



An Unstoppable Message



Pastor Todd Jarrett and members of his congregation in Chicago's South Side were preparing to decorate

their church with colorful eggs. Their annual children's Easter outreach was coming up and they were excited to share the gospel with all the neighborhood kids and families!

But as the COVID-19 pandemic began its stealthy takeover of entire communities, the church realized its annual outreach tradition of a Resurrection-

themed puppet show and Easter egg hunt would be little more than a 2020 pipe dream.

But that wasn't going to stop them from sharing the hope of Jesus with their community! It was time for Plan B, which meant switching the program away from the church and into a large park nearby.

The congregation had to improvise. They changed out their normal community Easter dinner for boxed meals and socially-distanced fellowship in the fresh

Continued inside...

Continued from front

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spring air. But one thing didn't change — God still touched people's hearts.

As a part of the modified outreach, the church passed out Easter Bags made possible by faithful donors like you. Each bag contained candy, kid-friendly gospel literature, and beaded salvation bracelets that help children remember the story of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Young Victor was as excited as any other child that day to receive an Easter Bag. He and his aunt just happened to be at the park during the outreach. Initially "his interest was piqued," according to Pastor Todd, and that opened the door to interact with them and give Victor a bag full of goodies and the gospel.

Two weeks later, Pastor Todd and several members of his team visited Victor and his family at their home. Evangelism follow-up is part of Cru® Inner City's Easter Bag outreach training and in line with Pastor Todd's approach to ministry. "We don't want this to be one time We're in a community. We want to reach the community," the pastor said.

Victor's grateful father thanked the church

profusely for the Easter outreach, saying his son "talked about it for two days nonstop." All credit, the pastor told the dad, belonged to the heavenly Father.

The pastor's statement struck a nerve with Victor's father, and "he was just convicted to know more, learn more about this God."

So Pastor Todd shared the gospel with father and son as the man's own dad swayed in a nearby rocker. Mostly non-verbal, Victor's grandfather mumbled a bit but otherwise listened.

"By the time we finished, the grandfather nodded his head when we offered the salvation plan," he said. That day three generations of men gave their lives to Jesus Christ!

And Pastor Todd is clear with his intention to continue discipling them. "That's our goal, not just the conversion piece but to continue to see them grow in the love and the likeness of Jesus Christ."

Thanks to committed church partners who were willing to step out in faith, and donors like you who equipped them with key evangelistic tools like Easter Bags, Victor's family has been transformed!

The pastor's statement struck a nerve with Victor's father ...



Last year, many of our church partners were unable to put on traditional outreach events like ones with these children, but they found safe and creative ways to share the hope of Christ using Easter Bags.



A Spark in the Solitude



Margaret was sequestered in her Bakersfield, California home with her six kids, three of them teens.

Even with a houseful, Margaret felt increasingly isolated after relocating to the Central Valley for her husband's job. His unexpected passing several years ago left her far removed from extended family and friends — state-mandated shelter-in-place orders only exacerbated the sense that she was alone and overwhelmed.

Without school or other outside distractions, everyone was going stir crazy, and Margaret was running out of options to keep their minds busy. It got to the point where they started rummaging through old boxes in their house to pass the time.

And that's when Margaret came across something that caught her eye — gospel literature she had received as part of Cru® Inner City's Box of Love® outreach after her husband's death. Originally, the box had contained a full Thanksgiving dinner as well. Her family had eaten the meal, but she had set the pamphlets off to the side, meaning to throw them away.

But God works in mysterious ways. And in the midst of the boredom and isolation, Margaret started looking through the gospel materials with fresh eyes. And the Spirit moved! Not only was

Margaret's heart touched by the message, she started using the downtime to walk her children through the Bible study and a booklet introducing readers to Jesus ... and they all accepted Christ! They even joined a local church.

Eventually her family had to move from California. But before they did, they had one final stop — to visit Lessie Holloway of United Souls for Christ, the Cru® partner that had given Margaret her Box of Love several years ago. She dropped off a financial donation with a note, saying the literature she

received from Cru Inner City had helped her family “see the power of God and what God could do in their lives.”

Lessie was touched by the gift and grateful to hear how God had used the Box of Love, even years later.

“We're a little ministry, but we're great in God,” she said. “We have so many people, and so many lives, that God has allowed us to see the fruit of our labor. There can be no other joy than to introduce somebody to Christ or know that — through what you gave them — they were introduced to Christ.”

Please pray for all the recipients of Boxes of Love this year, that their hearts would be touched by the love of Christ, and they would grow in their newfound faith.

Lessie was touched by the gift.

A Personal Word



Milton Massie
Executive Director/
Steward

Throughout history lighthouses were indispensable tools for sailors, helping them avoid danger and guiding them to their final destination during storms and darkness.

In the same way, we are reminded in the New Testament to keep our eyes “fixed” on Jesus because

He is our light (Hebrews 12; John 8). When we do, God will guide us and use us to accomplish amazing things for His kingdom.

That’s why, at Cru® Inner City, being Christ-centered is our first value.

We are encouraged by the thousands of social agencies that address the physical needs of the poor and marginalized. As believers, however, we are clear that God calls us to minister to both body and spirit; we must address the very real spiritual hunger that only Jesus can fill.

Here are three biblical guideposts that help us stay Christ-centered.

The Great Commission: Matthew 28 reminds us that our primary call is to connect others to a relationship with Jesus. Being Christ-centered means that evangelism and discipleship are integral

to everything we do; we never forget the primacy of the eternal consequences of our work.

The Great Commandment: Matthew, Mark, and Luke make clear that we are called to love God with all that we are and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Jesus emphasizes that there are no greater commandments than these. Being Christ-centered means we must nurture our personal relationships with Jesus. When we do, He is able to guide and empower us as we minister to the mind, body, and spirit of everyone around us.

The Great Concern: Proverbs 29:7 most succinctly encapsulates the biblical mandate of ministering to the poor and marginalized. Being Christ-centered means we follow how Jesus lived out this mandate by placing himself in the position of those who were suffering and by treating each other justly (Matthew 25:31-45).

Ultimately, as we commit ourselves to ministering to the marginalized and discipling believers, the practice of keeping Christ central reminds us to share Jesus, live for Jesus, and glorify Jesus in all that we do.

Grateful for your partnership,

Milton Massie

Executive Director/Steward

Cru Inner City’s Biblical Foundations



Christ-Centered

2 Corinthians 5:14–15



Church-Based

Matthew 16:18



Compassion-Driven

James 2:14–17

Where the Lord Leads



When it comes to telling people about Jesus, Rosa Marti goes wherever the Lord leads, whether it's

at church or in her mobile Sidewalk Sunday School ministry — she's always looking for ways to share God's good news.

For the past 27 years, her ministry has partnered with Cru® Inner City's Boxes of Love® Campaign to reach families for Christ. A Box of Love® — provided by generous donors like you — satisfies body and soul with a full Thanksgiving meal for six people, plus a Bible and gospel literature.

Last year, Rosa partnered with her son's congregation to invite neighbors to a church service that worked in conjunction with their Box of Love distribution. And to her delight, she noticed some new faces in the congregation that Sunday

What happened next was an answer to prayer.

As Rosa was worshipping, she noticed a woman, Tiffani, making her way to the front of the church with tears streaming down her face. Tiffani carried a prayer card to the altar where she set it down and asked God to forgive her sins. She hadn't been to church in a long time and she could feel the need for God in her life.

Rosa barely had time to process what she just witnessed when two others, Carlos and Gloria, came forward, surrendering their lives to Jesus as well.

All three of the newly saved guests had recently felt a desire to go to a church. They had just needed an invitation. The Box of Love outreach not only met their physical needs, it also connected them to a church so they could hear about God's love.

As Rosa shared, "That was wonderful to see because that's what it's all about. We're going fishing for men and women."

Rosa already has Tiffani, Carlos, and Gloria plugged into a new discipleship study so they can grow in the Lord. And she continues to express her gratitude for people like you who provide the resources and training for compassionate outreach events like Boxes of Love. After all, she said, "That's how they got into the church. If it wasn't for that [Box of Love], they would have never heard the message."





Lost and Found



In the blink of an eye, they lost everything.

A broken water pipe wreaked havoc on a Chicago group home for developmentally disabled adults. Their belongings were destroyed — and the damage so extensive, the residents would need to be moved to temporary shelter.

Maya, who works at the home, knew just what to do. She picked up the phone and called her church, in inner-city Chicago. The church responded immediately ... *thanks to friends like you.* Just days earlier, the church had received **Homeless Care Kits** for distribution. Church members visited the suddenly homeless and blessed them with warm blankets — cozy socks for bitter Chicago nights — a

The church responded immediately ...

toothbrush, toothpaste — and most importantly, a clear presentation of the plan of salvation. *The warmth of God's love.*

Many residents were led to faith in Jesus through this simple act of kindness and compassion. “Jesus is my friend,” one of the residents excitedly shared.

Because of friends like you, providing Homeless Care Kits to people in urgent need, many residents who lost everything *gained eternity in Christ.*

Thank you for comforting the downtrodden with the warmth of God's love. Please do it again this winter by giving generously to provide Homeless Care Kits. Thank you!



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