



God is a ‘Heart Man’



Pastor Kelly Coleman and her ministry team gathered in a small community park northeast of

downtown Milwaukee. At just 10 in the morning, the thermometer had already soared toward the heavens. Neighbors, seeking a reprieve from the summer heat, gathered around Pastor Coleman’s pop-up ministry table, eager for some of the refreshing lemonade and tasty hot dogs they were serving.

For years, Seek Outreach Ministries has used PowerPacks®, backpacks filled with school supplies

and gospel materials, at its “Prayer and Lemonade” events to witness to families in need.

Before they distributed the PowerPacks, the ministry team spent time getting to know the growing group of children and adults. When it was time for prayer, they gathered everyone into a large circle and talked about moments in their own lives when they felt their need for God. The ministry team

intentionally opened up about their deepest fears and uncertainties before asking anyone attending

“I just felt alone and
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to do the same. For instance, one volunteer shared how she was bullied as a child.

“I knew how to fight but didn’t want to,” she said. “I just felt alone and ashamed and just wanted friends.”

The ministry team’s vulnerability established common ground with everyone in attendance — it opened the doors to people’s hearts!

Soon, three adolescent boys were sharing their fears about being bullied when they returned to school. All three had fathers who were incarcerated. Would they be accepted at school? What would life be like for them as they transitioned from boys to young men? Without their dads, who would help them?

They were not alone. Others kids talked about the challenges they faced, even the death of loved ones, some through violence. By the end of the prayer and ministry time, 31 children and four adults turned their lives over to Jesus!

Tears flowed.

And so did the gratitude, as the ministry partners handed out the PowerPacks with their much-needed school supplies to these newly saved adolescents.

Reflecting on the emotional nature of the day, Pastor Kelly said, “God is a heart man. That’s what He came to change.” With your prayer and support for outreach tools such as PowerPacks, 35 hearts were changed for eternity. Thank You!



Although many children will have to wear a mask this school year, we know they’ll be smiling underneath it when they receive their backpacks full of supplies!



Since the gospel is an integral part of neighborhood outreach, gospel tracts like these are often a part of our relief efforts.



His Perfect Timing

At 87 and widowed, Elaine was eager to serve, joining a team of Cru® Inner City volunteers at Kingdom of God Outreach Ministries, a partner church that was distributing food to families struggling in light of COVID-19. But Jacksonville, Florida's 90-degree heat can be taxing, even for a spry octogenarian. The summer sun was also taking a toll on Roger,* a 10-year-old autistic boy there to help fill food bags.

Roger, an intelligent, but shy homebody, is the neighbor of Cru Inner City Jacksonville's Co-Director Connie Johnson. His mother, the single parent of four, sent Roger to the distribution event to encourage him to interact with others.

And his help was welcome, as Kingdom of God Outreach needed every hand they could get to distribute food to their working-poor neighborhood.

From the start, Roger was reluctant to participate and was not coping well with the heat, so he joined Elaine in seeking shelter indoors.

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Connie, determined to seize every opportunity for a gospel touch point, handed Elaine a gospel tract to share with her young charge. When the co-director returned 15 minutes later, an elated Elaine handed her back the tract, raised her arm in joy and announced that Roger had prayed and received Christ.

A month later, during a children's lesson on the need to connect with fish if you are going to catch them, Roger was asked if he was connected to God.

"Yeah," he said. "I prayed with that lady."

Over the past months, we and our partner churches have been forced to adapt our outreaches to fit the constraints of a global pandemic. But God's perfect timing hasn't changed. Before the planned neighborhood outreach had even begun, the child who was hesitant to leave the comfort of his own house found an eternal home with Jesus Christ.

**name changed to protect privacy*

A Personal Word



Milton Massie
Executive Director/
Steward

Our world has changed dramatically in the last six months. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered our daily lives in ways previously unfathomed. And the high-profile murder of George Floyd has laid bare the prevalence of systemic racism in our country.

As a nation, we're trying to implement new rules and regulations to deal with the reality of the pandemic and the revelation some are now experiencing around long-standing issues of racism. As citizens of faith, we should continue to speak into this process, even when it's imperfect and messy. But as Christians, we must always remember what drives our actions.

In Genesis 1, the Bible says that all people were created in God's image. We are all His creation, and we all bear His mark; Jesus reminds us of this in Matthew 25:31–40 when He says that compassionate actions done for the “least of these” are the same as doing them for Him.

We are called to love others. But that love goes beyond caring for people's basic needs. God wants us all to thrive in every aspect of our lives: spiritually, physically, vocationally, and relationally. In Exodus 3:8, God didn't just pull his people out of slavery, He desired to send them into a land flowing with milk and honey. He wanted them to flourish and experience the fullness of His love.

Whether we're providing food and hygiene supplies in the midst of a pandemic, creating Bible studies that deal with race and poverty, providing Compassionate Products™, such as PowerPacks®, or establishing youth and adult development programs, we do it because we see the image of God in the faces of those in need, and we want to help them thrive in their daily lives. But most importantly, we want to help them connect in a deep relationship with the Father whose image they bear.

Grateful for your partnership,

Milton Lee Massie

Milton Lee Massie

Executive Director/Steward



Dig deeper into your faith

Cru® Inner City's Options Together™ Bible study is available online at optionstogether.org



A Biblical Perspective

As a child in 1960s Mississippi, Cynthia Massie, now a Cru® Inner City staff member, experienced segregation firsthand when she was forced to use colored-only restaurants, waiting rooms, and water coolers. But the cruelty of racism in her life turned violent when the KKK burned down her family's house as an act of vengeance against her stepfather.

"That pain [of racism] defines you, feeling like you don't belong and you're not as good as the next person because of your skin color," Massie said in a video for Cru Inner City's *Options Together*™ Bible study.

Although segregation is no longer legal, systemic racism is still a daily occurrence, though the concept is a new discussion point for many believers. In module four of *Options Together*, we tackle the inextricably linked issues of racism and poverty — and the Christian response — from a biblical perspective.

Racism is not primarily a set of attitudes, it's systems that were built over many generations

Evangelical author and musician Andy Crouch, who contributes his expertise throughout the Bible study, said, "I would love to believe that we don't have to deal with race anymore ... But we have to recognize that racism is not primarily a set of attitudes, it's systems that were built over many generations that treated one group of people as human, and another group of people as not fully human."

Those systems, he cautioned, are steeped in tradition. They "don't just disappear. Even if our attitudes start to change, the systems can still be there."

Options Together is a powerful, biblical tool designed to help believers engage the complexity of poverty in America from a faith-based perspective. Created with small groups and churches in mind, it can also be used for individual study.

To learn more about the Options Together Bible study, or for your complimentary digital access, visit optionstogether.org today.

An Eternal Encounter

When 11-year-old Ian* agreed to help pack up bulk food items for an outreach at our Agape Center in Chicago, he was just being a good, obedient kid. The volunteers noticed what a hard and diligent worker he was.

Later that day, during lunchtime, Eric, a Cru® staff member, noticed Ian sitting alone and struck up a conversation with him. What began as chit-chat turned to eternity, and Eric asked Ian if he knew whether he'd get into heaven if he died that day. Ian wasn't sure.

Eric then shared about God's love for Ian, about how sin separates us from Him, and how the Father sent His Son to die in our place. Ian was fascinated — he listened intently to this brand-new concept.

Soon, Ian was opening up about his life ... and prayed and received salvation right there, at the

lunch table, with Eric's guidance!

Ever since that day, Eric has been discipling Ian, teaching him about the Bible and how to study it — and Ian is loving it! While they've had to meet mostly via phone or video calls in a world of social distancing, their relationship continues to grow in the grace and love of God!

Your support helps make genuine connections like this possible, even in difficult times for our inner cities. Your impact is changing lives now and for

eternity.

Thank you for giving compassionately as He enables you today — your gift, doubled through our *Crisis in the City* Matching Challenge, will point more people, young and old, to Jesus!

**name changed to protect privacy*

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Cru is a charter member of the Evangelical
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Occasionally the names of people featured in this report are changed to protect their privacy.

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