

## A Planted Seed



**Brian Gardner waited in the parking lot with yet another gift.** This time,

a PowerPack® — a colorful backpack filled with school supplies. *Gerald will be thrilled*, he thought with a smile.

Throughout the summer Brian had been working with the 11-year-old through a COVID-modified summer day camp offered by Cru® Inner City Chicago.

Brian and a Cru intern waited as Gerald's mom, Christine, pulled into the parking lot of the Agape Center where, in pre-pandemic years, the day camps were hosted. Brian introduced the intern to Gerald and asked the child to share what he learned during the home-based day camp.

"I know that He's the Son of God and I know that He helped create the world and I know that He died for me," the child declared.

Brian, who led his team through a month of chaotic planning to pivot their annual day camps away from the center to comply with pandemic restrictions, was almost giddy. Six weeks after the camp, Gerald still remembered what he learned about Jesus.

"For me that was *it*," Brian said. "When He says some plant, some water, for God brings the increase, I feel like I've planted. We're all doing some watering now and we have to keep praying and trusting God, but He's got it."



Gerald and his mom were one of 30 families served through the modified day camp, presented through weekly day camp kits delivered to their homes.

The kits included daily activity sheets, snacks and a family game such as Connect 4 or Uno. For the lessons, the children linked to a special "Jesus Journey" video series on YouTube, as well as how-to clips for craft projects and workout sessions — all created on the fly. The project illuminated God's hand at work in the chaos, and the creativity He provided our teams to think outside the "in-person camp" box.

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“We’re not going to let it stop the gospel from going forward,” Brian said of the coronavirus. “God can use broken people, broken places, pandemics, racial violence, whatever craziness is going on — and He can still save lives.”

Even now, nearly a year later, Brian still follows up with Christine, Gerald, and his 4-year-old brother,

Chade. While the resources may be an entry point, Brian sees it more like a relationship investment. After receiving an Easter Bag last month, Gerald accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

An investment still being made and bearing fruit today because of the prayers and generous giving of friends like you!

## Hope for the Poor



**Charles Gilbert has more roommates that he can count.**

Under the Dallas I-35 bridge, Charles’ wall-less home, there’s a constant ebb and flow of men and women of all backgrounds — some with no names, some struggling with addiction, all of them bearing the mark of indignity that comes from poverty and homelessness.

Tragically, Charles has even been a sad witness to those driven by despair to escape off the edge of that bridge.

“When people look at me like I’m not a human being it makes me feel like I have no hope,” said Charles, one of several homeless people who share their stories in Cru® Inner City’s powerful Bible study, *OptionsTogether™*. “I only find hope in Jesus Christ and that’s the only way I can find hope, because if I allow people to judge me the way that they’re judging

“I only find hope in Jesus Christ,” says Charles.

me — and let it hurt me — I would be one of those people jumping off the bridge right now.”

Issues of poverty aren’t tied to a calendar. Hunger and homelessness are persistent year-round. They don’t pause for the stifling heat of summer or the chill of wet, winter weather, both of which intensify the loneliness of those without a home or family.

“Don’t judge us,” he said. “Talk to us, find out what we’re like and make your judgment based on what you’ve learned from us.”

To learn more about the free Bible study, visit [optionstogether.org](http://optionstogether.org).

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