

Nothing to Give

The envelope simply read, “Homeless”, but it held what could have been all that he had. For this man, that change put into an offering plate could have been his next 16-ounce or his next pack of cigarettes. All he owned may have been nothing to most people but it honored the Father. How can it be that all we have to give, when it seems like we have nothing, is enough? It may be that out of our brokenness there is more to give.

After being around the City of Refuge for a while, I have seen generosity in action. If someone were to ask, “What is one thing you have learned in the past couple of years?” my answer would be, “Giving.” Whatever you are given is not necessarily just for you. God gives to us so we can give freely to others. He uses us, each in different situations in life, to give our time, talent and treasure to others so they may find Him to be the generous giver of life. I have learned to give even when I can’t see an immediate return on my investment. If giving were dependent on immediate results, I would have missed conversations with kids who would have never opened up before. I would never have seen ladies and men, who before had nowhere to call their own, serving others in a kitchen or passing out clothes.

How have I learned about giving? By the actions of others and in countless ways: through Bruce and Rhonda sharing their home, other members of the church opening their homes and workplaces, volunteers giving hours on Saturdays and after work, and the envelopes that hold the only change a person might have.

Do we think we are at the point in our busy schedule, our tight wallet, our small house, and our disappointed heart that there is nothing left to give? That could have been the opinion of the widow who gave all she had, but it wasn’t. She could have held on to her two copper coins with a closed fist and a closed heart. The opinion of the widow was gratefulness, instead of bitterness, for what the Father gave her. How could that be? She was a widow. She was in a scary place in life at that moment when she gave-- a place without security, a place where tomorrow was unsure, a place of pain. Her focus was honoring the Father even with the last in her hand. She chose generosity through her pain, despite her situation.

We may walk by and put nothing into our families or into others because of our busy schedules. Our disappointed heart may dump in the box our refusals to try again. We may let our limitations keep us from even getting near putting our last two coins in the box. We each have our busy schedules, our disappointed hearts, and our limitations but it is our choice as to what we will put in the box. – Laura Carey

Looking Back...

On July 11th Bruce and Rhonda will be celebrating their 7th year at City of Refuge. We have asked some who were here from the beginning and some who have joined the journey to consider the impact of the ministry in their lives.

As new believers we came to the City of Refuge and were greeted with so much love, the true love of God. It was so overwhelming, flowing from every man, woman, boy and girl. This love made us feel like we belong and were safe from the storms of life. My wife and I came from a place of poor self-image, bad choices and substance abuse. Through the City of Refuge we now experience spiritual growth, spiritual maturity, and the presence and power of God in our lives like never before. City of Refuge taught us humility, humbleness, and compassion for all of humanity with a spirit of servitude.

All our love,
George and Deborah Plater

The Bible says God knows what we need before we even ask him and I believe it.

I came to Midtown in November of 2000, one month after I was released from prison. It wasn't long after I came into order under Pastor Bruce that I found my life changed. Bruce soon called and asked me to volunteer by spending the night at the homeless shelter on Bankhead. I have learned so much from the men and women there. From spending time with the homeless, many accepted Christ and started new lives in recovery programs. All I learned during that time prepared me for the walk I walk now. I am blessed to see so many lives being transformed by the true Spirit of God. Almost 4 years later, I thank God for my pastor and what he has done for me. And I now know what the City of Refuge means.

Seven

A past of desperation and brokenness from my hopeless choices led me on a blind journey to the cave, known as the City of Refuge. Without question, the benevolent heart of the Father was demonstrated to me through the actions of Pastor Bruce Deel. I was literally taken in and changed. Commitment to pass on the example shown to me is my daily ambition, which I am steadily running to. The abundant heart that is expressed through the City of Refuge and the leadership of Pastor Bruce is the authentic and unpolluted purpose for us all to pass on. My personal vision is to pass on cave dwelling to my children so they can see the benevolent heart of our Father.

Tammy Queen

The City of Refuge, as a congregation, has opened their arms to me and shown me the true meaning of unconditional love. They spark determination, hope and endurance. They inspire and uplift me to have self-confidence and respect for myself. They provide peace and true protection. For the last three years, I have

been living with Seven and have become involved in the ministry of serving others.

Eric Purdy

When I was in fourth grade, my parents got a divorce and my mom searched for a church to get involved with. She came across Pleasantdale Church of God where Pastor Bruce was youth pastor at the time. They were there to support us emotionally and physically. Pastor Bruce moved to Midtown Church and became pastor. Pastor Bruce asked my mom to be a part of one of the vision for the church, a home for needy children and orphans named Hannah's House. This allowed us to open the opportunity to bring more children by supporting my mom to stay at home full time. Hannah's House has had as many as 70 kids come through the home, and she is adopting four of them.

Come my senior year of High School, I had to make a decision on what exactly I was going to do, knowing the whole time where I was supposed to be. Finally, I made the decision to work with the church during the summer and school year and loved it. Then Pastor Bruce brought me the opportunity to go to the School of Urban Mission that was starting at the church. I knew this was exactly what I was supposed to do. I think it is very important to study the word and be able to relate it to ministry.

I thank Pastor Bruce for being there for me when I was going through the change of my parents divorce, pushing me into a deeper relationship with God, and encouraging me to seek the purpose God has for me.

Tasha Flynn

A year ago June 16th, I turned my life over to God. I was able to do so because the City of Refuge has been my refuge. By doing that, I am able to walk in my purpose. One year ago, I was on the street smoking dope, but today I am cooking for the homeless and taking other guys to recovery programs.

I am able to be a part of the Kingdom because of the teaching of Pastor Bruce and the guidance of Seven. My church family shows me so much love. I have so much peace, joy and love and that gets me through the hard days. You couldn't have told me a year ago that I would be here today. I am grateful and blessed to be working in the Kingdom. So I would like to thank God, Pastor Bruce, Seven and my church family for having faith in me.

Luther Aaron

Describing our experience at the Mission is hard, as all of the words we would use seem to fall short of what we feel. Simply put, the Mission is our home, and those who also call the Mission their home are our family. We work together, laugh and sometimes cry together, succeed and sometimes fail together, worship together. One of us is always standing at the doorway, looking out, ready to welcome those who have finally found their way home.

The Gray Family
Jeff, Elly, Max & Ginger

The City of Refuge has given me a new way of looking at the way I should live. I went to Set Free recovery so I could be set free from my old life. City of Refuge and Set Free gave me time to think and to look at the right way I should live. I now understand that my life is not my own, but God's. I must do His will at all times, I now love myself and always put God first. I understand what it means to be a servant. I understand it costs a lot. I know Jesus is all about love and it is all about Jesus - the one that paid the price. The City of Refuge gave me life in Jesus' name.
Razzie "Big O"

For me, life and ministry is like starting over in something new and yet a continuation of something old. I was originally trained about 30 years ago under Pastor Jack and Pastor Steve Land and founder families of the Midtown Mission Church. But in the past seven years under Pastor Bruce and his family, I have returned to boot camp again for further training in kingdom living. I train with a new set of volunteer soldiers who are being prepared to march into enemy camps and inhabit the Promised Land. Under the leadership of Pastor Bruce, God has expanded the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 beyond the walls of an outpost on 14th Street to a City of Refuge, a 210,000 sq. ft. warehouse on Simpson Street.

We are gaining the benevolent heart of our Father and learning to be the expression of Christ to the last, the lost and the least. We can't see the final outcome or the total grand plan with our eyes but we know that what God says He will accomplish. These past seven years have challenged and changed me. I know the future will be even more so as we go forth together.
Penny Wickey

City of Refuge is a place of kindness where people really care for others. It is a place where you know you are safe and Jesus is on your side. I came from a home that was chaotic, separated and always moving from place to place. Sometimes we didn't have anywhere to stay or anything to eat.

I have been involved in Kid's club and Kid's church and now love being in the youth group. I live with Pastor Trey and his family. I feel safe and know that God has great things in store for my future. Without Jesus, there wouldn't be anything. I will always love City of Refuge.
Oliver Jackson

Weekly Events: Hands to the Plow
Sun: Breakfast on Bankhead 9:30 AM/Service 10:30 AM
Tues/Thurs: Safe Haven 11 AM-2 PM, Feeding Program 5 PM
Tues: Teen Service 7 PM
Wed: Mid-week Service 7 PM
Wed, Fri: Bridge Ministry 6 PM
Sat: Kids Church 8 AM, Ring of Fire 12 PM

Calendar:

July

Summer Camp	1-4
Summer Camp	8-11
Teen Camp	12-16
Day Camp	26-29