

Letters from Stateville

by Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom and Stateville students, p. 20

In 2015 North Park Theological Seminary began offering theology courses at Stateville Correctional Center outside Chicago. The transformative stories of faith from both incarcerated students and their professor speak into the brokenness that we all share.

1. Professor Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom introduces this article by outlining the dangers of living according to the Beatitudes for those in prison. How might the Beatitudes be dangerous for people who are free as well?
2. Clifton-Soderstrom relates the sad reality that “prison is a place that defines people by the worst things they have ever done.” How does this statement contradict the message of the gospel?
3. After reading the reflections from the men incarcerated at Stateville on themes of thankfulness, beauty, restoration, and forgiveness, what surprised you most?
4. Was there anything that bothered you?
5. Which of these men would you most like to meet? What would you say to him?