

A grayscale photograph of a person standing on a path, looking out over a misty landscape. The person is silhouetted against the light, standing on a path that leads into the distance. The landscape is hazy and foggy, with a path that curves into the distance. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Effective Reentry Ministry for Ordinary Congregations



INSIDE OUT

NETWORK

Connecting returning citizens with
service providers.

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EXPANDED EDITION WITH 7 NEW SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDIES



SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL GUIDE

FOR PRISON AND BEYOND

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Why the Great Disconnect?



	Feeling Unable	Feeling Able
Willing	<div>50%</div> <div>Willing but Feeling Unable</div> <div>(open to change, but modestly resourced and feeling stuck)</div>	<div>5%</div> <div>Willing and Able</div> <div>(both motivated and well-resourced; many already involved at some level)</div>
Unwilling	<div>35%</div> <div>Unable and Unwilling</div> <div>(struggling and focused on other things)</div>	<div>10%</div> <div>Able but Unwilling</div> <div>(well-resourced but focused on other things)</div>

The Path Forward





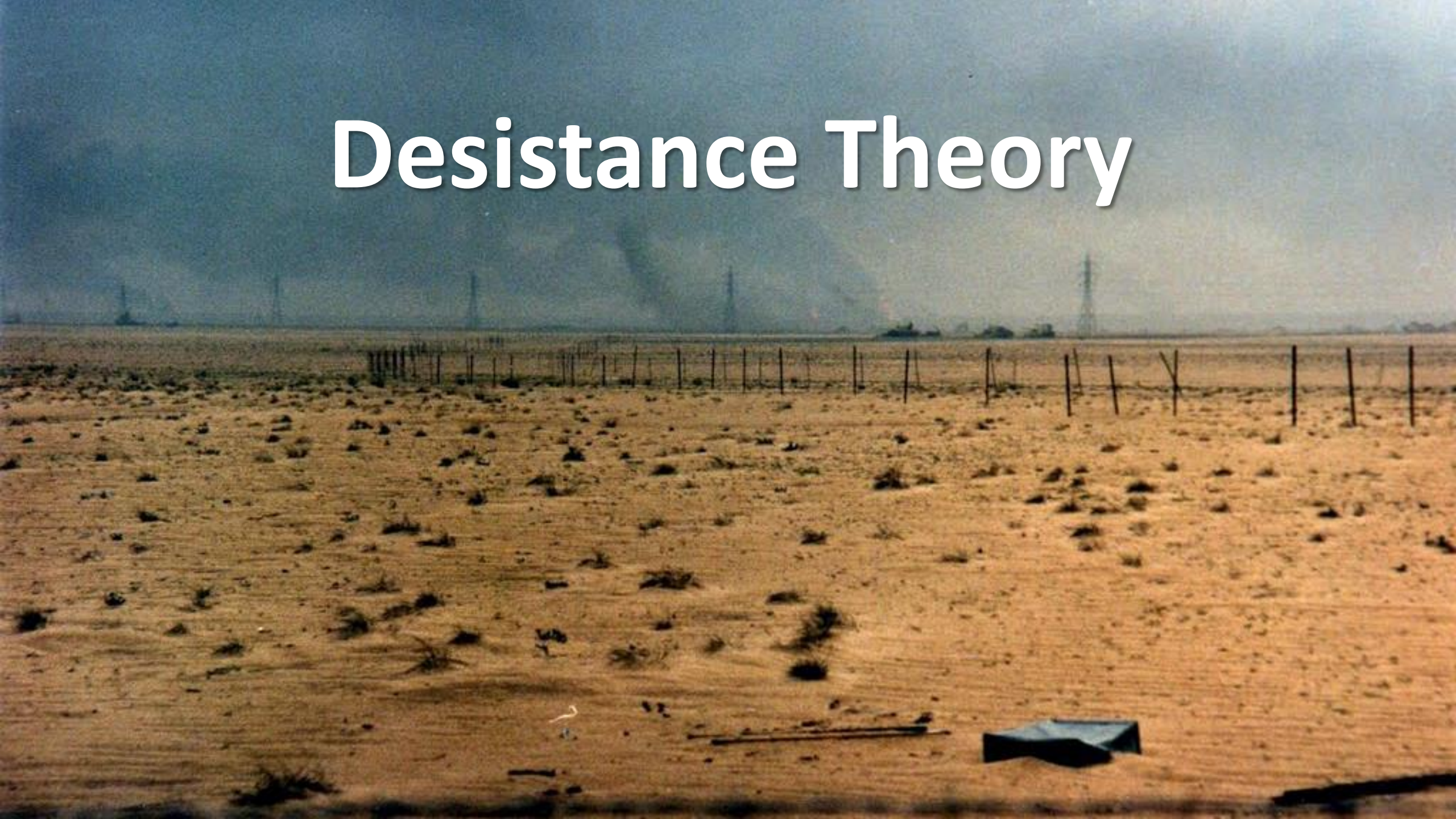
**How do you get out when you find
yourself in the middle of a minefield?**




**Follow the footsteps of the guy
who got out successfully.**



Desistance Theory



- 
- The background of the image is a wide, flat desert landscape. The ground is sandy and brown, with sparse, low-lying desert vegetation. In the distance, a line of wooden fence posts is visible, stretching across the horizon. The sky is a pale, hazy blue with some light clouds. The overall scene is desolate and open.
1. Openness to change
 2. Good Hooks, or Turning Points
 3. Adopting a positive, new self
 4. Putting away the old, false self
 5. Community acceptance & welcome

A New Paradigm



A grayscale photograph of a person standing on a dirt path, looking out over a misty, open landscape. The person is silhouetted against the lighter background. The path leads into the distance, curving slightly to the right. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

A GRAND Paradigm (beliefs, attitudes, and working assumptions)

Grace-motivated
Restorative-framed
Asset-based
Network-implemented
Desistance-informed

A grayscale photograph of a person standing on a path, looking out over a misty landscape. The person is silhouetted against the light, and the path leads into the distance. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Eight Models for Effective Reentry Ministry for Ordinary Congregations



THE SERVICE STATION MODEL

“You’ve been through a lot and we know you have a lot of needs right now. Come and get some of what you need.”



THE RECOVERY FELLOWSHIP MODEL

“We’re on a journey from addiction to real freedom. Come and work your sobriety with us.”



THE COACH/MENTOR CONNECTION MODEL

“Reentry is tough to figure out on your own. Come and get connected to someone who can help you find your way and take your next steps.”



THE PEER-LED MINISTRY MODEL

“We get you because we’ve been there and we’re just like you. Come for ‘church on the inside,’ the outside version.”



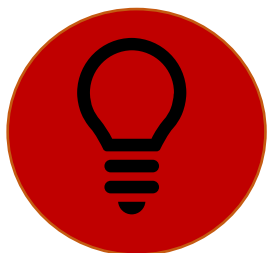
THE JAIL TO CONGREGATION PIPELINE MODEL

“We’ve already connected on the inside.
Come and join us on the outside.”



THE LIFE-CHANGING SMALL GROUP MODEL

“God’s already been at work in your life. Come and keep growing spiritually
and as a leader in a welcoming and supportive group setting.”



THE WHOLE FAMILY SUPPORT MODEL

“Come with your family.
We’re here for all of you.”



THE MISSION STATION MODEL

“You have a lot to offer. Come with your passion, gifts, and skills,
and let’s make a difference together.”

THE SERVICE STATION MODEL

“You’ve been through a lot and we know you have a lot of needs right now. Come and get some of what you need.”



IDEA IN BRIEF

THE OPPORTUNITY

A large number of returning citizens have practical physical needs that can be met by ordinary congregations without a large investment in time, resources, or volunteers.

WHAT IT INVOLVES

Congregations can build on their strengths. This model is modular (only do what you are capable of) and scalable (pick a frequency that works for you). Top needs are feeding, clothing, hygiene kits, and help with transportation.

THE WAY FORWARD

Establish a working team. Identify your strengths. Reach out to local parole offices and other service providers to identify contacts, establish partnerships, and learn where and how you can fit in and add value.

THE RECOVERY FELLOWSHIP MODEL

“We’re on a journey from addiction to real freedom.
Come and work your sobriety with us.”



IDEA IN BRIEF

THE OPPORTUNITY

There’s a pipeline of returning citizens leaving jail and prison looking to stay engaged in recovery ministry. Ordinary congregations can employ a turnkey process to launch a significant recovery ministry with a moderate investment of time, resources, and volunteers.

WHAT IT INVOLVES

To increase the odds of success, congregations benefit from having committed and passionate leaders with firsthand experience in recovery, a willingness to tap into existing recovery resources, and a reasonable number of volunteers to start this kind of ministry.

THE WAY FORWARD

Establish a working team. Identify other recovery ministries and groups in your area and see where you might fit it. Order leaders’ guides to some of the major recovery ministries, like Celebrate Recovery, and find out if you are ready to move forward with the congregation.

THE COACH/MENTOR CONNECTION MODEL

“Reentry is tough to figure out on your own. Come and get connected to someone who can help you find your way and take your next steps.”



IDEA IN BRIEF

THE OPPORTUNITY

There's probably nothing more accessible, flexible, cost-effective, and life-changing than a strong coaching or mentoring ministry. It aligns wonderfully with desistance research and can also be used effectively in a wide range of ministries.

THE PROBLEM

Unfortunately, coaching and mentoring suffer from stereotypes that make them unappealing to many returning citizens. This can make it challenging to create a robust pipeline of people wanting to be coached.

THE WAY FORWARD

If you haven't already done so, invest in a "Coaching 101" course to begin to build your coaching skills. Establish connections with other reentry ministries to let them know you are available for coaching. Use coaching as a capacity-building measure to help you do the other models even more effectively.

THE PEER-LED MINISTRY MODEL

“We get you because we’ve been there and we’re just like you.
Come for ‘church on the inside,’ the outside version.”



IDEA IN BRIEF

THE OPPORTUNITY

Peer-led ministries of all kinds enjoy built-in credibility and authenticity. They also can be incredibly effective. A peer-led reentry ministry model can create a positive, self-sustaining reputation and increased impact.

THE PROBLEM

Building a ministry on an individual leader can be risky. People, including leaders, come and go. Finding the “right” leader can be difficult.

THE WAY FORWARD

One way forward is to start with one of the other models and then add the peer-led model if/when a suitable leader emerges. Another way is for a peer leader to start an independent ministry and then affiliate with a church where the fit is good.

THE JAIL TO CONGREGATION PIPELINE MODEL

“We’ve already connected on the inside.
Come and join us on the outside.”



IDEA IN BRIEF

THE CHALLENGE

The barriers between the world of your local jail and the world inside your congregation can be marked by stigma, fear, mistrust, and ignorance on both sides. Even if you can create a great reentry ministry, it can often remain a hidden gem and go underutilized.

THE GOOD NEWS

Despite these barriers, life-changing personal connections are being made every day by men and women doing jail ministry. Building trusted relationships and a continuity of care that begins in jail and continues in the congregation can create a virtuous cycle and an effective pipeline from jail cell to congregational ministry.

THE WAY FORWARD

If you’re feeling the call to dive into the deep end instead of just testing the waters, then begin by being strategic. Map out how you can be *missional* by reaching out to your local jail and *attractional* by having a reentry landing pad in your congregation.

THE LIFE-CHANGING SMALL GROUP MODEL

“God’s already been at work in your life. Come and keep growing spiritually and as a leader in a welcoming and supportive group setting.”



IDEA IN BRIEF

THE GOOD NEWS

Your most powerful reentry ministry might be sitting in plain sight. Small groups are a great crucible for identity transformation. Chances are, there’s already some kind of small group ministry happening in your congregation, whether it’s a Bible study, a friendship group, or a grief support group.

WHAT IT INVOLVES

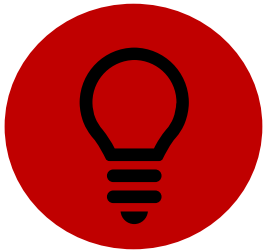
The transformative magic is in the combination of content and process. When the content focuses on key aspects of identity transformation and the group process encourages life application and allows for real belonging, this can be a ministry that serves everyone involved.

THE CHANGES REQUIRED

This needs to be more than simply inviting returning citizens to your existing small groups. Creating a small group covenant and reframing group materials so that they’re sensitive to the needs and concerns of returning citizens is worth the investment.

THE WHOLE FAMILY SUPPORT MODEL

“Come with your family.
We’re here for all of you.”



IDEA IN BRIEF

THE SHIFT

What if your frame of reference wasn’t just the individual person returning from incarceration, but that person’s family? What would it look like to shift your focus to *their* struggles and needs and to build relationships with them—both before and after their loved one returns from prison?

THE OPTIONS

Thankfully, several turnkey programs have been developed to help congregations begin to understand the needs of the families of the incarcerated and to begin to respond to them in both small, practical ways and in larger-scale congregational transformation.

THE GOOD NEWS

Whatever form your ministry to the families (and even the larger communities) of incarcerated men and women takes, your congregation can be a shame- and stigma-busting place of acceptance.

THE MISSION STATION MODEL

**“You have a lot to offer. Come with your passion, gifts, and skills,
and let’s make a difference together.”**



IDEA IN BRIEF

THE BLIND SPOT

In our desire to serve and meet the significant needs of people leaving incarceration, we can forget that one of their most important needs is to be respected and valued as someone capable of serving alongside us.

THE INSIGHT

For many returning citizens, the act of serving and making a difference in the lives of others isn’t something additional or peripheral. It’s actually a significant part of how they work their own reentry in a healthy way, as they live into a new, pro-social identity and write a new “redemption script” for themselves.

THE UPSIDE

Although it can sometimes be difficult to match opportunities to people’s interests and competencies, engaging them in meaningful service opportunities can demonstrate respect, foster collaboration, and combat the tendency for people to feel as if they are your “project.”

Next Steps





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