

SPOTLIGHT

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The Purpose Of Outreach

By Jay Song

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."

Matthew 25:35-36

I am reminded of a line from a song in Disney's Lion King, "oh I just can't wait... to be king!" Even though all of us know that we are not going to be a king or a queen, we all spend much energy, time, and money trying to build up our own little kingdoms. Ideal kingdoms can be the comfort of a family and home, great possessions, or adventure and excitement. In any case, our own kingdom takes the priority of our time, energy and money with very little going towards helping and serving others.

Contrary to how many of us live, the call to be a disciple is the call to let go of our own kingdoms so that we can be servants of The Kingdom. One of the practical ways we can do this is by focusing our efforts and resources on those in need. My prayer is that every member and attendee of Good News Chapel will be made aware of the suffering and injustices that are happening in our world, and that practical avenues will be available for us to participate in order to shine the Light of Christ.

Now I want to introduce our monthly newsletter Spotlight. We hope that through Spotlight, God will open our eyes and hearts to see the needs of the people in this world, and be moved to act and help those in need as we follow the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. †

Homelessness

By Julie Hong

This past month, I started volunteering at the local public library. I figured it would be a pretty low-key gig... What I didn't prepare myself for were the "crazies" that would come by on a regular basis. I tend to forget that the library is a free public space... not just for the academic elite or the bored housewife, but a festering sanctuary for nomads and derelicts.

As I was putting some books away, I caught a whiff of a vile, tangy odor and heard a low rambling of a man talking to himself while frantically crooking his neck every 30 seconds or so (I believe he had a tic). I could feel myself unintentionally cringing as I quickly pushed my book-cart into another aisle.

My interactions with homeless people could generally be broken down into two categories:

1. Ignoring them. Just like my buddy at the library, I would avoid eye contact altogether. If I passed by them, I would pretend to be terribly busy text messaging a friend. The trickiest is when I'd be in my car. I'd guiltily shift my eyes away from the "Need Money For Food- God Bless You" sign as I'm pleading in my head for the traffic light to turn green. When I first arrived in Korea, I watched in horror and great sadness as homeless people would roll around the sidewalks like poor sick seals, missing a leg or two. But the people on the streets seemed to be more irritated than touched, nonchalantly pushing these homeless cripples out of their way. It only took me less than a week to start stepping around these folks

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Loving the Homeless

By Richard Park

"When you're homeless, something in you just dies."

Hearing that on the radio one morning, I thought to myself, who cares? Los Angeles Missions, a group dedicated to ending homelessness was having a telethon and they were playing testimonials of various homeless people and workers. They talked about how hopeless their situation seemed and how grateful they were for the help. When you're homeless, something in you just dies. But, I just thought to myself, why should I care?

According to the 2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, only 1.5% of the population in Los Angeles County experiences homelessness annually and only 68,608 on any given day. (Not terribly large). 20,000 more than the amount of people dead from car crashes a year. I could run rife with stats all day. What is the median age? 45 years old. How many sleep in jails, hospitals and rehabilitation facilities? 6000 persons. How many homeless persons claim to be disabled? 74%. How many reported that they needed medical attention and didn't receive it? 22%. And how many were victims of domestic abuse? 11%. Less than half of them are women and children and about half of them are black. 42% abuse alcohol and drugs and 33% of them are chronically homeless. So again, why should I care?

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cont. of "Homelessness" by Julie Hong

and seeing them as a nuisance as well. That's when I learned- you can give a human being some time & exposure, and he can be desensitized to anything.

2. Being "charitable." But not in the true selfless Mother Teresa way (though who knows what really went on in her heart). I tend to do nice things for others thinking that I'll get something in return whether its riches here or riches in heaven. Not only that, but the act of giving can sometimes instill the giver with a certain "power" over the recipient. Yes, when I give the homeless man on the street a crisp, new five-dollar bill, I subconsciously feel a sense of self-gratification, knowing deep inside that I'm helping out a person who is a few notches down the totem pole.

But that defeats the whole purpose, doesn't it? As long as we think of those less fortunate than us as lesser beings, we will never be able to love. The reason why we don't feel a sharp conviction to donate to the needy or feel great sorrow for dying children in Africa is because we feel a sense of detachment, a lack of empathy. Empathy will bring us closer, while sympathy only widens the gap.

Maybe I had been in SoCal Korean Christian middle-class suburbia for too long, but it has become extremely hard to empathize... what do I really have in common with this man with no money, no education, and bad hygiene? The only thing that really puts us back in the same playing field is Christ. To Him- beggars, prostitutes, doctors, presidents... we are all none but the same in our brokenness, emptiness, and our total state of depravity without Him. Any day, God can pull a "Job" on us and send a gargantuan earthquake to shatter our towns and strip us of our belongings. There is nothing that is inherent; no physical/mental ability or materialistic attribute that is promised to us forever. All that we take pride in is ultimately God-given and can be confiscated in a fraction of a millisecond. As much as we scrub ourselves clean and douse ourselves with designer perfume, we still carry the universal stench of sin.

So, next time when I'm walking down the narrow aisles of the library and see (or smell) my friend, I will no longer see him as an "other," but I will see myself in the purest form of my being. †

cont. of "Loving the Homeless" by Richard Park

The truth is that it matters because it matters to God. He cares so much, that Christ's ministry was started by "teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people." (Mt 4:23) "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many." (Mt 20:28) And to that end, "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rm 5:8) While we were unworthy of his sacrifice. And more than that, he rose from the dead giving us a hope that we may share in his glory as we share in his suffering.

He cares so much, so that we are commanded to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. "If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1Jn 4:11) and "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (Jn 15: 12) How shall we apply this? If you are hungry, do you not eat? If you are thirsty, do you not drink? If you are naked, do you not clothe yourself? So then, how can we profess to love our neighbors as ourselves, if we withhold from them the love we show ourselves?

This is a call to examine your heart and renew your minds, to pray without ceasing and determine the will of the Father who is in heaven. It may not be in his will for you to serve in this particular ministry of Outreach. Perhaps your gifts lie elsewhere. But for those who are called, this is our exhortation, that you may first give yourselves to the Lord and then by the will of God, to the ministry and that those who give, give cheerfully and generously so that nobody may be in need. May the homeless be comforted both spiritually and physically, and may we all be encouraged of a home in the Lord. I end with this:

"Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (Jn 14: 23) †

*GNC Outreach will be collecting clothes, appliances, and canned goods throughout November.

All donations will help human trafficking victims, the homeless, and abused women and children of Los Angeles. Also, please join us on December 5th as we volunteer at Midnight Missions to help serve food to the homeless.

Articles were abridged to fit into layout. For full article, visit www.GNCoutreach.blog.com.

If you are interested in writing, drawing, sharing ideas, or editing for Spotlight, please send an email to gnc.outreach@gmail.com.

Mike's Picks

monthly music recommendations

1. True Love – Phil Wickham (Cannons)
2. Everlasting God – New Life Worship (My Savior Lives)
3. Jesus Messiah – Chris Tomlin (Hello Love)
4. Our God Saves – Paul Baloche (Our God Saves)
5. The Power of the Cross – Keith and Kristyn Getty (In Christ Alone)
6. Beautiful Jesus – Kristen Stanfill (Hello)
7. Glorious – Todd Fields (Todd Fields)
8. I Believe in You – Bethany Dillon (Imagination)
9. C.S. Lewis Song – Brooke Fraser (Albertine)
10. Clinging to the Cross – Tim Hughes (Holding Nothing Back)
11. Oh to See the Dawn – Stuart Townsend (Mission: Worship)
12. Where we Belong – Hillsong (This is Our God)

*Album of the Month: Heaven and Earth by Phil Wickham