Our approach to grading seeks to focus on quality rather than quantity. Our goal is to provide individual attention to each of the students for his/her eternal welfare. So please, take as much time as is appropriate to accomplish this goal. To this end, we offer the following suggestions as guidelines for grading.

**Preparation**

Perhaps it should go without saying, but we are entrusting you with a significant amount of spiritual responsibility as a grader. The input you offer, the counsel you give and the way you administer it, all will have an impact upon the student. Thus, it is imperative that you be a man filled and lead by the Spirit. For all of us who would be grading, this demands spiritual preparation. Please do not overlook this important aspect of your role as grader. Take time to be a prepared vessel.

It is also important that the course material be very familiar to you. Grading the course will prove quite difficult without this aspect of your preparation. Please take some time in the beginning to review the course you will be grading.

**Perspective**

What we mean by perspective is the view you have about what it is you hope to accomplish. We work with folks of many different backgrounds and perspectives. If you are to succeed as a grader, you will need a measure of discernment and wisdom as you encounter various situations. Consider the following:

1. **Doctrinal Disputes:** We are a ministry which operates from a Calvinistic doctrinal perspective; and our material will often reflect this perspective. Obviously, there will be those who do not agree with us. When you encounter a student who chooses to disagree with us, please respond without being “disagreeable”. Please avoid judgments of character, salvation and intelligence. We want to have some latitude on the minor doctrines, in order to be clear on the key doctrines in salvation and sanctification.

2. **Identifying Needs:** We are here to serve in Christ’s name. Please keep an eye out for opportunities for us to meet needs. This would include prayer requests, the expression of personal questions and concerns, and frequently “reading between the lines”.

3. **Discerning the Intent:** Because we are not necessarily looking for verbatim, textbook responses in many instances, you will be required to discern if the student addressed the intent of the question. A correct or complete response may be in the student’s own words. Your ability to detect this will take a little more time, but please take it. However, if in your judgment, the student has missed a vital aspect of the question, do not hesitate to offer your insight and counsel.

**Giving Feedback**

1. **Use green ink.** Please make all written comments inside the answer sheets and on the LRF in green ink. This allows there to be a measure of consistency in format among the different graders which the student may encounter over time. We send green pens initially; please let us know when you need more and we will send replacements.

2. **Check each generally correct answer** next to the question number to indicate that you have read it. If the answer is off track in some way, then do not check the answer, but circle the question # and add a short comment instead. Your comment can indicate a point from the answer key which the student missed, or suggest Scripture for them to consider, or mention a different point of view from your own experience and study.

3. **Discipleship feedback:** Your advice and counsel can be one of the most important aspects of taking this course for our students. Please add comments as you feel the opportunity presents itself. With experience, we believe it works best on average to have *one or two sentences of discipleship comment*, on each two or three pages of the student’s answer sheets (using a green pen). This is extremely important, as some students have no other source for Christian discipleship. Please write these remarks (in green) directly onto their answer sheets. If you need more space, please use a separate sheet of paper, noting the lesson number and question number, and insert the sheet with their answers. Please do not use post-it notes stuck onto their answer sheets: many prisons do not allow post-it notes [some make “weapons” of them!].

   Also, some graders have written letters to the student. We suggest only to do this as a rare exception, when the Holy Spirit is clearly leading you to do so. We highly recommend to correspond only through MZBI: sign only your first name, and enclose your letter with the graded lessons when you mail them back to us. This is because some inmates are insincere, and very clever at manipulation. These have used personal information to disadvantage later.

4. **Ask us to send materials:** Please make use of the tracts and booklets we are able to provide. When you notice an area of need, please tell us to *send one or two selected titles* that we print to the student (it is easy for us to enclose them with the
returned lessons). Or just advise us of a topical area that is needed; we will find a title for it. This is one of the unique benefits of MZBI—having the Chapel Library supply of literature available. The student can then receive a readable piece of literature that is well matched to his area of need, just at the time when he may be very teachable. Again, this is very important.

Always use a post-it note for this, in the top right corner of the LRF. [This allows us to see the name during computer processing, and to add the note to the outside envelope when it goes to the literature department for adding the title.] Only mention on the note the student’s name, and the title or topic.

5. The last page of the last lessons of a course. Students will often ask us to send a next course on the last page of their lessons. It is not necessary to call our attention to this request. We always check the last page of the last lesson when it is received from the student. We put his next course in the mail immediately at that time, in order to allow him to continue his studies. Please do call our attention to any other remarks from the student.

Lesson Response Form (LRF)
This form provides you with another opportunity to communicate with the student.

1. Course Complete. This is where you would indicate that the student has completed the entire course and is now ready to proceed with another. (Therefore, marked when the course’s last lesson is graded.) Mark this even when there are many 'Questions for Review.' We simply encourage the student to review these on his own, and allow him to continue with the next course.

2. Lessons Complete. In this space you would indicate that the work submitted is entire and complete. Sometimes lessons are missing, pages are lost, or a host of other situations. Here you are able to note any discrepancy in this regard. Leave this blank if there are many ‘Questions for Review.’ Please always check either this box or ‘Questions for Review’ (or both if only a few ‘Questions for Review’).

3. Questions for Review. These are answers which you consider very incomplete or inaccurate (completely separate from the other questions where you have added discipleship comments). You the grader have the choice whether to a) simply have the student find your ‘questions for review’ circled inside his answer pages, or b) also to list the lesson # and question # on the LRF. (Put any discipleship comments you wish to add next to the question itself inside the answer sheets.)

4. Notes from your Grader. Here is the place to add some summary remarks to the student, typically a word of encouragement to keep studying God’s Word, or an overall comment on something you would like them to do differently in future courses, and an appropriate general Scripture reference as the Lord leads. Please always add these summary remarks. And, please sign your first name and last name initial (not the full last name to protect your identity in the prisons)—this is a bit more personal and allows us to trace any inmate questions back to the one who graded.

Communicating with Us
The goals of the Institute can only be accomplished effectively if we work together. Communication is important. There are a few ways for you to do this.

1. Correspondence. Your comments and questions are always welcome, but when you return your graded lessons to us it is a convenient time for you to mention them. Use a separate sheet to bring to our attention things about the student that you feel are important. These could be prayer requests, personal concerns, and requests for material (again, we do already send his next course when we first receive his lessons, before sending it on to you).

   Also, how might we improve our efforts? Do you detect a question in the course that the students are finding particularly difficult? Do you have a personal prayer request? Please let us know these or other needs/observations.

2. Timely Return. In order to ensure the student receives maximum benefit from your feedback, it is important that we return the lessons within a reasonable time frame. We ask that you mail the graded lessons to us within two weeks after receiving them (or three if necessary). If that is too quick, then please tell us to send fewer lessons the next time, so that you can meet this guideline. (And in the same way, if you can handle additional lessons within that time, please tell us.)

3. Your Mailing Envelope. please always mark the lower left hand of your mailing envelope with “Graded Lessons.”

Conclusion
The purpose of MZBI is to teach the gospel of Christ and the Word of God, by distributing courses without charge as far and wide as possible, that God may be glorified. We believe that this is a goal worthy of our efforts. We welcome your labors and prayers as we join in the accomplishing of this work.