



Original Article

# Rewriting Lives with Scriptures: Faith Journeys and Life Reorientation of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) in Dasmariñas City Jail, Cavite

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**Abstract.** This study examined how faith-based programs in Dasmariñas City Jail, Cavite contribute to life reorientation, identity reconstruction, community reintegration, and reduced recidivism among Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), guided by Pargament’s Religious Coping Theory. Addressing the limited local research on the lived experiences of PDLs in Philippine city jails, the study used a qualitative narrative design involving nine PDLs actively participating in faith-based programs. Data were gathered through a validated researcher-made interview guide and analyzed using thematic coding, with expert validation to strengthen rigor and limit bias. Four themes emerged: active sacred engagement for personal and spiritual growth; collaboration between institutions and service providers; rediscovery of life purpose and moral transformation; and spiritually guided pathways to community reintegration. Findings showed that spiritual involvement provided emotional grounding, stabilizing structure, moral guidance, and renewed personal responsibility. Institutional support, organized religious activities, and volunteer facilitation further strengthened participants’ transformation. The study affirms the role of faith-based initiatives as a complementary component of correctional reform by supporting rehabilitation, family reconnection, and societal reintegration. Its findings may guide correctional institutions and service providers in improving program implementation and sustaining support for PDLs’ long-term positive behavioral change.

**Keywords:** *Community reintegration; Faith-based programs; Institution; Moral transformation; Religious coping.*

Globally, concerns about jail management and rehabilitation have drawn attention both globally and in the Philippines, calling into question whether incarceration itself is sufficient to bring lasting change. Overcrowded facilities, high incarceration rates, and unfulfilled relational demand exposed the limitations of jail approaches and emphasized the need to address behavioral and spiritual dimensions of PDLs (Marano, 2024). In response, contemporary jail administration increasingly advances holistic rehabilitation frameworks that recognize spiritual development as a vital complement to educational and behavioral interventions. This global shift aligns with the goal of SDG 16, which promotes a peaceful and just society, upholds the humane treatment of incarcerated people, and advances rehabilitation-oriented justice systems.

However, persistent issues continued to expand in Philippine jail settings. Resource constraints and limited access to psychosocial support frequently leave faith-based programs as one of the few interventions available for PDLs (Robinson-Edwards & Kewley, 2018). Moreover, while Article III (Bill of Rights), Section 5 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution granted freedom of religious practice within the jail, these legal mandates do not ensure that spirituality functions as a rehabilitative force in the everyday reality of confinement. There is a lack of empirical studies that explain how PDLs embody spiritual teachings to change their lives and morals.

As Political Science researchers, analyzing spaces where governance, policy, and social dynamics converge is essential to understanding state–society relations. Jails exemplify such spaces, revealing how state authority and social values intersect. Within this context, faith-based programs show how non-state actors fill gaps in rehabilitation, supporting the life reorientation and identity reconstruction of PDLs while promoting community reintegration and reducing recidivism. This study underscores the critical role of governance, institutional collaboration, and societal participation in fostering humane and effective justice systems that uphold human rights and social justice.

By examining the personal narratives of PDLs, this study demonstrates that jail can serve not only as a site of punishment but also as a space where individuals regain hope, reconstruct their identities, and find direction through faith. Moreover, these experiences highlight the transformative impact of faith-based programs within correctional settings, providing critical insights into how faith fosters moral development, resilience, and ethical decision-making. Consequently, the research advances understanding of rehabilitative practices and offers guidance for policies that incorporate spiritual and social support, promoting more effective reintegration of PDLs into society.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative narrative research design to analyze how faith-based programs contribute to life reorientation, promote community reintegration, and help reduce recidivism of persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) at Dasmariñas City jail. Narrative research focuses on collecting and interpreting personal stories to understand the meanings of life experiences, particularly in relation to faith and moral transformations. This approach preserves the holistic flow of PDL's stories, enabling an in-depth understanding of how faith shapes their coping and rehabilitative processes (Scheffelaar et al., 2021).

### **Participants and Sampling Technique**

A total of nine (9) PDLs were selected using purposive sampling, specifically five from the male dormitory and four from the female dormitory, with an age range of 25 to 51 years old. Specific criteria were established for selection: (1) charged with heinous crimes including murder, rape, human trafficking, parricide, and homicide; and sentenced to six (6) years and above; (2) active participants in faith-based programs implemented by the city jail; and (3) had been confined in the city jail for at least one (1) year. These offenses were considered to ensure that participants had experienced significant legal and personal consequences, thereby providing a deeper context for examining processes of reflection, behavioral change, and rehabilitation. By focusing on individuals involved in these cases, the study was able to understand better how faith-based programs function among PDLs facing long-term confinement and the weight of severe charges, as well as how such programs may influence their perspectives, actions, and readiness for eventual reintegration into society.

### **Research Instrument**

A researcher-made interview guide was utilized in the study, designed to obtain in-depth qualitative data relevant to the objective of the study. The interview guide has four sections, each comprising three to four main questions, with follow-up questions. Section 1 focused on participants' engagement in faith-based programs, including the types of activities and their experiences of frequent participation. Section 2 explored the institutional integration of faith-based programs, examining the support provided by institutions and personnel. Section 3 addressed life reorientation and identity reconstruction, examining whether such programs had lasting effects on their lives and personal reflections. Lastly, Section 4 explored community reintegration and recidivism prevention, examining whether faith-based programs guided in helping PDLs avoid reoffending.

The interview guide underwent content validation to ensure the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of each

item in relation to the study objectives. This process involved evaluation by four qualified subject specialists: two from education, one from public administration, and one correctional officer. Each item in the interview guide was rated using a validation scale, in which each question received a score of 3, interpreted as relevant and appropriate. The consistent rating across all items indicates that the interview questions were deemed suitable for use without major revisions.

Following this process, minor refinements were still made based on feedback from the validators. The background section of the interview guide was removed, with some questions transferred to other sections where the information could be captured more appropriately and effectively. Meanwhile, to further align with the study objectives, one additional item was added to Sections 1 and 4. Some questions were also rearranged to ensure a more logical flow of inquiry and better coherence during the interview process. After incorporating these revisions, a trial interview was conducted with an ex-PDL from Pagbilao City Jail, Quezon Province, to further assess the instrument's clarity and appropriateness. The recorded interview was transcribed verbatim using TurboScribe (Most Accurate) and subsequently subjected to thematic analysis.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

Permission to conduct the research was secured from the Regional Superintendent following a thorough evaluation of the study by the Regional Research Department of the BJMP CALABARZON. Upon receiving official clearance to conduct the study, data collection commenced with face-to-face interviews at the Dasmariñas City Jail Male and Female Dormitories. The interviews were audio-recorded and closely supervised by two jail officers to ensure the safety of both researchers and the participants. Data collection was completed within a single day in the third week of October.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

Thematic analysis was employed in the study to analyze and interpret the data, following the reflexive thematic analysis approach of Ahmed et al. (2025). This approach involves six recursive phases: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, constructing initial themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed using TurboScribe (Most Accurate) and repeatedly read to ensure familiarity with the data's depth and breadth. The researchers then generated initial codes by systematically identifying meaningful data segments relevant to the research questions. These codes were developed through careful, iterative reading of the transcripts, ensuring that both explicit (semantic) and underlying (latent) meanings were considered. Following this, codes were collated to construct initial themes that reflected patterned responses across participants.

The identified themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure coherence within each theme and clear distinctions between themes. This process involved checking the alignment of themes with the coded extracts and the entire dataset. Each theme was subsequently defined and named based on its central organizing concept and relevance to the study objectives. An expert review process was also conducted as part of the analysis to strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. This involved external parties who independently examined the coded data, emerging themes, and interpretations to validate the consistency and clarity of the thematic outputs and provided feedback for refinement where necessary. This collaborative yet independent review process helped ensure that the final themes were well-supported by the data and accurately reflected the participants' narratives.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations of the study were carefully addressed, with an emphasis on the informed consent process. The consent form was thoroughly explained and carefully read to each participant to ensure voluntary participation and overall safety. In this regard, it was clarified that all data will be kept solely by the researchers until the end of 2025, at which point it will be permanently deleted. All data is handled with strict confidentiality to ensure participant privacy, in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Active Faith Engagement for Personal and Spiritual Growth**

One of the dominant themes that emerged from the interview was active sacred engagement for the spiritual and personal growth of persons deprived of liberty (PDLs). Participants reported that actively attending faith-based

programs, such as devotion, worship, and prayer meetings, led to shifts in beliefs and in spiritual and emotional stability. As they rediscovered faith in their lives, it offered them more than a superficial belief; it was a faith-driven motivation for moral transformation.

**Theme 1.** *Active faith engagement for personal and spiritual growth*

Theme	Subthemes	Codes	Representative Statements	Interpretation
Active Faith Engagement for Personal and Spiritual Growth	Daily Spiritual Practices	Prayer, scripture reading, devotion, routine spirituality	"I read on my own and engage in prayer – every single day..."	Faith practices function as structured routines that provide emotional stability and psychological anchorage in confinement.
	Spiritual Awakening and Conversion	Faith rediscovery, belief transformation, divine encounter	"I was previously an atheist... that moment marked the beginning of my belief."	Incarceration serves as a critical turning point for existential reflection and spiritual transformation.
	Emotional Healing through Devotion	Anger management, peace, emotional regulation	"I was able to overcome my anger... I became more composed."	Faith-based practices facilitate emotional regulation and inner healing, aligning with therapeutic outcomes.
	Faith as a Coping Mechanism	Acceptance, resilience, meaning-making	"I realized that I had no one else to rely on... the Lord is my companion."	Faith operates as a coping strategy that transforms distress into resilience and acceptance.

Several participants shared that prayer, scripture reading, and involvement in religious activities have become integral parts of their daily routines. Their narratives reveal how these practices provide comfort, guidance, and a sense of stability amid the challenges of confinement.

As one of the participants narrated: *"I read on my own and engage in prayer – every single day, without exception. I make it a point to read daily, and I always have a Bible with me."*

Another participant shared: *"I consistently pray, of course – before going to sleep, before and after meals, and upon waking up. It is part of my everyday routine. It never leaves us; it has become something we hold onto, our source of strength."*

Similarly, a participant described: *"I believe it is part of my daily life. I actively participate in religious activities. I have also been involved in devotional practices. The intensity of their praise for God is truly profound – it is deeply moving."*

These narratives show that spiritual practices play an important role in participants' coping with confinement. The consistent use of prayer, scripture reading, and participation in religious activities reflects not only routine behavior but also a conscious effort to find meaning, emotional balance, and stability. These experiences highlight that faith serves as a source of strength, helping them manage difficulties, preserve a sense of self, and sustain hope.

The findings indicate that active sacred engagement emerged as a consistent and deeply embedded aspect of the participants' daily lives, functioning as a stabilizing force within the restrictive environment of incarceration. Regular involvement in prayer, Scripture reading, and organized religious activities fostered a sense of continuity, structure, and inner anchorage, helping participants navigate emotional strain and uncertainty. These practices appeared to nurture personal discipline and moral attentiveness, allowing individuals to reconnect with meaning and purpose despite physical confinement. Such engagement aligns with the Nelson Mandela Rules, which emphasize that access to religious materials, faith representatives, and moral-spiritual activities is integral to safeguarding the dignity and holistic well-being of persons deprived of liberty (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016).

Moreover, the voluntary and intrinsic nature of faith participation is consistent with broader evidence that when inmates freely engage in religious programs, these practices are associated with improved conduct and internal motivation for change rather than external compliance (Duwe et al., 2015). Within the local correctional context, structured activities such as Bible studies, prayer gatherings, and praise and worship – facilitated by chaplains and religious volunteers – demonstrate how institutional support for spirituality provides a meaningful space for

reflection, moral recalibration, and emotional grounding (Bureau of Corrections, 2021). Collectively, these results suggest that sustained sacred engagement operates as more than a rehabilitative supplement; it serves as a daily locus of inner strength that quietly nurtures dignity, hope, and personal reorientation among incarcerated individuals.

Consequently, several participants reported a profound spiritual awakening that not only reshaped their beliefs but also influenced their daily practices and outlook on life. This transformative experience allowed them to cultivate a deeper sense of purpose, emotional stability, and moral awareness.

As one participant recounted: *“I was previously an atheist. Given the multitude of religions, I found it difficult to believe. However, there came a day when I was supposed to be released, and something within me shifted profoundly. On that day, I prayed – and later, I received news that my situation had been settled. That moment marked the beginning of my belief; it became my turning point.”*

Another participant further narrated: *“While I was here, I began to seek God and intentionally searched for His presence in my life. It was here that I came to understand His will – how to follow His teachings, and how to transform my way of living so that it reflects those principles in my daily life.”*

Similarly, another participant shared: *“There has been a significant change in me. Knowing that He is there removes my fears. I have learned to hold firmly onto Him. Whatever happens throughout the day, I remain confident because my faith in Him has grown stronger.”*

These responses highlight how embracing faith can transform one’s perspective, offering clarity and direction in life. Through active engagement with prayer and spiritual reflection, participants cultivated a sense of security and trust in a higher purpose. Faith, therefore, becomes a guiding force that shapes daily choices and fosters enduring emotional and moral stability.

This finding reveals that participants experienced a marked spiritual awakening that contributed to a fundamental reorientation of their beliefs, identity, and daily conduct during incarceration. This awakening was characterized by an intentional search for God, a deeper understanding of divine will, and conscious efforts to integrate spiritual principles into everyday life. Such internal shifts reflect how spiritual engagement becomes a pathway for reconstructing meaning and moral direction within confinement. This process is formally recognized in the Philippine correctional context through the Moral and Spiritual Program upheld by the Supreme Court, which affirms the role of structured spiritual guidance in fostering inmates’ inner growth and moral welfare (Philippine Supreme Court, 2020). As faith became internalized, participants demonstrated increased emotional security, reduced fear, and a strengthened sense of reliance on a higher power, suggesting that spirituality functioned as a psychological and moral anchor amid uncertainty. This pattern aligns with findings that correctional and rehabilitation programs that emphasize moral renewal and spiritual growth promote emotional regulation, ethical awareness, and restored dignity among persons deprived of liberty, enabling them to manage distress and regain a sense of personal worth (Demegillo, 2025).

Moreover, the gradual transformation from disbelief to committed faith aligns with evidence that spiritually oriented rehabilitation facilitates the development of a redemptive identity and moral reorientation, particularly during periods of transition and personal crisis (Ferolino & Yap, 2022). Collectively, these results indicate that faith awakening within incarceration is not merely a change in religious affiliation, but a reflective and transformative process through which individuals reconstruct meaning, cultivate inner strength, and reframe their lives toward purposeful and morally grounded living.

Furthermore, several participants reflected on how sustained participation in prayer and devotional activities facilitated profound emotional and personal growth. These practices enabled them to manage anger, transform negative thought patterns, and develop a renewed sense of hope and life purpose.

As one participant narrated: *“Prior to engaging in devotional practices, my greatest struggle was my anger issues. However, since my incarceration, I began reading scriptural passages, and gradually, I was able to overcome these tendencies. Over time, I reached a point where I became more composed, no longer easily affected by what others might do to me.”*

Another participant recounted: *“Through prayer, my perspective on life has profoundly changed. The negative thoughts that once occupied my mind have been transformed. I have come to realize that life is indeed valuable, and I now carry a renewed sense of hope.”*

Similarly, another participant shared: *“I did not practice this before. However, here, upon waking, prayer has become essential. There is a deep sense of peace that comes with praying. When it is done with sincerity, it becomes an overwhelming experience – you find yourself moved to tears without even realizing it.”*

These responses illustrate how sustained engagement in prayer and devotional practices can gradually transform intense emotional struggles into self-control and inner calm. Through reflection and sincere communication with the divine, participants reoriented negative thought patterns and rediscovered the value of life and time. In this sense, devotion emerges as a deeply personal process of emotional healing that nurtures hope, humility, and renewed moral awareness.

Finding highlights that active engagement in prayer and devotional practices served as a profound source of emotional healing and moral recalibration for participants. Through daily prayer and reflective reading of sacred texts, individuals gradually transformed anger, negativity, and inner turmoil into self-awareness, patience, and a renewed sense of calm. This process aligns with the objectives of the Therapeutic Community Modality Program, in which spiritual activities are deliberately integrated with counseling and peer support to cultivate emotional regulation, self-discipline, and holistic well-being among incarcerated individuals (Alvarez, Talvo, & Cabalonga, 2025). Beyond managing emotions, prayer and devotion provided participants with a tangible sense of connection to a higher power, offering solace and a renewed appreciation for the value of life. Such experiences reflect the broader impact of faith-centered interventions, which have been shown to foster resilience, reflective growth, and the ability to reinterpret personal struggles as opportunities for moral and spiritual development (Luceño, 2024). The deeply personal and affective nature of sincere prayer – often accompanied by heartfelt emotional release – underscores the human need for empathy, forgiveness, and inner peace, resonating with findings that chaplaincy and spiritual guidance significantly contribute to emotional restoration within correctional settings (Jarrett et al., 2024). Altogether, these results illustrate that devotional engagement is more than ritual; it is a transformative journey that nurtures emotional healing, cultivates hope, and quietly reconstructs the moral and spiritual fabric of an individual’s life, even within the confines of incarceration.

Moreover, some participants reflected on how faith became a source of perspective and inner clarity amid the challenges of incarceration. Through spiritual engagement, they learned to accept their circumstances, find meaning in their experiences, and navigate personal and social adjustment.

As one participant indicated: *“In my situation – having gone several years without receiving any visits – it was during that period that my faith in God emerged. I came to believe in Him more deeply, realizing that I had no one else to rely on. I found solace in the understanding that He is with me; the Lord is my constant companion.”*

Another participant shared: *“Through faith, I came to understand that this experience is a form of challenge. I began to see that perhaps the Lord allowed me to be here so that I could reflect, correct myself, and learn to adjust my behavior in relation to others.”*

A participant also narrated: *“I rarely receive visits. There was a time when a personnel here spoke to me and said that the key is acceptance – accepting that you are already here. I then learned to attend Bible studies, which, in many ways, helped bring clarity to my thoughts.”*

These responses underscore the role of faith as a guiding framework for navigating emotional challenges and isolation during incarceration. Through engagement in spiritual practices and the cultivation of acceptance, participants were able to reflect on personal conduct and foster meaningful self-improvement. In this context, faith operates as both a source of resilience and a structuring principle, imparting purpose and direction amid adversity.

The result underscores the profound role of faith in sustaining hope, emotional stability, and personal growth amidst the hardships of incarceration. In the absence of family visits and external support, trust in God and active engagement in spiritual practices, such as Bible study and prayer, became pivotal sources of inner strength and

guidance. These practices not only helped participants navigate feelings of loss and loneliness but also fostered acceptance, resilience, and the ability to reinterpret confinement as an opportunity for self-improvement. This aligns with findings from the Therapeutic Community Modality Program, which emphasizes that structured spiritual activities enhance emotional regulation, behavioral adjustment, and self-efficacy among incarcerated individuals (Teves, 2023). Moreover, faith facilitated moral and social recalibration, allowing participants to reflect on their actions, adjust their interactions with others, and cultivate a renewed sense of purpose. Such transformative effects are consistent with evidence that spiritually guided programs promote self-reflection, personal growth, and the development of social and emotional competencies critical for successful reintegration into society (Rubio et al., 2024). The engagement with Scripture and spiritual mentorship also offered participants a tangible sense of divine presence, providing ethical direction and comfort in the midst of adversity (Pineda et al., 2025). These findings illustrate that faith within incarceration is not merely a coping mechanism but a profound source of emotional healing and moral guidance, enabling individuals to rebuild their inner lives, cultivate hope, and prepare for meaningful engagement with the world beyond prison walls.

Collectively, the findings show how active sacred engagement promotes personal, moral, and spiritual transformations among PDLs. Participant experiences support the idea that faith is powerful as it allows them to embrace their situation progressively and to recognize the value of their lives again, despite the difficulties that they were facing. This notion is consistent with Religious Coping Theory by Pargament, as cited by Xu (2015), in which participants used faith to cope with stress brought by incarceration, regulate emotions, and turn despair into an opportunity for moral and personal development.

Significantly, Jang and Johnson (2022) found that faith-based programs enhance identity transformation, self-control, and forgiveness. Through divine guidance and teachings, they cultivated humility and redefined their identities. Likewise, Brandner and Trinidad (2020) observed that engagement in faith provides resilience, structure, and meaning in jail settings. Despite its restrictions, jail can serve as a venue for individuals to reflect on their offenses, indicating that real growth begins not with punishment but with forgiveness, healing, and hope. The shift from anguish to spiritual conviction reflects the profound role of faith in rehabilitation, enabling them to face the difficulties they experienced while inside bravely. Moreover, while most PDLs may not hold religious beliefs, in this environment, they often rediscover their faith, embracing divine love and direction without animosity. Hence, being able to forgive, regardless of the challenges encountered, is important as life's purpose moves beyond revenge and centers on acknowledging mistakes and surrendering hatred from one's heart and mind.

The findings suggest that faith-based programs have a substantial impact on participants' self-reflection, behavior, and spiritual beliefs. It gives them someone to lean on when they need help without fear of being judged. Through these programs, transformation has been instilled in the participants' souls, and they have been supported in releasing unwanted habits. As they turn the pages of the Bible and whisper prayers that only they know, marks that they are rewriting the lives that were once destroyed and abandoned by society, the lives that they are gradually building with determination and hope. Thus, jail management may strengthen this program to ensure it is both inclusive and well-structured, thereby increasing its influence. Meanwhile, future research may focus on how PDLs achieve holistic growth and faith in jail, despite the numerous teachings and lessons learned from various service providers.

### **Collaborative Support from Institutions and Service Providers**

Another theme that emerged from the analysis focuses on the role of collaborative support from institutions and service providers in strengthening faith-based programs. Several participants reported that faith-based programs became more impactful and significant when supported and involved religious groups, organizations, and volunteers. It creates a nurturing environment that allows persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) to strengthen their faith and resilience and to embody positive transformations. Hence, some participants highlighted that aligned efforts between jail officers and service providers created opportunities for self-reflection, growth, and resilience through faith-based programs.

**Theme 2. Collaborative support from institutions and service providers**

Theme	Subthemes	Codes	Representative Statements	Interpretation
Collaborative Support from Institutions and Service Providers	Institutional Support	BJMP support, structured programs, accessibility	"The facility provides strong support... we are not neglected."	Institutional commitment ensures the sustainability and accessibility of faith-based programs.
	Role of Service Providers	Volunteers, religious groups, mentorship	"They regularly invite various religious groups to conduct Bible studies."	External stakeholders enhance program richness and reinforce moral guidance.
	Safe and Inclusive Environment	Equality, belongingness, dignity	"It feels like a family... everyone is treated equally."	Faith-based programs foster social cohesion and inclusive rehabilitative environments.
	Holistic Rehabilitation Support	Emotional support, reflection spaces	"The burden of my thoughts... has been alleviated."	Collaboration creates psychosocial support systems beyond spiritual instruction.

As one participant stated: *"In the provision of religious services, such as the celebration of Mass, the BJMP has been consistent and unwavering. Daily devotional activities are also conducted. The facility provides strong support for these kinds of programs; we are not neglected in this regard."*

Another response highlighted: *"During prayer activities, they are consistently present to guide us. With their assistance, particularly through prayer sessions and the involvement of service providers. The burden of my thoughts about being incarcerated has been alleviated."*

A participant further shared: *"At the BJMP, they regularly invite various religious groups to conduct Bible studies. These gatherings allow us to come together, reflect, and engage with one another. Often, we are also given the opportunity to share our personal experiences and perspectives on life."*

These responses reflect that sustained institutional support and collaborative engagement with service providers are integral to the effective implementation of faith-based programs in custodial environments. This collective effort ensures the continuity and accessibility of spiritual activities while contributing to emotional regulation, reflective participation, and constructive personal reorientation among persons deprived of liberty.

The finding highlights the meaningful impact of institutional and service provider support in sustaining faith-based programs within the jail facility. Participants shared that the regular conduct of masses, daily devotions, prayers, and Bible studies provided not only religious instruction but also emotional guidance and a sense of care. These activities created spaces where they could openly reflect on their lives, share personal struggles, and feel spiritually supported, easing the psychological and emotional weight of confinement. These experiences resonate with Jang et al. (2019), who demonstrated that structured faith-based initiatives in correctional settings play a crucial role in fostering personal growth and promoting positive values. Such programs also enhance human agency, enabling inmates to make constructive choices and reduce antisocial behaviors. In the participants' accounts, this translates to individuals finding renewed purpose and motivation in their daily lives, even within the restrictive environment of incarceration.

Similarly, the finding resonates with observations of Rostaing, Béraud, and de Galember (2015), who reported that inmates perceive religious programs as practical tools for coping and self-improvement. For the participants, engagement in prayer, Bible studies, and group reflection allowed them to manage the stress and emotional challenges of confinement, while also providing opportunities for social interaction and the sharing of personal experiences. This indicates that faith-based programs are not only spiritual activities but also psychosocial support mechanisms that address the holistic needs of persons deprived of liberty. Additionally, the participants' experiences align with Harms-Dalibon (2017), who emphasized that chaplaincy services in prisons facilitate identity transformation, moral reflection, and emotional support. By providing guidance and fostering a safe space for self-expression, these programs help inmates confront feelings of guilt, navigate social pressures, and reconcile internal conflicts. In the BJMP context, the presence of service providers and religious volunteers offered participants both mentorship and companionship, reinforcing moral and spiritual development while helping

them regain a sense of dignity and self-worth.

Furthermore, numerous participants highlighted that the jail facility provides a secure and orderly environment that upholds their dignity. Engagement in communal activities, especially religious services, fosters a sense of belonging and equity, while the support of service providers and faith-based volunteers reinforces a nurturing and rehabilitative atmosphere.

As one participant reflected: *“The facility is well-maintained, with adequate seating and an overall orderly environment. We are treated with care – we are not subjected to harm or rushed, especially for older individuals like myself. There is a sense of consideration in how we are accommodated.”*

Another participant shared: *“They actively participate, such as in attending Mass and other religious activities held here. It is a fulfilling experience because you can truly feel the absence of discrimination – there is no sense of division among us. It feels like a family, where everyone is treated equally.”*

A participant also narrated: *“They provide support for the programs conducted here. Various groups visit the BJMP to teach about God, and they are welcomed and accommodated. The administration coordinates with external partners and service providers who are able to extend assistance and contribute to our well-being.”*

The participants' accounts indicate that the jail facility fosters a secure, dignified environment that promotes inclusion, respect, and community. Participation in religious services and communal activities, supported by service providers and faith-based volunteers, provides guidance, emotional support, and opportunities for personal growth. These experiences demonstrate that structured and collaborative programs play a meaningful role in the rehabilitation and holistic development of persons deprived of liberty.

The finding highlights that participants experienced a supportive and dignified environment within the jail facility, where their physical comfort and emotional well-being were actively considered. They shared that participation in communal activities, particularly religious services, provided a sense of belonging, fairness, and mutual respect, creating spaces where they could reflect on their lives and find guidance amid the challenges of confinement. In addition, the presence of service providers and faith-based volunteers offered mentorship and spiritual support, reinforcing a sense of care and hope. These experiences aligned with Ajouaou and Bernts (2015), who emphasized that multi-faith initiatives in correctional settings ensure inclusivity and professionalism while attending to the diverse spiritual needs of inmates. Similarly, El Asri (2015) noted that prison chaplaincy programs help balance institutional policies with religious support, fostering social cohesion and aiding in personal rehabilitation. Moreover, Beckford (2015) argued that integrating religion within correctional systems serves as a moral and stabilizing force, promoting ethical reflection, behavioral transformation, and personal growth.

Consequently, participants narrated that faith-based programs in the BJMP facility significantly influence their outlook and personal growth. Guidance from service providers and religious teachings supports reflection, moral development, and alignment with the facility's rehabilitative goals, helping inmates internalize values and navigate life within confinement.

As expressed by one participant: *“It is of great significance, as it contributes to transforming individuals' perspectives on life. Religion plays a vital role in shaping the outlook and personal development of the people here.”*

Another participant shared: *“The teachings provided to us by the personnel and visiting service providers are meaningful and beneficial. In many ways, the guidance we receive from these service providers complements and reinforces one another – they are aligned and collectively contribute to our personal transformation.”*

A participant also reflected: *“These efforts are intended to help mold us, particularly through the teachings of the Word of God. In essence, the purpose of the facilitators and the will of God for us as individuals appear to converge and flow in the same direction.”*

These experiences indicate that faith-based programs serve as a guiding framework for personal reflection and transformation within the BJMP facility. Beyond imparting moral lessons, these initiatives foster alignment between spiritual growth and the facility's rehabilitative goals, enabling inmates to develop resilience, self-

awareness, and a renewed sense of purpose despite the constraints of confinement.

The results show that faith-based programs at the BJMP facility offer guidance, structure, and a meaningful sense of purpose in their daily routines. They described how participation in religious services, mentorship from service providers, and communal activities encouraged reflection on personal values, strengthened resilience, and helped them cope with the emotional demands of confinement. Moreover, these initiatives align with the facility's rehabilitative objectives, supporting both ethical growth and spiritual development. Khan (2020) highlighted that religious programs in correctional settings provide consistency, instill discipline, and foster hope, promoting constructive behavioral change and moral realignment among inmates.

Similarly, Jagualing (2025) found that structured and reliable programs enhance inmates' perceptions of fairness and inclusion, contributing to a sense of belonging and community cohesion. In addition, Urinboyev and Pallot (2024) emphasized that integrating spiritual support alongside legal and psychological frameworks strengthens holistic rehabilitation, offering inmates opportunities for self-reflection and purposeful growth. Taken together, this finding suggests that faith-based initiatives create a supportive and transformative environment, enabling persons deprived of liberty to rebuild dignity, cultivate self-awareness, and experience meaningful personal development within the constraints of incarceration.

Altogether, the findings indicate that meaningful collaboration between institutions and service providers strengthened the delivery and implementation of faith-based programs. This indicates that they ought to offer not only supervision to participants but also foster their active involvement in the programs, as this enables PDLs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the significance of the programs available to them. Aligned with Pargament's theory of Religious Coping, the search dimension is evident as participants actively seek meaning and guidance through these institutional and service-based supports. As stated by Duwe, Johnson, and Hallett (2023), inmates improve their behavior, self-control, and identity transformation through faith-based programs integrated by correctional institutions. Notably, it develops structured environments that allow participants to reflect on life decisions.

Meanwhile, in African prisons, these programs foster moral awareness, which encourages reflection and reintegration (Akih & Dreyer, 2017). Similar to European correction settings, where faith-based programs helped incarcerated individuals to cope with guilt, redevelop identity, and self-reflection (Deuchar et al., 2016). Supporting PDLs with empathy demonstrates jail officers' willingness to make positive changes in their lives. Every act of empathy, instruction, and listening they provide serves as a bridge to the door of a new life for PDLs — one filled with purpose, faith, and compassion for both themselves and others. They feel the care and support extended to them, recognizing that, despite their offenses, there are still individuals willing and committed to helping them improve themselves. Together, these show that institutional and service provider collaboration highlights the role of structured support in holistic rehabilitation.

The findings imply that to ensure continuous, internalized engagement, jail administration should maintain partnerships with service providers and incorporate programs that go beyond mere participation. With their dedicated care and concern for persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), these efforts not only facilitate personal growth but also lessen feelings of loneliness caused by separation from family, providing opportunities for meaningful communication and exchange of thoughts. Moving forward, researchers and policymakers may look into equal access to faith-based programs for PDLs, as well as the integration of diverse spiritual practices, to ensure that programs are inclusive and sensitive to varied religious beliefs and practices.

### **Rediscovery of Life Significance and Moral Transformation**

One of the central themes identified in the analysis is the rediscovery of life significance and moral transformation. Notably, several participants recognized the comfort that faith provides, especially during challenging periods of isolation, which fosters courage and a positive perspective. Participation in these programs enabled individuals to gain clarity, purpose, and a sense of responsibility. Many participants described a profound shift in their self-perception resulting from their involvement in faith-based programs. Through spiritual engagement, many moved beyond identities shaped by incarceration and past mistakes, instead recognizing themselves as individuals capable of moral growth and purposeful change. Faith was experienced as a guiding presence that fostered self-reflection, accountability, and renewed hope, enabling participants to rediscover personal value and meaning in their lives.

**Theme 3. Rediscovery of life significance and moral transformation**

Theme	Subthemes	Codes	Representative Statements	Interpretation
Rediscovery of Life Significance and Moral Transformation	Identity Reconstruction	Self-worth, new identity, redemption	"I now recognize... change is still possible for me."	Participants reconstruct identity from offenders to morally responsible individuals.
	Moral Awareness and Ethical Development	Right vs wrong, accountability, discipline	"It helped me discern between right and wrong."	Faith internalization strengthens ethical judgment and moral reasoning.
	Reflection on Past Actions	Accountability, remorse, learning	"I learned humility and self-understanding."	Reflection transforms past mistakes into learning opportunities for growth.
	Future Orientation and Purpose	Hope, goals, life direction	"I now have aspirations and goals for my future."	Faith fosters forward-looking perspectives and purposeful living.

As one participant reflected: *"I hold a strong belief in the power of prayer. Through praying, I came to realize that change is still possible for me. I no longer feel as burdened by my problems; instead, I have developed a sense of inner peace and emotional stability."*

Another participant shared a similar shift: *"My perspective has changed since I began praying here. I now offer gratitude to the Lord, despite the mistakes I have made. I remain thankful because, even in those circumstances, He has never abandoned me."*

As another participant expressed: *"This transformation began when I decided to surrender myself to Him. At first, I avoided acts of worship, but over time, I became more intentional. Now, I willingly take the initiative to participate in religious activities."*

These narratives capture how faith-based programs prompted participants to reexamine their identities, leading to a deeper understanding of their moral responsibilities and life purpose. The spiritual grounding they experienced fostered hope and self-discipline, allowing them to move beyond feelings of guilt and see themselves as individuals capable of redemption, resilience, and purposeful transformation.

The result highlights that involvement in faith-based programs led to a profound rediscovery of life significance and moral transformation. Through sustained prayer, religious participation, and engagement in pastoral activities, they gained deeper insight into their lives, recognizing meaning beyond past mistakes and confinement (Hallett et al., 2016). This involvement strengthened moral awareness, encouraged self-reflection, and renewed their sense of purpose, enabling participants to reconstruct their identity around accountability, hope, and spiritual values (Jang et al., 2017). Similarly, Christian conversion and active participation in spiritual communities allowed individuals to form non-offending identities and regain a sense of moral direction, highlighting faith as a foundation for redefining personal worth despite the constraints of incarceration (Diaconu, 2021).

Moreover, several participants revealed that these experiences have profoundly reshaped their sense of identity, allowing them to see themselves beyond past mistakes and limitations. Through sustained spiritual involvement and reflection, they developed a renewed understanding of their purpose and values, fostering emotional stability and moral awareness. This transformation not only guided their daily decisions but also strengthened their commitment to personal growth, self-discipline, and meaningful relationships, reflecting a deeper alignment between their actions and a redefined sense of life significance.

A participant revealed: *"Through daily prayer, my perspective on life gradually transformed. I was able to change myself—where I once lacked a clear sense of self, I have now gained direction through the Lord's guidance. As a result, I have begun to cultivate aspirations and goals for my future."*

As further narrated by another participant: *"Through the programs implemented here and the rules we are encouraged to follow, both our thinking and behavior have changed. We are able to improve ourselves in positive ways, gradually letting*

*go of negative thoughts as we are guided by God."*

Another participant shared: *"I often say that every time I participate in religious activities, I do not regret being incarcerated. Many aspects of my life have changed. Before, I was reluctant to engage in worship, but I have come to realize the importance of humility."*

Participants' accounts demonstrate that prayer and spiritual reflection can foster a deep rediscovery of life's meaning. Through these practices, they experienced heightened self-awareness, strengthened moral judgment, and emotional resilience, allowing them to confront past mistakes, realign their values, pursue purposeful goals, and nurture hope, humility, and a renewed sense of direction.

The result led participants to a profound rediscovery of life's significance, guiding them toward a renewed understanding of their identity and values. Saunders and Stephenson (2025) found that Christian conversion enabled former offenders to develop faith, recognize divine intervention, and manage emotional struggles, fostering moral transformation and emotional stability. Similarly, Jang et al. (2019) reported that religiosity among South African inmates cultivated meaning and purpose, as well as virtues such as forgiveness and self-control, thereby strengthening moral resilience and guiding responsible decision-making. In the Philippines, Quisto (2025) observed that inmates engaging in Bible studies and prayer sessions experienced hope, emotional healing, and renewed purpose, demonstrating how spiritual reflection can reshape identity and instill a sense of life significance. Together, these studies illustrate that faith can serve as a guiding force, enabling individuals to view themselves as capable of growth, moral responsibility, and meaningful contributions to society.

Furthermore, participants shared that the principles and lessons imparted through faith-based programs significantly influenced their moral outlook and ethical awareness. Continuous spiritual involvement encouraged moral attentiveness and ethical awareness, helping participants reassess past behaviors and align their actions with principles of integrity, compassion, and accountability. Several participants shared that the moral insights they developed deepened their commitment to self-discipline, relational growth, and purposeful living, underscoring the role of faith-based values in shaping lasting character and life outlook.

As one participant narrated: *"It feels as though faith is guiding me toward a transformation of my life. Upon eventual release, I believe I will become a renewed version of myself. Through my faith, I came to realize that my past actions were wrong, and it has helped me discern between right and wrong."*

Another participant recounted: *"Through prayer, I seek guidance from the Lord so that I may avoid making further mistakes. Drawing from what I have learned about God and the teachings found in the Bible, I strive to strengthen my commitment to doing better toward others within this environment."*

Another participant shared: *"From what God has taught, one must strive to be a good person. When you sustain goodness within yourself, it creates a meaningful impact. We are also taught to love others – even those we do not know – because God is always present."*

These responses show how the teachings and values of faith-based programs led participants to a profound rediscovery of the significance of life and a transformed sense of morality. Through reflection and internalization of these principles, they developed a clearer understanding of right and wrong, enabling them to reassess past behaviors and make choices grounded in integrity, compassion, and accountability. This moral transformation strengthened their sense of purpose, guided daily decisions, and fostered commitment to self-discipline, personal growth, and meaningful relationships, reflecting a holistic renewal of both character and life direction.

This result demonstrates that, through reflection on their experiences, participants perceived the teachings and values of faith-based programs as profoundly reshaping their understanding of right and wrong. Through consistent engagement in prayer, bible study, and pastoral guidance, they developed a heightened moral awareness and a clearer sense of ethical responsibility. Significantly, DiPietro and Dickinson (2021) observed that faith helped individuals reconcile with past traumas and rebuild their moral frameworks, illustrating how spiritual involvement can transform one's sense of ethical direction.

Likewise, Harris, Ackerman, and Haley (2017) found that religiosity among men convicted of sexual offenses

improved emotional regulation, forgiveness, and social connections, highlighting the role of faith in fostering self-reflection and morally sound decision-making. Moreover, structured religious programs such as the Halaqah program in Malaysia have been shown to effectively change inmates' moral behavior through focused education on faith and ethics (Mohamed, Mohammad, & Mohamad, 2015). Together, these experiences indicate that engagement in faith-based programs not only renews one's sense of life purpose but also strengthens commitment to personal integrity and moral accountability.

Consequently, participants reported that engaging in spiritual activities allowed them to reassess their past actions with clarity and honesty. Through prayer, reflection, and faith-based teachings, they recognized harmful patterns and the impact of their previous choices. This awareness fostered accountability, remorse, and a genuine motivation to change, turning their past experiences into lessons for personal growth. By viewing their history through a moral and spiritual lens, participants transformed past mistakes into a foundation for integrity, compassion, and a renewed sense of purpose.

As a participant recounted: *"When you constantly face hardships, prayer becomes the essential response. It guides you toward personal transformation and encourages you to act righteously. In my journey of change, God has always been present, and my focus remains centered on Him – there is no one else."*

Another participant shared: *"I am gradually transforming myself. The behaviors and attitudes that were once negative are now changing. I have learned humility and self-understanding, and I continue to broaden my capacity for empathy and reflection."*

A participant also narrated: *"Through prayer and participation in religious activities, you learn that personal change is necessary. You are guided to become a good person, even if you have made mistakes in the past. It is essential to realize that God is present, and His presence becomes your strength and support as you prepare for life after release."*

These responses highlight how spiritual activities helped participants reassess their past actions and recognize the consequences of their behaviors. By internalizing faith-based teachings, they developed accountability and moral insight, which motivated them to make positive changes. This process fostered personal growth, ethical decision-making, and a renewed sense of life purpose.

The finding reveals how participation in faith-based programs helped individuals reinterpret their past actions and foster a desire for positive change. Through sustained prayer, religious participation, and engagement in pastoral activities, participants developed a heightened awareness of their moral responsibilities and the consequences of their previous behaviors. Kewley (2015) demonstrated that involvement in religious and spiritual communities among individuals convicted of sexual offenses fostered a sense of belonging, hope, and non-offending identities, illustrating how spiritual engagement encourages reflection and ethical self-redefinition.

To a similar extent, Wilkinson et al. (2021) found that Muslim inmates utilized faith to seek forgiveness and regain mental stability, highlighting the role of spiritual reflection in reassessing past behaviors and internalizing moral teachings. Moreover, Jang et al. (2018) reported that religiosity decreased depression, anxiety, and aggression by providing purpose and gratitude, supporting the idea that internalized spiritual values promote moral clarity and motivate constructive decisions. Collectively, these studies indicate that engagement in faith-based programs allows individuals to view past mistakes not as permanent failures but as opportunities for learning and personal growth, fostering a renewed sense of purpose and commitment to ethical living.

In addition, several participants recounted specific moments or experiences within faith-based programs that profoundly shaped their beliefs and values. These stories often involved moments of reflection during prayer, discussions with service providers, or witnessing the transformative journeys of fellow participants. Such experiences illuminated the consequences of past actions and highlighted the possibility of moral and personal renewal. By connecting deeply with these moments, participants internalized lessons of accountability, compassion, and integrity, leading to a renewed understanding of their purpose and life significance. These pivotal stories served as catalysts, turning abstract teachings into lived convictions that guided their decisions and reinforced their commitment to change.

As expressed by one participant: *"I have learned to value myself. I now recognize God's presence in my life, guiding me*

*to take care of myself so that I am not overwhelmed by my thoughts. I have come to understand that these challenges are tests from God, and I need only to place my trust in Him."*

Another participant shared: *"When I am faced with sadness, I turn to prayer and seek guidance from Him. My requests are often answered, and my self-worth has increased. I have come to understand that only the Lord can be relied upon in difficult situations – there is no one else."*

Also, a participant reflected: *"I feel truly blessed to have been given the opportunity to speak and participate. Engaging in religious services has helped me value my life more profoundly. Much has changed within me; I no longer dwell on being incarcerated or being apart from my family."*

These narratives illustrate how a story shared during the faith-based programs profoundly shaped participants' beliefs and values. It inspired participants to reassess their priorities and embrace ethical and meaningful actions. Its message reinforced the program's spiritual teachings, fostering hope, self-discipline, and a renewed sense of life's significance. As a result, participants internalized values that guided moral growth and motivated positive personal transformation.

The result emphasizes how personal stories shared during faith-based programs profoundly shaped participants' beliefs and values. Narratives presented through testimonies, guided reflections, or spiritual teachings resonated deeply, encouraging individuals to reassess their past actions and internalize lessons about responsibility, compassion, and integrity. For instance, Haviv et al. (2020) highlighted that Jewish rehabilitation programs, such as the Torah Rehabilitation Program and Torah Study Program, use religious teachings to foster repentance, atonement, and a sense of belonging, thereby allowing participants to reflect on their behaviors and moral choices.

In this regard, Aris and Cirebon (2023) emphasized that incorporating humanist values into faith-based rehabilitation promotes behavioral change through self-awareness rather than fear-based compliance, encouraging inmates to internalize moral lessons authentically. Moreover, programs by Indigenous Ministries Southeast Asia (Indigenous Ministries, 2023) engage participants in Bible studies, worship services, and family support, fostering self-reflection, moral growth, and the reconstruction of personal identity. By engaging with these narratives and teachings, participants developed a strengthened moral compass and a renewed sense of purpose, demonstrating how experiences within the program foster both the rediscovery of life significance and meaningful moral transformation.

Notably, some participants shared that engagement in faith-based activities enabled them to envision a future markedly different from their past trajectories. Through moments of reflection during prayer, meaningful interactions with service providers, and the observation of transformative journeys, they began to imagine lives grounded in purpose, responsibility, and ethical conduct. These experiences fostered hope, illustrating that past mistakes need not define their futures. By internalizing lessons of accountability, compassion, and integrity, participants were able to set goals for personal growth, healthier relationships, and positive contributions to society. In essence, the faith-based programs provided both a moral framework and a vision of possibility, encouraging participants to aspire toward a renewed, meaningful life beyond the facility.

A participant revealed: *"I feel inspired to become a pastor upon my release. I want to study the Word of God and live a righteous life. I have reached a point in my life where I envision, once I am free, sharing God's teachings with my children and guiding them in His ways."*

Another response highlighted: *"Through prayer, I have learned to think rightly and to plan my life carefully. I am confident that God is with me and will never abandon me. I aim to lead a good life, even though the path to personal transformation may be challenging."*

One participant expressed: *"Our goal is to return to God and renew our commitment to Him. I want to share what I have learned with others and encourage them to draw closer to the Lord, because being close to Him truly makes a difference."*

These responses reflect that participation in faith-based activities helped participants envision a purposeful future beyond their term in the facility. These experiences fostered hope, self-discipline, and a renewed sense of life significance, motivating them to set positive goals, adopt constructive behaviors, and pursue a future grounded

in integrity, compassion, and moral accountability.

The results show that the personal stories shared during faith-based programs not only shaped their beliefs but also helped them envision a different future for themselves after their term in the facility. By engaging with testimonies, reflective discussions, and spiritual teachings, participants were able to see beyond their past mistakes and imagine a life guided by moral responsibility, hope, and meaningful goals. Research supports this transformative effect: Stansfield, O'Connor, and Duncan (2018) found that inmates who identified as both religious and spiritual had lower recidivism rates, highlighting how spirituality fosters moral reform and a sense of purpose. In the same context, Talik and Skowroński (2017) reported that prisoners who employed positive religious coping strategies experienced greater life satisfaction and resilience, demonstrating that spiritual engagement can help individuals navigate distress and embrace personal growth. Programs such as the Servants of the Holy Eucharist's "3 R's" initiative (Nema, 2022) provide structured opportunities for restoration, rehabilitation, and reintegration, teaching inmates about dignity, forgiveness, and personal renewal—practical examples of how faith-based narratives inspire positive behavior and a renewed sense of purpose as participants anticipate reentry into society.

Collectively, the findings highlight that active involvement in faith-based activities fosters profound personal, moral, and spiritual transformation among PDLs. Participants' experiences demonstrate that faith serves as a vital resource, enabling them to accept their circumstances, reframe challenges, and rediscover the value and purpose of their lives despite the hardships of incarceration. Stansfield et al. (2016) found that religious support positively influenced post-release outcomes such as employment and substance use, indicating that spiritual engagement not only aids practical rehabilitation but also promotes personal growth and resilience. Similarly, the Catholic Church's prison ministry emphasizes restorative justice, compassion, and holistic care for inmates, providing opportunities for prayer, reflection, and participation in ministry programs that nurture moral and spiritual development (Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP News, 2023).

Moreover, Adamczyk, Freilich, and Kim (2017) reported that religiosity can prevent deviant behavior and strengthen social control, reinforcing the idea that faith encourages ethical reflection, accountability, and moral responsibility. These findings align with Religious Coping Theory, as cited by Xu (2015), which suggests that individuals draw on faith to manage stress, regulate emotions, and transform moments of despair into opportunities for moral growth and self-improvement. Ultimately, the evidence underscores that spiritual engagement supports rehabilitation while fostering a renewed sense of life significance and moral purpose.

Overall, the findings indicate that spiritual connections are a significant component of PDLs' lives. Faith assists individuals in gradually overcoming detrimental habits and moral shortcomings, serving as a key factor in their transformation. Despite experiencing social disaffection, participants found support through spiritual engagement. Furthermore, administrators and policymakers are encouraged to elevate the presence and quality of these programs, implementing innovative strategies to foster balanced growth for every individual behind bars. With careful attention to narrative flow and inclusivity, these efforts may cultivate environments where lasting change is truly possible.

### **Spiritually Guided Pathways to Community Reintegration**

Another key theme identified is the role of spiritually guided pathways in community reintegration. Participants indicated that faith-based programs extended beyond the jail walls, providing not just spiritual comfort but also practical strategies for addressing the challenges of post-release life. These programs offered critical support for rebuilding relationships and embracing the responsibilities of community membership. Hence, several PDLs emphasized that faith-based programs offered a spiritually guided pathway for community reintegration. They reported that these programs helped them confront past mistakes, build self-discipline, and manage societal judgment. By applying the moral and spiritual lessons learned during incarceration, they expressed readiness for positive change and responsible participation in their communities.

*As one participant said, "What has helped me most are the daily activities we engage in here, which prepare me for the future. I am determined not to return to my past wrongful behaviors. Prayer has transformed my sense of morality and guided me to correct the mistakes I have made – it has taught me that change is necessary."*

*As narrated by another participant: "The most important guidance they give is encouragement. It helps you to envision*

*the many positive things you can achieve once you are released."*

**Theme 4. Spiritually guided pathways to community reintegration**

Theme	Subthemes	Codes	Representative Statements	Interpretation
Spiritually Guided Pathways to Community Reintegration	Reintegration Readiness	Self-discipline, responsibility, behavioral change	"I am determined not to return to my past behaviors."	Faith strengthens readiness for reintegration through moral discipline.
	Coping with Reintegration Challenges	Stigma, fear, adjustment	"Life will test me... but God will not abandon me."	Participants anticipate challenges but rely on faith for resilience.
	Sustaining Faith Beyond Incarceration	Continuity, commitment, spiritual dependence	"Do not lose your connection with Papa God."	Sustained spiritual engagement is crucial for long-term transformation.
	Prevention of Recidivism	Avoidance of wrongdoing, moral guidance	"Prayer helps you avoid actions that could harm you."	Faith-based programs contribute to behavioral reform and reduced recidivism.

Another participant reflected: *"The promise of God – the promise of eternal life – means that life can be joyful and orderly. Even when problems arise, you are capable of overcoming them, and your life can move forward in a meaningful way."*

These narratives express that faith-based programs helped PDLs prepare for reintegration into their communities by prompting them to reexamine their identities and understand their moral responsibilities. Through spiritual grounding, participants developed hope, self-discipline, and a renewed sense of purpose, enabling them to move beyond guilt and recognize their capacity for redemption and positive change. By internalizing these lessons, they felt better equipped to rebuild relationships, navigate societal challenges, and contribute meaningfully to their families and communities upon release.

Based on this finding, several PDLs described that involvement in faith-based programs helped them prepare for reintegration into their communities by providing a spiritually guided pathway toward personal growth and social readiness. These programs enabled participants to reflect deeply on their past actions while cultivating moral discipline, hope, and a renewed sense of purpose. Roberts and Stacer (2016) emphasized that participation in faith-based programs strengthens moral awareness and self-control, which are crucial for leading law-abiding lives. In a like manner, Cohoon (2023) highlighted that religious redemption allows individuals to reshape their identities by releasing guilt and embracing moral renewal rooted in faith and accountability. Through sustained prayer, worship, and engagement in pastoral activities, participants also developed resilience and ethical awareness, as noted by Stansfield and Mowen (2018), rediscovering the significance of their lives and acquiring the moral framework necessary to navigate societal expectations. This spiritual grounding enabled them to envision a positive role within their communities, equipping them with the discipline and moral fortitude needed to return to society successfully.

Furthermore, numerous participants indicated that their involvement in faith-based programs within the jail has strengthened their readiness to reenter society. Engagement in religious services and communal activities provided them with a sense of belonging, instilled moral values, and fostered self-discipline, all of which are essential for navigating societal expectations. The ongoing support from service providers and faith-based volunteers fostered a nurturing environment that helped participants build confidence, emotional resilience, and a renewed sense of purpose, equipping them to reintegrate successfully into their communities.

One participant reflected: *"Whatever others may think of me no longer matters. You should not allow your life to be defined by their perspective. You are the one who makes your own decisions – you are the master of your own fate. Ultimately, you are still the one in control of your choices."*

Another participant shared: *"I still feel fear; there is still apprehension. But in another way, I adjust myself internally and take small steps. Of course, I am ready because God is always beside us, guiding and supporting us."*

Also, a participant narrated: *"To be honest, I deeply desire to go home, but I feel hesitant – like a child taking tentative steps. Yet I know my family will be there to guide me. I believe that Papa God will also help me transform and start anew"*

*once I return home.”*

These responses reflect that participation in faith-based activities has significantly prepared participants for reintegration into society. Through prayer, reflection, and engagement with transformative stories, they developed a stronger sense of ethics, responsibility, and moral accountability. These experiences fostered self-discipline, hope, and a renewed sense of life purpose, enabling them to adopt constructive behaviors and set positive goals. As a result, participants reported feeling better equipped to face societal challenges, build meaningful relationships, and contribute positively to their communities, demonstrating a readiness to reintegrate successfully after incarceration.

The finding emphasizes that engagement in faith-based programs strengthened their preparedness to reintegrate into society. Through sustained prayer, religious participation, and activities, they cultivated self-discipline, moral clarity, and a renewed sense of purpose, which helped them confront past mistakes and societal stigma (Nyamburi, 2025). The incorporation of moral and faith-based values into prison programs also enhanced their behavioral reform, emotional well-being, and sense of community, providing the ethical guidance and resilience needed to navigate social relationships and contribute positively to society (Bonggot et al., 2024). Furthermore, holistic rehabilitation initiatives in the Philippines, which address spiritual, mental, and social development, equipped participants with practical skills and confidence, preparing them for a responsible transition from incarceration to active participation in their communities (Perez & Mitra, 2025).

Additionally, several participants expressed concerns about the challenges they might face in maintaining their faith and newly adopted values after reentering the community. While faith-based programs offered transformative experiences that reshaped their beliefs and moral perspective, participants acknowledged that external pressures—such as social stigma, exposure to negative influences, and the demands of daily life outside the facility—could test their commitment. They anticipated difficulty consistently applying the lessons of accountability, compassion, and integrity without the structured support and guidance provided by the program. These anticipated struggles highlight that, although spiritual and moral growth can be deeply internalized within the facility, reintegration requires ongoing effort and resilience to sustain the lifestyle changes they have embraced.

As one participant said, *“I know that life will test me with hardships. But as long as you believe in Him, He will never abandon you. You understand that these challenges are God’s way of testing the depth of your faith and trust in Him.”*

Another response highlighted: *“Perhaps it is simply a challenge for me – not being discriminated against by others – but God is always there, the one I lean on. I know that in His eyes, I am a righteous person. Even though I have transgressed the law, before Him, there is no fear and nothing to hide.”*

A participant shared: *“When you are released, you cannot escape encountering people. That will likely be the greatest test – how you prove that not everyone here is bad, and that goodness can come from this place as well.”*

These narratives illustrate the concerns participants have about sustaining their faith and new lifestyle after being released. Despite the profound personal growth and moral transformation experienced through faith-based programs, many anticipate challenges, including societal judgment, stigma from their past, and the influence of environments that may not support ethical choices. Transitioning from a structured, spiritually guided setting to the uncertainties of everyday life is seen as a significant hurdle, testing their self-discipline, hope, and commitment to the values internalized during incarceration. Nevertheless, participants remain determined to uphold the lessons learned, viewing their faith and ethical framework as essential guides in navigating the complexities of community reintegration.

The findings show that while faith-based programs profoundly shaped participants’ beliefs and values, many foresee challenges in maintaining their faith and reformed lifestyle after release. Participants anticipated difficulties, including societal stigma, negative influences, and the pressures of daily responsibilities, that may test their commitment to ethical living. Although testimonies, guided reflections, and spiritual teachings instilled lessons of responsibility, compassion, and integrity, they acknowledged that sustaining these practices outside the structured environment of the program would require ongoing effort, vigilance, and support.

In the Philippines, spirituality serves as an important coping strategy for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals facing stigma and social exclusion, and faith strengthens resilience and fosters optimism during reintegration (Agtong et al., 2023). Faith-based community organizing in the U.S. shows that “redemption scripts” and collective faith practices empower formerly incarcerated individuals to reintegrate socially and participate in civic life (Flores & Cossyleon, 2016). Post-release faith-based initiatives provide mentorship, values formation, entrepreneurship training, and employment support, helping formerly incarcerated individuals overcome stigma and rebuild family and community ties (PRESO Inc., 2025).

In addition, several participants reported that engagement in faith-based programs led to profound spiritual and moral transformation, reshaping their beliefs and daily practices. This experience fostered a deeper sense of purpose, emotional stability, and ethical awareness, enabling them to make positive choices and avoid behaviors that could result in reincarceration. As a result, participants emphasized that these spiritually guided pathways serve as a crucial support system, helping prevent individuals from returning to jail facilities and promoting successful reintegration into the community.

As one of the participants narrated: *“Through prayer, the Lord guides you. It helps you avoid actions or situations that could harm you or others. This is why prayer is truly significant in a person’s life.”*

Furthermore, a participant similarly expressed: *“The support of service providers who visit us here is very meaningful. We are able to adopt the lessons they teach, especially the teachings from the Word of God. There are many ways to apply these lessons – such as working diligently and making good choices – so that you do not return to previous mistakes.”*

Another participant also reflected: *“They advised that even when you leave this place, you should not lose your connection with Papa God. When relying only on yourself, temptation can arise. It is essential to always have something – or someone – to hold on to.”*

The experiences recounted by participants reveal that faith-based programs play a crucial role in preventing individuals from returning to jail facilities. By providing spiritual guidance, fostering moral reflection, and reinforcing personal accountability, these programs help participants confront past behaviors and adopt positive, law-abiding lifestyles. Engagement in faith-based activities instills hope, resilience, and a renewed sense of purpose, enabling individuals to cope with the challenges of reintegration and resist influences that may lead to reoffending. Through these spiritually guided pathways, participants are equipped not only with practical support but also with a strong moral and ethical foundation, reducing the likelihood of recidivism and promoting successful reintegration into their communities.

This analysis demonstrates that engagement with faith-based programs can serve as a vital support system in preventing reoffending and returning to jail facilities. Likewise, Bonggot et al. (2024) emphasized that incorporating moral and faith-based values into prison operations enhances behavioral reform, emotional well-being, and fosters a sense of community among inmates. The teachings and values instilled through consistent prayer, scriptural study, and pastoral guidance fostered a heightened moral awareness and a strong sense of ethical responsibility. Meanwhile, Mowen, Stansfield, and Boman (2017) found that individuals who engaged more in religious activities after release demonstrated lower rates of substance abuse and criminal relapse, highlighting how spiritual engagement encourages constructive choices and helps resist negative influences. Steckley, Friedman, and Simmons (2021) noted that faith-centered reentry programs, including mentorship and community involvement, provide a strong moral foundation, decreasing recidivism and fostering a sense of belonging. As a result, engagement in these programs offered not only personal transformation but also a practical pathway for successful and sustained reintegration into society.

Overall, the findings underscore that spiritually guided programs offer a transformative pathway for PDLs toward successful community reintegration. Through active engagement in faith-based activities, participants develop moral awareness, emotional resilience, and a renewed sense of purpose, enabling them to embrace their circumstances and rebuild their lives with hope and direction. Consistent with Pargament’s Religious Coping Theory, as cited by Xu (2015), faith helps individuals manage the stresses of incarceration, regulate emotions, and turn challenges into opportunities for personal and moral growth. Duncan et al. (2018) highlighted that consistent participation in collective worship and faith discussions allows inmates to find meaning and stability, countering feelings of hopelessness and fostering emotional resilience. Cohoon (2023) emphasized that engagement in faith-

based programs encourages offenders to view their past actions in a redemptive light, promoting accountability and a renewed sense of morality.

Furthermore, Kaufman (2018) demonstrated that integrating spiritual care with practical interventions equips participants with essential life skills, hope, and inner resources, ultimately reducing recidivism and supporting successful long-term reintegration. Taken together, these studies illustrate how spiritually guided programs provide both the ethical and emotional foundations necessary for PDLs to navigate the challenges of reentry and embrace constructive pathways in society.

The results suggest that faith-based programs offer more than comfort; they allow people to reflect on their past, face judgment, and imagine a meaningful future. As they moved toward healing, faith opened the door to embracing the past. Hence, spiritual assistance may continue after release to sustain guided reintegration and help individuals build the courage to adjust in society. Local government and community leaders may incorporate assessments and programs that address the holistic livelihoods of reintegrated individuals to help them regain confidence and participate in the community. Meanwhile, future studies may further explore how faith-based activities, combined with practical support such as mentoring, job training, and community work, can strengthen determination, moral rebuilding, and real-life participation in the community.

## Conclusion

Engagement in sacred activities through faith-based programs significantly impacts participants' life reorientation, identity reconstruction, and community reintegration. It shows how consistent participation in prayer, worship, and devotional practices fosters emotional stability, discipline, and personal growth among PDLs. It indicates that PDLs developed the courage to reflect on their previous actions, change their perspectives, and pursue personal improvement. Moreover, this process helps them develop a stronger sense of moral awareness and the determination to change. Rather than focusing solely on outward behavior, faith-based programs promote internal change by shaping attitudes, values, and emotions essential to personal growth and long-term improvement. Moreover, the importance of collaborative support from institutions and service providers further explains how jail personnel, chaplains, and volunteers played a vital role in sustaining the implementation of faith-based programs. Their coordinated efforts ensured that spiritual activities were consistently delivered, properly facilitated, and made accessible to participants, thereby strengthening the overall impact and continuity of the programs.

In addition, the rediscovery of life's significance and moral transformation illustrate the gradual development of self-reflection, moral awareness, and a renewed understanding of life's purpose among participants. This transformation was reinforced through spiritual engagement, which enabled them to reassess past actions and adopt more positive values and behavioral orientations. Likewise, Spiritually Guided Pathways to Community Reintegration shows how faith functioned as a guiding framework for acceptance, coping, and preparation for reintegration into society, allowing participants to reframe their incarceration experience and envision a more meaningful future beyond confinement. Ultimately, this study provides deeper insight into the lived experiences of individuals behind prison walls, particularly their journeys of reflection and personal growth as organized through the four identified themes. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that faith-based engagement, institutional collaboration, moral transformation, and spiritually guided reintegration are interconnected processes that shape rehabilitation outcomes. Moreover, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of correctional rehabilitation, human development, and social reintegration.

## Contributions of Authors

**Authors 1 and 2:** Jointly led the conceptualization of the study and were primarily responsible for data gathering, data analysis, and the initial drafting of the manuscript, including the organization and interpretation of findings.

**Author 3:** Served as the thesis adviser, providing overall academic supervision, methodological guidance, and critical review throughout the research process.

**Author 4:** Provided guidance for journal publication, including refinement of the manuscript structure, strengthening of scholarly arguments, and alignment with publication standards.

**Author 5:** Contributed to the fine-tuning of the paper, focusing on language polishing, coherence, and overall presentation quality for publication.

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## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

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