

Replacing the Revolving Door with an Exit: Rehabilitation in the American Prison System

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This paper examines the crisis of recidivism and mass incarceration in the U.S. Criminal Justice System. The overwhelming increase of incarceration rates over the past four decades has created a prison system with a revolving door. The jarring transition from prison to civilian life causes two-thirds of released inmates to return to prison within three years of release. Justice demands that crimes receive punishment, yet God's abundant grace should compel us to extend his love to those who need it most. Punishment is necessary, but punishment must be accompanied by rehabilitation to be effective. Correctional treatment programs such as vocational training, secondary education, and behavioral therapy decrease recidivism rates, providing released nonviolent offenders with the skills and opportunities necessary to smoothly reintegrate into society after imprisonment. Nonviolent offenders are more likely to benefit from rehabilitation programs and show reduced recidivism rates compared to those of violent offenders. Prisons must refocus on rehabilitative measures to reduce crime and wasted government funds for the sake of society and for the communities and families of offenders.