



Dear friends,

April, 2022

It is good to think of each of you. We'd enjoy knowing how you are doing.

The Lord is faithful. We are well because of His goodness. God encourages us with His presence, through His word, and through our brothers and sisters in Him. How good and wonderful He is. Thank You, Father, for saving us through Jesus. Thank You for Your patient, faithful, life-long work in conforming us to the image of Your Son.

Thank you for your partnership with us in the Gospel. God is faithfully giving His guidance, help, and open doors to engage with ones in our city to tell of the Lord Jesus and disciple in His name.

The Gospel Shared through Meeting Tangible Needs

We enjoy Tuesday mornings in seeing God at work through the food distribution. Our volunteers work hard week after week. Through them, and through our time serving alongside one another, the Gospel is being shared, ones are being prayed for, and relationships are being established through meeting tangible needs.

Betty* is a neighbor we first met at the post office. In brief conversation with her, we let her know of the food distribution. She's come nearly every Tuesday morning since that conversation. We enjoy seeing her. Just before Christmas – though needing food – she said her purpose for coming that morning was for prayer after awaking and feeling great sorrow from the losses she has experienced. We are thankful for how Jesus is helping us connect with her, and share Gospel truth that she might know peace and hope in Him. It was exciting to have her with us in church for a first time at Easter. We are looking forward to meeting Betty for lunch and continuing our conversations about our hope in Christ.



Please pray for the Lord's faithful work in Betty's life, and Gospel connections with ones in our community.

"When Have You Seen Jesus?"

We were with a family to celebrate Maundy Thursday. We were asked the question, "When have you seen Jesus?" It caused our minds to recall our Hope for Addiction group meeting a week earlier. One of our homeless neighbors, Tammy*, joined us for our meeting that night. When she walked into the room, the smell from not taking a shower filled the room. Tammy has attended our meeting on occasion in the past.

But tonight, she was surprisingly engaged with the Gospel lesson, and especially connected with the group discussion – particularly, with LaShay’s testimony of once being on the streets herself.

Tammy asked a question, but instead of answering the question as the leader of the meeting, Ricky turned the question to LaShay and Cheryl who have experienced similar lives. They each were able to share the hope they found in Jesus, the transformation He has brought in their lives, and the hope of change that is possible for Tammy, too. Tammy was moved with emotion and tears as she heard their stories, especially as LaShay reflected back to the miracle of her 4-year-old daughter’s life. God used her daughter’s birth to rescue LaShay’s own life. After closing the meeting in prayer, LaShay fully embraced Tammy with all of her stench that had filled the room. It was a beautiful moment, and **where we saw Jesus.**

We are so thankful for how Jesus finds us in our stench of sin, rescues us from sin and death, and gives us new life. Please pray for Tammy as God opens her eyes, heals her, and brings true heart change through Christ.

It has been one-year since LaShay started attending our church and Hope for Addiction. It’s been four years since God rescued her life from darkness and bondage, and gave her a beautiful little girl. Enclosed is LaShay’s story. She would like her story to help someone else know that new life through Christ is possible – no matter how dark it seems.

A Growing City in Great Need of Our Savior

There is great harvest around us, and much light to shine for others to find hope in Christ. Please pray with us for a steady Gospel witness in a growing city in great need of our Savior. Please pray for the Kingdom connections He would give us to accomplish His continued work. Please pray with us as we continue to seek God in focusing even more intentionally on the ministries in which He wants to bring fruit.

This summer, we will be taking a break from our food distribution to focus more intentionally on our steps forward, and the needed financial support to continue in this work. Please pray with us. We are encouraged.

*NAME CHANGED

May it be Jesus’ presence flowing from our lives.

Ricky & Sherrie



TO PARTNER WITH US, PLEASE VISIT MERCYMINISTRIESPHX.COM OR CONTACT US THROUGH OUR INFO BELOW:

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LaShay's Story

My name is LaShay. I had been in my addiction and homeless for more than twelve years. I had lost my three oldest sons due to my addiction. I was pregnant with my fourth child, and was prepared to give the baby up for adoption in thinking adoption was the only solution. I mean, I was a junkie on the street. How was I going to care for a baby? I was probably going to lose this child in the system of things anyway. Besides, I really wanted to die. I remember about a week before I went into labor, I was sitting in front of a mirror in a motel room crying and asking God, "Why?" "Why would You let this happen?" I couldn't even take care of my other children. I just wanted to kill myself, and I was hurt and angry that I couldn't kill myself because I was pregnant. So, I decided that I would give the baby up for adoption. **Then, I could die and all my suffering would be over.**

My premature baby was substance exposed and the hospital where we were did not have a Neonatal ICU. So, my baby was flown to another hospital because she was not able to suck on a bottle and needed a feeding tube. At this point, I did not know what to do. **I was completely lost and alone.**

Then as I lay in the hospital bed, I awoke to my doctor staring at me. She said, "I bet you are wondering why I am here." She must have been there for a while because she had her feet up on the bed and she looked relaxed. I said, "Not really." She then said, "I am trying to figure out why you are alive." They were having a hard time getting blood from me, and the doctor wanted the blood work repeated because she was convinced the results could not be correct. They repeated the blood work and brought the tests back with the same results. So now she is sitting next to my bed telling me that there is no way I should be alive, because I have half the blood needed in my body to stay alive. I needed four blood transfusions immediately. I really didn't care, because I was telling myself, **"You should let me die."** The doctor told me I had nowhere to go and nothing to do, so "to just relax and let me make you better."

The doctor left my room, and as I sat there, I heard a voice say, "You are your mother's daughter. Your mom has four children, and you have four children. Your mom has three boys and one girl, and you have three boys and one girl. Your mom's two oldest boys were taken and raised by someone else, and your two oldest boys were taken the same way. Your mom raised you and your brother, and you now have the opportunity to raise your son and daughter. This time, you can break the cycle, because if you don't, your daughter is going to repeat the mistakes you made just like you have repeated your mother's mistakes." I didn't know how I was going to accomplish this, but I was willing to try. **I knew God had spoken to me,** because no one on earth could have made me see this.

I went into treatment, and afterwards, I couldn't get a job, much less a place to live. I struggled. I finally got a job, into transitional housing, and my daughter was returned to my care. I started having communication with my sons that were adopted, and two years ago, my oldest son came to live with me. **This was a miracle all by itself.**

One year ago, a friend / co-worker invited me to church. It was Easter Sunday, so I went. She then invited me to Hope for Addiction and I went. I love this church and this recovery group. Though hearing the Gospel growing up, it was attending this church and recovery group, that **I understood the Gospel** for myself and how to apply it to my life.

I was feeling alone. Even though I rekindled a relationship, I felt alone. I was struggling with loneliness and I spoke about this loneliness at the Hope for Addiction meeting. I was immediately giving phone numbers from others in the group that I could reach out to. It took me a while, before one day I was struggling so much that I texted one of those numbers and asked for prayer. I received a message back that I was on their prayer list. That completely comforted me! **I wasn't alone and someone was thinking about me.** Jesus is always with me, and I am teaching my daughter this, too.

Only God could have done this. On April 23, 2022, it will be four years since God spoke to me in the hospital bed. It will be my daughter's fourth birthday, and four years that I have been off drugs. **God saved me!**

We asked LaShay a few questions:

Question: What would you ask / say to someone who is lost in addiction as you experienced?"

Answer: I would ask the question, "what will it take for you to stop?"

Question: Where would you suggest they go for help?

Answer: Go to church (connect with others who can help you know who Jesus is and how to apply Gospel truth to your life).

For further help:

If you do not know the Gospel – the Good News of Jesus – please contact us (contact information below). We would love to share with you how you can have life and freedom in Christ.

If you know someone who is struggling with addiction and wants to receive help, please go to <https://www.hopeforaddiction.com/>

Please pray for:

- ✧ Those living in addiction to know and experience the freedom and abundant life that is possible through Christ.
- ✧ LaShay as she grows in a relationship with Jesus, and raises her daughter to know and follow Him.



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