

January, 2008

Putting Students Back on the Streets:



Jesse Clere

What would happen if you took hopelessness and changed it? What would happen if you took desperation and infused it with Jesus? You would begin to see drastic, radical change in the lives of people. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. The first and the last, the beginning and the end. He is the Hope Agent, the ultimate transformer.

The majority of the men and women coming through the doors of Teen Challenge are in a state of desperation and hopelessness. Longing for something different, longing for hope, a shot, a second chance. Everyone coming from different backgrounds with different

stories, but with one common denominator: a lack of relationship with Jesus. He steps in and things change - drastically. Suddenly a whole new door is opened. The entire world seems to turn upside down. Healing starts to manifest itself and reality begins.

Garbage that appeared important before suddenly doesn't seem to matter as much. Priorities that were neglected in the past are now at the forefront. Only because Jesus is now part of the equation. Motivations change, passions and desires suddenly become different. The desire for - the draw towards worldly junk is turned around 180 degrees.

Teen Challenge has recently teamed with local evangelist Jesse Clere. Putting our guys back on the streets, but in an entirely different light. Instead of working to find acceptance and a knee-up in the world, instead of being all about self and chasing after false pleasure, the men are giving back to their old communities. They're going out and witnessing, going out and sharing the love that Jesus has so freely given each one of them, on the streets.

Jesse has been evangelizing on the streets in the Des Moines area for a couple years. There he meets people whose stories are similar to the ones we hear at Teen Challenge. We're doing and giving the only thing we have of any real importance, the message of Jesus Christ, God's Son, and what He's done for us. The important part is that it's all about Jesus and what He can do.

By partnering with Jesse, the students now have an opportunity to give, grow, and mature in their faith. It's shocking, the guys are hungry to get the word out. Jesus is alive and coming back for His bride. Opportunities of hope are being released through men who were once hopeless and abandoned. All through a new found relationship. What greater change can you present to someone than the testimony of a life that was once engulfed in all the sin of the world, now standing for righteousness and purity. The wisdom of God to take the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

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SET FREE! – A Testimony of Hope

At 18 I was positioned to be successful and everyone I knew thought it was a done deal. I had it all – I thought nothing could keep me from my self made destiny. Unfortunately it took me some 20 years to finally surrender and admit that my way was the wrong way. There was a plan for my life, I just had to get out of the way and let Him do what He had planned. And what a plan that was.

I started drinking alcohol at 13 years of age and by 20 I was doing drugs too. I learned about Christ when I was younger but I thought I had a better plan. I managed my drug and alcohol use for a few years but then I changed. I was best described as a scoundrel (a mean, wicked and immoral person). I moved to Seattle in '90 after burning all my bridges and I thought things would be totally different. By '97 I was completely lost and I was stealing \$1,000 a week to fuel my drug habit. I was finally caught in '97. I was relieved but totally hopeless. On March 13, 1997 I set out to never wake up again. I wanted to do so many drugs that I would never feel pain again. In the midst of my stupor, I heard an audible voice ask, "Have you had enough?" I said, "Yes." It was then that I knew God finally had me. It was over – I was over. The next few years weren't easy but He was with me every step of the way. He was so good to me after all of the things I did (I didn't know it at the time, but my mom was praying for me those 20 years). Thank God, He answers prayer.

I moved back to Iowa and tried to take over again. I continued using drugs and alcohol and was so hurt

and mad that after all He had done for me, I turned and had done this again. I honestly thought I was crazy. I went to a Christian Psychologist and told him my story and he looked at me and said, "You need to go to Teen Challenge."

In July of 1992 I went to Teen Challenge and I've never left. I completed the program in November '03 and did a one year internship. I graduated in June '05 and knew that God had called me to ministry. I stayed on as a staff member and the work in my life had just begun.

God needed to shake things up. Being a staff member was harder than being a student. He knows what we need before we do. I never married for obvious reasons

and I never thought it could happen to me. I had my chance and I thought I was too old – wrong again. God brought Natalie to Teen Challenge in March '05 as an Administrative Assistant. My heart was stirred and in November '06 we were married. Being 47 years old, I started to think I was too old to have children – maybe He just gave me Natalie. Wrong again. On October '07 we had a little girl named Rachel Susan. Unbelievable! I never thought this could happen to me. I thought I blew it! God is so good and not a day goes by that I don't thank Him. While in Teen Challenge, He gave me what He always wanted me to remember, my three R's. Reliance (total – 100% - no questions) – Relationship (Me first, but you need others in your life) – and Rest (It is finished – there is nothing I can do). What a testimony and it's all pointed to Him!



Brian, Natalie, and Rachel Near

Holiday Greetings!

So [the shepherds] hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” Luke 2:16-19.

I once heard a speaker ask why the elders and angels are gathered around the throne in heaven, and for generation after generation, they praise and worship the Lord. Besides the fact that He’s worthy, the speaker’s conclusion was this: they’re endlessly fascinated with Jesus.

That seems to be Mary’s response to the words spoken about her new baby – she treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. Fascinated not only that the promised Messiah was here, but that she was part of it.

I think that’s the message of Christmas – He’s here, and we’re invited. That’s what happens every day of

the year at Teen Challenge. He’s here, and He asks us to participate. Some of us participate by living and working here, and some participate by praying or contributing time and resources.

However you participated this year, I want to say thank you. Christ is becoming real to them and their families. Have a great holiday season.

Bob Larson
Executive Director



Annual Hog Roast...

Every November we load the bus, layer the clothing, and head east from Colfax to Kalona, IA. That’s the home of Calvin and Ada Yoder, who have been long time friends of Teen Challenge.

For sixteen years, they’ve hosted a hog roast on their property for our staff and students. It’s a unique way to touch base with our friends and treat the students to a day away from the normal routine. The picture below was taken prior to our trip, signed by staff and students, mounted on a plaque and presented to the Yoders.





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Helping People Who Hurt

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Students praying and worshipping together