



Lighthouse News

Issue 1, Volume 70
January 2019

THE STORIES YOU'RE CREATING  THE LIVES YOU'RE CHANGING

**"My biggest
problem was
myself."**

Your investment in Mark's life has
given him a vision for his future.

Read **HARD-PRESSED** *page 3*



God Uses the Broken

YOU, too, can say yes to inconvenience

One of the greatest spiritual influences in my life is a custodian, named Oscar, who works for the Fresno First Presbyterian Church. No kidding intended. I think the world of Oscar and greatly benefit from his wisdom.

Oscar lives in the Lowell Neighborhood of Downtown Fresno. Recognizing that many kids in his neighborhood had no safe places to play, he used his property to create Martin Park, a safe site for kids. Each day, afterschool-kids come to his yard to play and receive food, tutoring, and (of most importance) discipleship.

When I met Oscar, what really stood out were the broken windows in his home. Why? His windows are in the direct path of the kids' basketball court; the only place it would fit. You see, Oscar chooses to live with the perpetual inconvenience of cracked glass so that these children will continue to have a safe place to shoot hoops.

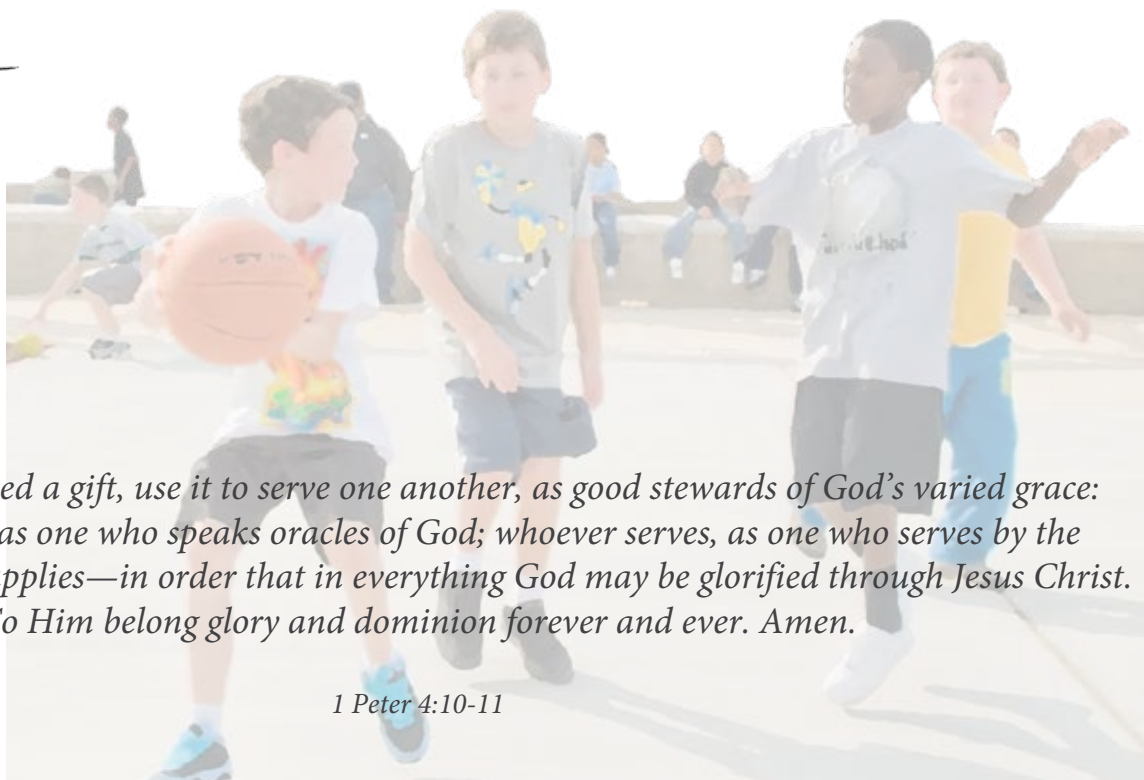
When I think about Oscar's example, I have to ask myself; am I willing to inconvenience myself for the sake of the gospel? What windows in my life am I willing to leave broken so that others might benefit? The gospel is not convenient. It tells us to go into places we would rather not go, to talk to people who might make us uncomfortable, to give when it is easier to keep and to love when it is easier to be apathetic.

As you begin this New Year, I hope God is asking you these same questions. How might the gospel inconvenience your life and possibly make you talk to someone new? Would you be willing to go somewhere unfamiliar? Will you act when it is easier not to act?

Having a house full of perfect windows is nice, but so is having a ten-year-old kid with nowhere else to go choosing to play in your front yard. My life was "inconvenienced" by Oscar. I made sure Oscar no longer had broken windows.

Your friend in Christ,

Matt Dildine
Chief Executive Officer



As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:10-11

For years he lived with jealousy, anger, and confusion raging war in his head. Today, Mark is discovering true freedom and inner peace.

"I grew up in a middle-class, ranch-style home in Fresno County. I have a younger brother who is a Highway Patrolman. My mom and dad both worked hard and provided everything we needed. Though I was an honor roll student with a friendly personality, I was also awkward. I envied people around me who seemed to have what I thought I was missing. It led me down a path I now find hard to understand."

HARD-PRESSED

YOUR INVESTMENT IN MARK'S FUTURE

MARK'S STORY OF GOD'S LOVE FOR HIM began long before we met him. It started with an encounter in 2009; a guest speaker - a gentleman, *also named Mark* - was sharing his testimony of recovery and redemption with a group of men enrolled in a rehab program across town. After listening to details of his personal victory, Mark was encouraged and thought, *"I could do this, too."* Later, after speaking with him one-on-one, Mark was given the name of a church he could visit to get better connected. [Mark didn't go]

In 2016, still struggling with his addiction to alcohol and drugs, Mark attended an introductory meeting at Celebrate Recovery. The CR group was connected to the church he failed to visit in 2009. Through that church Mark met Tony, a well-dressed man who welcomed him at the church entrance. Mark thought, *"This guy is just like me,"* though he knew nothing about him. Later, after a long discussion, Tony told Mark, *"You need to surrender to God."* [Mark didn't surrender]... at the time, Mark also didn't know Tony was a graduate of the Academy program.

A few months later, Mark met Ray at the same church. Ray worked for the FRM Academy. Again, Mark thought, *"He's easy to talk to; down-to-earth."* After speaking one-on-one, Ray gave him his business card, inviting him to take a tour of the Academy program. [Mark didn't call]

Then, a few weeks later, Mark read a Facebook post a friend from Jr. High shared announcing his graduation from the Mission's Academy program. They connected. In their discussion, his friend told him to call Frankie, another friend from their Jr. High days who worked for the Academy program. Mark finally walked through our doors December 7, 2017.

It took EIGHT YEARS, but God finally got Mark's attention.

It's difficult to imagine Mark, as he describes, living as he once lived. Yet, his willingness to be open and transparent is a blessing.

"My biggest problem was myself. I had anger issues. To sum up the damage I caused in 40 years: I sold drugs in high school, joined a street gang for the money, prestige, and protection, and committed countless crimes, including possession of drugs and stolen property, grand theft auto, and four separate domestic violence charges. My aspirations in life were to be known as a hard-core thug whose name was in news headlines."

Thankfully, Mark's aspirations failed. Though his past was certainly peppered with riotous living and pain-filled moments he caused, the public reputation he thought he was building was nothing more than fantasy. *"I was a quiet person. I drank and smoked weed. Most of the arguments I had with the people in my life took place in my mind, without their knowledge. I would secretly hate them for hurting me in some way. The best example I have started with my family. My dad encouraged me and my younger brother to consider attending a private high school to help us achieve our goals, away from the public school system. I thought he was just getting on my case, not wanting me to be happy with my friends and where I was. So, my brother took dad's advice and I didn't. I grew more distant from both of them. For years I blamed them for my unhappy outcomes, jealous of my brother's success. Conversations and arguments I created with them in my head kept me angry. Over the years, I did the same thing with everyone I knew: 'They were the problem.'*

When I would meet Christian men who were, at one time, just like me (yet God had clearly freed them from their addictions and pain), I began wanting what they had, too. It took a long time to have the courage to admit I couldn't achieve what they had achieved on my own. No matter how much money I made and no matter how hard I tried to be a good father and a good man, my weaknesses

Continued...

and the inner turmoil I felt would continue to hurt the people I loved. What I eventually discovered was they hadn't changed their own lives. Jesus had. I heard that truth a lot in prison and in church, but it took years for me to recognize that the reason I was hearing it was because God was speaking through them to get my attention. I finally listened. I'm so glad I did."

Today, Mark is preparing to transition from the Academy program into Aftercare. Because of your prayerful support of our ministries and because of those whose lives were changed through our ministries years before, Mark is now a new man. He loves the Lord, loves his 4-year-old daughter, and is looking forward to taking college courses (though his final pursuits are not yet known). He shared, "I love the people I've met through the Mission and I want to help others like so many people have helped me along the way. People tell me I'm easy to talk to and that I seem to understand their struggles - and I do. To me, it's a gift from God - a desire He placed in me when I first read these words in 2 Corinthians 4..."



Mark, leading the men of the Academy in an early morning devotion before breakfast.

"...we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." 2 Corinthians 4:7-9



December 21st Christmas Luncheon for our homeless guests and neighbors

Cycles for good

You can help fuel the joy in 2019

Many of us have fond memories of Christmas morning; children scurrying about in their pajama's, begging to start unwrapping the mound of presents under the tree. Having those joyful memories, it's often difficult to imagine families who've had none.

Kyrsten is a mom with 3 children. She is currently enrolled in our recovery program through Rescue the Children. She shared, *"I never enjoyed Christmas before. I didn't put up a tree, didn't decorate, and didn't have Christmas dinner. I would take my children to my parents so that they could have gifts and family time. I was usually high, watching them enjoy what I couldn't give them. I hadn't been sober for Christmas for 15 years.*

This year, I will be celebrating 10 months of sobriety. I am excited that I will be able to give my children healthier memories. We will begin to create traditions together, like making ginger bread houses and having playful moments. I will teach them about Jesus' birth and the meaning of God's gift to us. I want them to know the joy of Christmas!"

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Because of your support, the men, women, and children we serve have discovered joys they never knew before. It started with LOVE - the love of a Savior. He poured out His compassion to mankind through His sacrifice and unending love. We, in turn, share His love with everyone we meet - all because of you.

Thank you for the love you shared with those in need during the 2018 holiday season.

*Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!
They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance.*

Psalm 89:15

You can continue to carry these lessons of compassion forward into the New Year:

My Gift of Compassion

Yes, I want to help men, women, and children find added joy in 2019 to end the ongoing cycles that fuel homelessness.

To help, here is my gift of:

\$ _____

To make an easy online gift, logon to:
www.FresnoRM.org



P.O. Box 1422
Fresno, CA 93716-1422
559.268.0839

Make checks payable to the
Fresno **Rescue** Mission.

Your gift is tax deductible, as allowed by law.

Thank you for your support!





Community Partnerships, and YOU!

FEATURING: Abundant Life Ranch – Horse Therapy

Abundant Life Ranch is a non-profit organization using horses to teach important lessons of relational health (e.g., communication, trust, and respect, etc.) The women enrolled in our 18-month recovery program at Rescue the Children attend the ranch twice a month, interacting with horses and learning about boundaries, team work, and managing something bigger than themselves. At the end of each session the day is concluded with a Bible study.

Do you have a ministry that might benefit the people we serve?

The men, women, and children who participate in our Transforming Life Communities benefit greatly from a variety of experiences. If you have an idea you'd like to share, please contact us:

Bud Searcy, Academy Director:
bsearcy@fresnorm.org

Priscilla Robbins, RTC Director:
probbins@fresnorm.org

Mark Your Calendars for 2019!

Volunteer for SPECIAL EVENTS:

... and celebrate as we invite our homeless neighbors in for a special holiday meal!

Easter Luncheon April 19th

Thanksgiving Luncheon November 26th

Christmas Luncheon December 20th

Service teams:

- Decorating the chapel tables with holiday décor
- Assemble plastic ware and napkins in a decorative bundle
- Don an apron to pre-cut pies and cakes for dessert
- Serve meals and drinks to our seated guests during the event
- Kid friendly – ages 8 and up – work alongside their parent or guardian

And don't forget our ...

Annual Fall Celebration Banquet October 15th

Every year we celebrate the accomplishments of our program graduates! Tickets to attend will be available in May!

COMING SOON...

Information about our Spring Event *for women!* Check our website for ticket sales and updates in just a few weeks!

FRESNO RESCUE MISSION, INC.

To mail a gift:

P. O. Box 1422, Fresno CA 93716-1422
Phone: (559) 268-0839
Fax: (559) 268-1317

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES – 263 G Street

FRM THRIFT STORE AND CARS
181 E. Sierra, Fresno CA 93710
(559) 440-0870



Please remember the
Fresno Rescue Mission
in your will or trust.

Need Help?

COMMUNITY CARE – 315 G Street
24-Hour Emergency Services /Case Management
(559) 444-0451

FOOD SERVICES
Dining Area/Kitchen – 285 G Street
Breakfast: 6 AM
Dinner: 5 PM

CHAPEL LOCATION – 239 G Street
Service Times: 7:30 PM Every Evening

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY:

Al Kawasaki – YourRacePhotos.net

Ken Scheid – ScheidImages.smugmug.com
scheidimages@att.net

Scott Streble – Scott Streble Photography
scott@scottstreble.com



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