

Reader Question: "What's your plans for when you get out?"

*Asked in a letter from Ammon, ID.*

Every one of us will make mistakes and bad decisions in our lifetime. Some of these will cause minor setbacks, while others will cause monumental setbacks (like serving several years in prison). What's important, though, is how we respond to these setbacks, or more specifically, if we choose to course correct or not.

I didn't always think this way. If you had asked this question 5 years ago, while I was dealing with my case, before I knew how long my sentence would be, my response would have been: "My life is over. I have no plans for when I get out because there's no way I can restart after this." And I truly believed that back then.

Things are different now. Being in prison has given me time to think seriously about how to reinvent myself moving forward. The first thing I thought was no matter what I do, I need to embrace and share my story. That's really important to me. And besides, who doesn't like an honest comeback story?

Next, I did something I have never done before. I sat on my prison bunk and asked myself: "What are the things in my life that I cultivated a true passion for?"

My answer consisted of the following 5 areas:

1. Music and independent creative culture
2. Bringing people together
3. Quality coffee
4. Birds (it might sound silly but I've been fascinated by birds and the lives they lead for years now)
5. Helping others as they move through life

Next I set myself to the task of figuring out how I could combine these passions I've cultivated and tell my story in a way that allows me to make a living. I would lay in my prison bunk night after night, trying to formulate a plan that would make it possible to pull this off.

Many ideas came and went, along with plenty of moments of self-doubt and fear. But, night after night, as I returned to my prison bunk, I moved through all the doubt and fear and this is what I came up with.

I will start a coffee roasting business that incorporates music as well. Eventually a percentage of the sales from the coffee would be donated to three specifically targeted

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areas: independent music and culture, support for birds and their habitat, and support for people locked up inside American prisons.

What remains is bringing people together, which I plan to accomplish by opening a brick and mortar coffee shop within my community. One idea of a name for the cafe could be Felon's Cafe (coffee so good you'd think it's illegal). This will create an opportunity to share my story across all aspects of the business.

To sum it all up, when I get out I plan to combine the passions I've cultivated and to tell my story by offering great coffee that supports great causes. I am excited to put in the work to make this dream a reality!