

Word on the Street

Volume I, Issue VII, February 2006 Here's Life Inner City in New York City Matt and Anna Shenk

Here's Life Inner City, Chicken, Eyeglasses, Beanie Babies, Pro Sports Teams and the Gospel

What do all of the above things have in common? Each one was an important part of *Lift Up America*, a special nationwide outreach in November and December. A powerful partnership of athletes, corporate donors and dedicated ministries provided much needed food, eye care and spiritual resources for at-risk children and their families.



Here's Life coordinated the distribution of resources in many of the cities. For instance, in Miami, Here's Life brought together a variety of ministries to receive 35,000 pounds of chicken provided by Tyson Foods, Beanie Baby teddy bears from Ty Toys and booklets with the Christian testimonies of six professional athletes.

Resources were loaded into ministry vans by several Miami Dolphin football players; Christians using their celebrity status to draw attention to the needs of the poor. The players and team owners also journeyed to a LensCrafters store, talking with inner-city kids who were being provided with free eye exams and glasses.

This scene was duplicated with 15 teams across the country including the New York Giants, the Chicago Bulls, the Orlando Magic, the Kansas City Chiefs, and the San Jose Sharks.

Not only did *Lift Up America* provide for immediate needs, but it also made connections for the future. In Minneapolis, a local school eagerly gave a pastor the names of 20 children who were in desperate need of glasses. At LensCrafters, the children were excited to hang out with the Minnesota Vikings players as they waited for their eye exams. There is now an ongoing connection between that church, those children and their local school.

Matt: Who Is Deserving of My Love and My Service?

Something excites me about the picture above. The people who were lovingly giving out the food, eyeglasses and toys were giving without wondering if those receiving deserved it or not. That's how I want to serve and love people ... without thinking if they deserve it or not.

I know that as a sinner, I don't deserve the unconditional love of a holy God (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23). Thankfully, because of Christ's death on the cross, He loves me anyway. What I need you to pray for me about, is that I can love people and serve people without first thinking if they deserve it or not. I'm afraid that my sinful nature will get in the way of that.

Here's my thought process. I think about the 13-year old kid in my neighborhood who has been recruited by a major drug dealer to sell small quantities of marijuana to his friends. My heart goes out

to that kid, and I hope I can help veer him away from the dangerous path he is on. On the flip-side, I think about the big time drug dealers, poisoning our communities, killing kids with stray bullets and ruining people's lives. When I think about them my heart shuts down. I don't WANT to care about them, and I don't WANT to love and serve them, because I don't think they DESERVE it.

If God compared the 13-year old kid selling pot to the 30-year old drug dealer who has shot three people in his life, then He would also have to compare me to other people. If God loved and forgave us based on merit, then I would not be going to heaven (Ephesians 2:8,9). I'm quite sure of that. My fraternity brothers from college could probably tell some unsavory stories to cement that point. God did forgive me though, and He can forgive the big time drug dealers too (1 John 1:9). If He didn't forgive people no matter what the sin, we'd all be in big trouble.

Please pray for me. I'm afraid that there will come times in inner-city ministry when I will come across people that I don't deem deserving of my love and service. I'm afraid I will think, "hmm, that homeless man with his life in shambles is an alcoholic, and he dug his own hole by drinking too much. I would have helped him if I didn't smell liquor on his breath." If I ever think that, it will be a sin. Pray that I would be conscious of how much grace and forgiveness God has given me and that I would be quick not to judge but to extend to others the same grace and forgiveness that has been given to me. Pray that I would be reminded of what Christ said to the crowd about to stone the adulteress in John 8:7, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

Prayer Requests

- *Please continue to pray that we would be introduced to new people who would be willing to hear about our ministry and pray about partnering with us.*
- *Pray that God would continue developing in Anna a more concrete vision for ministry and the specific role that He would have her play.*
- *Pray that God would use this season in our lives to grow us and equip us for the work ahead. Specifically, pray that we would learn greater trust and patience in Him.*

Thanks to all those who responded to our last newsletter's request to introduce us to others. We greatly appreciate your support. Thanks to everyone for your prayers, as they definitely sustain us.

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