



# PRISONS WEEK 2008 RESOURCES

## 'WORTHLESS OR TALENTED' DRAMATIC SKETCH

A short dramatic sketch illustrating the theme for Prisons Week 2008. It requires no rehearsal; we suggest you simply print off copies and recruit volunteers to read the four parts – in church (perhaps before the sermon), or at any other event where the Prisons Week material is being used.

The characters are based on those in the BBC television series *Porridge*.

- Mackay: Now then, you men. Listen to me. Her Majesty has decided, in her infinite wisdom, to provide education courses for prisoners (*said sneeringly*) to help them realise their worth in society.
- Barrowclough: Ooh! That sounds a good idea
- Mackay: If you ask me, it's absolute rubbish, but Her Majesty didn't ask me. There are classes in Bricklaying, Carpentry and Computer Literacy...but not one in Safe-Breaking I am afraid, Fletcher.
- Fletcher: Well, like Mr. Barrowclough, I also think it's a good idea, so much so that I have enrolled.
- Godber: What for Fletch?
- Fletcher: I have enrolled for Computer Literacy. The class started today and already I know how to go online
- Mackay: Go online, Fletcher? Online? What, are they teaching you to do? Catch a train? (*Laughs*)
- Barrowclough: No. I know what that means. It means he knows how to connect to the Internet.
- Mackay: Be quiet man. All this talk of Internets, in my day, we used ledgers and fountain pens. And only men of proven worth got to go on courses, (*Straightens his tie*) men who were of Senior Officer material!
- Fletcher: The teacher says I have a natural talent for it.
- Mackay: Does he indeed?
- Fletcher: She actually, sir.
- Godber: Hey, Fletch, is it that nice Miss Wilshire?
- Fletcher: It is. She was very encouraging. She said it might open up opportunities for me to show my worth in the outside world.
- Barrowclough: Oh Fletcher. I am so pleased for you.
- Godber: Yeah. So am I Fletch.
- Mackay: I don't know what your cunning plan is Fletcher. But I know there is one, and you can be sure I will find it and foil it.
- Fletcher: There's no cunning plan, Mr. Mackay. It's just that now I know someone believes in me, it makes a difference. I'm not just seen a worthless criminal anymore. And when I get out, I'm thinking of going straight.
- Barrowclough and Godber together: Hurrah! Good for you Fletcher.
- Mackay: Lord, give me strength.

*Discussion questions overleaf...*

Questions for use in discussion:

This might be a cynical ruse by Fletcher, who has shown himself to be a recidivist offender. Should he be removed from the course before he can carry through some crafty plan – or should he be given the benefit of the doubt?

How important is encouragement: having someone who believes in you?

What do you think of Mackay's attitude? Is he right to be suspicious? Or is he ruling out the possibility that people can change?

Do you support the notion of education courses and other forms of rehabilitation for prisoners? Or should prison be about punishment and hard labour. What Bible passages would you cite to support your point of view?

*Note: A large proportion of prisoners have literacy and numeracy skills below those expected of a child of eleven. Many failed to engage with school. This makes it difficult for them to obtain employment on release. For more statistics see the Prison Reform Trust prison factfile at [www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk)*

Do you feel that Bible teaching on repentance and forgiveness is relevant to the treatment of offenders? *You might want to look at the exchange between Jesus and one of the robbers crucified with him (Luke 23.39-43)*

Notes:

**Prisons week 16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2008**

**[www.prisonweek.org](http://www.prisonweek.org)**

**Encouraging prayer for, and raising awareness of, the needs of prisoners and their families, victims of offenders, prisons staff and all those who care.**