Is He Really a Believer?

George Mill is for the first time that he can remember really stepping out of his comfort zone. George had recently retired to Scottsdale, Arizona, with his wife after living and working as a cabinet maker in rural Pennsylvania for many years. This opportunity came through a friend he met at the local Rotary Club. That friend, Pete, has long been a part of a prison ministry effort at the nearby federal prison. He recognized that George was not only a believer but also had a strong carpentry background. The prison ministry had decided to work with the local Habitat for Humanity affiliate by having selected inmates build cabinets for the Habitat houses. Pete felt that George could be an important contributor to this effort. George jumped at the chance to both put his skill to good use and contribute to a worthwhile effort.

As George’s involvement in the prison cabinetry project progressed, he has gotten to know several of the thirty inmates who worked on the project. They are allowed to work three hours a day in the cabinet shop section of the prison. Of the group, one inmate has stood out in two ways. Eli is not only a very good cabinet maker but also is forthcoming about his Christian faith. Once, when they were taking a break from work, Eli approached George about being a mentor for him as part of the prison ministry effort.

Eli said, “I feel that my Christian walk has stalled these past few years. George, I really need someone on the outside who is a strong believer and one I can count on to help me to develop into the person God wants me to become.”

George was surprised by the request and replied, “I feel honored by your request. I am sure we can work something out. Let me get back to you next week when we get together again.”

George is slightly familiar with the mentoring program that exists at the prison. The role of a mentor is to develop a meaningful relationship with an inmate that ultimately leads to greater accountability for that person. Mentors also are expected to pray with and listen to inmates. Becoming Eli’s mentor would take on a special meaning. Eli is due to be released on parole in about a year.

Eli has been in several prisons over the past eighteen years. His crimes have been sexual in nature. From Eli’s own account and what George could find out through reading his prison files, much of Eli’s tendency toward sexual crimes could be traced back to a very dysfunctional family life when he was a child. Eli was born in New Mexico and the family had moved to Arizona when he was an infant. His father had left the family when Eli was five years old. He was brought up by his mother in what was described as an unhealthy environment.
Despite this disturbing background and the very difficult life he has had in prison due to the nature of his crimes, Eli told George that he had accepted Christ as his savior several years ago. This conversion occurred in response to a call to come forward during a Bible study class in a different prison. His involvement in Christian activities continued when he came to the current prison. Notwithstanding Eli’s outward dedication to his faith and involvement in several Bible studies over the years, that devotion appears to be based on a limited understanding of Scripture and how it relates to his personal situation. There has been no follow up to his decision to accept Christ by believers either from inside the prison or from outside prison ministry groups. A major reason for this time gap is that Eli has been moved among several prisons, each with a varying commitment to ministry.

George has never engaged in personal witnessing on a one-on-one basis, much less inside a prison setting. Furthermore, he is not convinced of the genuineness of Eli’s request. This feeling of inadequacy about how he should respond to Eli has caused George to ask you for advice. He is asking you for help in focusing the limited time he has with Eli on scripture which would best help Eli as he expands the depth of his faith. Again, time is of the essence due to the relatively brief period before Eli’s expected parole.

**ASSIGNMENT**

Faced with a very different witnessing opportunity, use scripture to help George proceed in his witnessing to Eli.
My Scriptural Research:

Group Scriptural Research:

Decisions / Recommendations:

Primary Scriptural References: