible study significantly *increased* religious involvement afterwards, whereas religious involvement among those who had average or above-average religiosity (particularly, the top 25%) significantly *decreased* after participating in TPJ.



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#### Baylor University Study of the Prisoner's Journey (TPJ) Program

##### Suggested Interview Questions

###### PFI

- Tell us about Prison Fellowship International (PFI) and its mission.

###### TPJ

- What exactly is “The Prisoner’s Journey” (TPJ) in-prison course?
- How many prisons operate this program and where are these prisons?
- How many prisoners have graduated since the program started?

###### Baylor University Study of TPJ

- Tell us about why the Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR) at Baylor University launched a longitudinal study of this program?
- When and where did the first phase of the study occur, and how was it conducted?
- What were you trying to learn?
- What were the major findings? Why Is the study important?
- Tell us how the program increases prisoner’s involvement in religious activity, and why this is relevant to a prisoner’s transformation and purpose.
- How does prisoner transformation affect prison culture?
- What is positive criminology? How is this study relevant to the field of positive criminology?
- Does the study show the program’s impact on prisoners of any faith or no faith background?
- When and where will the next phase of this study take place?

###### Impact of TPJ Study

- Do the findings of this study have an impact on Prison Fellowship International?
- How will reaching 20% of the world’s prison population with transformative programs like The Prisoner’s Journey trigger a cultural change within prisons?

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**About Prison Fellowship International:** Since 1979, PFI has helped prisoners experience transformation from the inside out through the healing power of the Gospel. Its mission is to transform the lives of prisoners, their families and victims through a global network of ministry partners. **Learn more at [pfi.org](http://pfi.org).**



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#### BAYLOR UNIVERSITY STUDY OF THE PRISONER'S JOURNEY (TPJ) PROGRAM

##### Bios – Research Team

###### **Byron Johnson**

Byron Johnson is Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University. He is the founding director of the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR). He is a Faculty Scholar in the Center for Spirituality, Theology, and Health at Duke University, Senior Fellow with the Witherspoon Institute (Princeton), Senior Fellow at the Sagamore Institute (Indianapolis), and is a Senior Advisor at the Religious Freedom Institute (Washington, DC).

Before joining the faculty at Baylor University, Johnson directed research centers at Vanderbilt University and the University of Pennsylvania. Professor Johnson is a former member of the Coordinating Council for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Presidential Appointment). He has been the principal investigator on grants from private foundations as well as the Department of Justice, Department of Labor, Department of Defense, National Institutes of Health, and the United States Institute for Peace, totaling more than \$77 million. He is the author of more than 200 journal articles, monographs or books. He is recognized as a leading authority on the scientific study of religion, the efficacy of faith-based organizations, and criminal justice. Recent publications have examined the impact of faith-based programs on offender treatment, drug addiction, recidivism reduction and prisoner reentry and is the subject of his book, "More God, Less Crime" (2011).

Johnson also directs the Program on Prosocial Behavior, which examines the ways in which religion impacts key behaviors like volunteerism, generosity and purpose. These topics are covered in four recent books, "The Angola Prison Seminary" (2016), which evaluates the influence of a Bible College and inmate-led congregations on prisoners serving life sentences; "The Quest for Purpose" (2017), which examines the link between religion and finding purpose and meaning, and the subsequent link to academic integrity; "The Restorative Prison" (2021), which looks at the empirical evidence in support of the link between religion and the emerging sub-field of positive criminology; and "Objective Religion" (2021), which looks at the relationship between religion and competition, tension, and perseverance. Johnson is currently the project director of the Global Flourishing Study, a longitudinal study which will survey 300,000 participants annually from 2021 to 2026.

###### **Sung Joon Jang**

Sung Joon Jang is Research Professor of Criminology and co-director of the Program on Prosocial Behavior within the Baylor University Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR).

Before joining Baylor University, Jang held appointments at Ohio State University and Louisiana State University. His research focuses on the effects of religion and spirituality as well as family, school and peers on crime and delinquency. His research has been published in social scientific journals of sociology, criminology, psychology and social work. Jang is the founding President of the Korean Society of Criminology in America and has been active in many capacities in the American Society of Criminology.





# Baylor University Research Findings: "The Prisoner's Journey" Transforms Prisoners, Leads to Culture Change in Prisons



I started this journey just to join a class...then I heard about somebody who can give meaning to my life, a meaning to the effort to try to change it.

**Dragomir, Prisoner**  
**Bulgaria**

This is the ministry of the century and I want to be a part of it.

**Prison Officer Saihemba**  
**Zambia**

As a condemned convict, I used to have sleepless nights, but through The Prisoner's Journey, I realized that Jesus Christ has paid the ransom for my sins and for the first time since coming to prison, I have peace.

**Ayo, prisoner**  
**Nigeria**

The beauty of The Prisoner's Journey is that it does not discriminate. Anybody can participate because it only represents the facts about Jesus Christ. It is not preaching.

**Deputy Controller of Prisons**  
**Nigeria**

The Prisoner's Journey is a program of hope and reassurance.

**Fr. Marwan Ghanem**  
**Board Chair**  
**Prison Fellowship Lebanon**

They are just so hungry and thirsty for God's Word... God's fire has fallen and created the most amazing excitement among all inmates inside this maximum facility...

**Pastor Tyrone**  
**The Prisoner's Journey Leader**  
**South Africa**

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Since 2014, "The Prisoner's Journey" (TPJ) course has been changing prisoners' lives. The eight-week in-prison course is an initiative of Prison Fellowship International (PFI). As of August, 2021, more than 460,000 inmates have graduated from the program, which runs in 39 countries spanning the globe, including Africa, Asia Pacific, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

**What is this study?** A longitudinal evaluation of the impact of PFI's The Prisoner's Journey® (TPJ) program on prisoner rehabilitation, conducted by researchers at the Baylor University Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR). This is the first study of its kind to examine faith-based programming in prisons on a multinational basis.

**What is TPJ?** TPJ is an in-prison course designed to transform the lives of prisoners, from the inside out, by introducing them to restorative principles taught by Jesus, who was also a prisoner. It is centered on the book of Mark in the Bible, facilitated by trained inmates or volunteers.

**When was the study conducted?** The first phase was conducted during a 40-month period from January, 2018 to April, 2021. (Researchers plan to continue the study and expand to more countries.)

**Where did the research take place?** Seven prisons in South Africa and Colombia.

**Who was studied?** Nearly 900 prisoners. The average participant age was 35. Most participants were from Christian backgrounds, but positive outcomes emerged for participants from other faiths or without faith.

## What were the key findings?

- Participation in TPJ increased religious engagement among prisoners.
- This increased religious engagement contributed to:
  - crystallization of discontent (which motivates self-change)
  - sense of meaning and purpose in life
  - development of forgiveness, gratitude and self-control
  - increased motivation for new meaning and purpose in life, i.e., identity transformation
  - decreased negative emotional states and less interpersonal aggression
  - growth in willingness to take responsibility for their behaviors

**What is the significance of TPJ and this study?** This groundbreaking study provides evidence that the faith-based TPJ course transforms prisoners – and leads to culture change in prisons. TPJ outcomes are uniformly positive: for prisoners, prison officials and the community at large.