

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

BUFFALO DREAM CENTER | WINTER 2016

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IT'S NOT FAIR! I WANT TO WALK WITH GOD!

PASTOR ERIC JOHNS

Hebrews chapter eleven speaks about the men and women of the Bible who accomplished incredible tasks and miracles by their faith. In the middle of all of these stories is Hebrews 11:6 which reads, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

Although the people of Hebrews chapter eleven accomplished great acts of faith, their works were products of the relationships that they had with God.

Everything we do for Him should be birthed out of knowing Him.

At the Buffalo Dream Center, we have been on a quest to experience more of God's presence.

Over the years, I have noticed that the North American church knows how to use its faith for healing, finances, and other things. But how many of us use our faith to know Him better? Are we using our faith to take ourselves deeper into His presence?

Matthew 6:33

records Jesus saying, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." It all boils down to what we seek.

One of the greatest enemies to living in God's presence is spending our lives seeking after material things. We need money. We need things. However, the center of our lives should not be seeking after things. We should seek Him.

Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Ask yourself – What do I treasure the most?

Where is my heart? How do I spend my time and money? What do I value? What do I spend time thinking about?

The word "treasure" can actually be defined as "deposit". Here is a great question for yourself – Where am I making daily deposits? These are the things that I consider treasures.

Some husbands treasure their career more than their wives and children. But if you view your family as a treasure, you take the time to make daily deposits into their lives.

I love to study the meanings of words in the Bible. When I looked deeper into the word "treasure" I discovered that it was actually taken from a Greek word which speaks of a person's posture. That word means

to place yourself in a horizontal posture, lay down, bow, sink down, and kneel down.

Many Christians love Jesus and serve Him, but if they were honest, what they daily worship is not Him! They are caught up seeking money, their careers, relationships, and

other things. But God desires for us to know Him more – to be in His presence and have a posture in our lives of seeking Him.

The writer of Hebrews told us that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. This compound word in the Greek means to search out, to investigate, to crave, and to seek after carefully.

Maybe what we are experiencing in churches across America is not what God considers normal. What if God wants us to have more? What if God gave us faith not only for healing, miracles, and city transformation, but also so that we would diligently seek His presence?

Everybody listed in Hebrews chapter eleven did great things for God. These great things came from a relationship they had with God ...continued on page 2

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that went beyond “normal”. Their lives had a posture of seeking God’s presence.

One of my favorite people in Hebrews chapter eleven is Enoch. Hebrews 11:5 says, “By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

Enoch never died! One day God just took Him. He pleased God. We know from verse six that the reason He pleased God was because He had faith.

In the book of Jude it gives us more insight into Enoch, telling us that He prophesied about the second coming of Jesus! How did He get this information? Jesus had not even come the first

time. Enoch lived way back in the book of Genesis.

I believe Enoch was so close to God, and had such an intimate relationship with Him, that God had no choice but to take him. He knew too much! God and Enoch had become very close.

In the Old Testament people lived longer. Adam lived to be 930 years-old. When Enoch was born, his great-great-great-great grandfather Adam was still alive. Like many grandchildren, Enoch liked to go over to his grandfather’s house and hear stories. Imagine Enoch begging Grandpa Adam to tell him the same story over and over – the one about life in the Garden of Eden.

Enoch would have heard his grandfather tell about walking with God. He would have heard about how his grandfather experienced the

presence of God. But every time Adam would end the story by saying something like this – “I messed up. Because of what your grandmother and I did, nobody can have a relationship with God like that anymore.”

Enoch would have been angry. He would have thought, “That’s not fair! I am not the one who sinned! I want to walk with God too.”

By faith, Enoch eventually walked with God like his great-great-great-great grandfather. But He became so close, that God took him. He sought after God with all of his heart.

Like Enoch, I don’t want to settle for “normal”. I want more of Him! It is time for all of us to have a posture of seeking Him and to use our faith to take us to a new level into God’s presence.

YOU CAN GO TO HONDURAS, GUATEMALA, AND INDIA

The Buffalo Dream Center has planned two trips to Honduras and one to Guatemala this year. There is also a trip to India early next year.

The first Honduras trip will take place August 15 through August 22. The team will stay at a mission house in Tegucigalpa. Each day the team will venture out on various missions which will include school outreaches, building a house for a homeless family, village outreaches, church meetings, prison ministry, ministry in hostel for the elderly, hospital ministry and much more. This is the perfect trip for people planning on going to the mission field for the first time.

Two days later, the second team will go to Honduras from August 24 until August 31. This week has limited space and is only for those who can physically handle it. The team will be spending three to four days in the mountains ministering to an unreached group of Indians. In order to travel to that destination everyone will have to ride in four-wheel drive trucks for about eight hours through very rugged terrain. The team will sleep on a cement floor. There will be no electricity, showers, or bathrooms. There will be no heat for the cold nights. The remainder of the trip will be in the city of Tegucigalpa and will include outreaches to villages, schools, and families living in the garbage dumps.

September 27 through October 4, the Buffalo Dream Center will join with House of Refuge Street Ministries in Chiquimulilla, Guatemala. This trip makes it possible for you to be the hands and feet of Jesus as you minister to prostitutes, men with addictions, children, and the Body of Christ. The mission statement of House of Refuge Street Ministries is “Loving the Unloved, Reaching the Unreached”. You will be amazed at the leadership of local missionaries, Steven and Karla Stoffelsen. They have given their lives for the people forgotten by others. The week in Guatemala will change your life forever.

If you plan ahead, you may be able to be a part of the India team in January of 2017. The dates for a trip to the most unreached country of the world are January 7 through January 21, 2017. Your time in India will include traveling to three main cities. In each place the team will conduct school outreaches, village

outreaches, pastor’s training, ministry in the slums, hospital ministry, tribal ministry, church services, and programs in orphanages. Please note that India now has more strict laws with regards to preaching the Gospel. If you go on this trip you are at risk of being questioned and deported which would be at your own expense.

Passports are needed for all of these trips. Your immunizations must be updated. If you would like to work for God on the foreign mission field, begin to make plans now. Please email us at information@buffalodreamcenter.org for an application. The enclosed “Missions Opportunities” flyer provides more information about prices and age requirements.



THE HOMELESS WONDERED – WHAT ABOUT CHRISTMAS EVE?

After all of the wrapping, packing bags, and distribution sites, the year ended with a dinner on Christmas Eve. Eleven years ago, the Buffalo Dream Center joined with Hearts for the Homeless to serve Christmas Eve dinner to the homeless and families in need. The tradition has continued year after year.

When Pastor Eric lived on the streets this year, the main concern from the homeless was the Christmas Eve dinner. The entire community knew that the Buffalo Dream Center had moved from its downtown location to the upper west side. Would there still be a dinner? How would the homeless get to the dinner from downtown?

“Every day I had people ask me,” said Pastor Eric. “In every soup kitchen, when I would strike up a conversation with someone, they would ask about Christmas Eve. It has become something that all of the homeless people look forward to. There are many places to eat in Buffalo for people living on the streets. But we

make Christmas Eve special with good food, music, and even dancing! The people are served by wonderful volunteers. It truly is an exciting event.”

After considering a couple of options, the decision was made to hold the dinner at the Buffalo Dream Center. Two buses were rented to transport the homeless from downtown. The buses made seven stops. Volunteers from the Homeless Alliance of Western New York served as bus aides. Both buses were filled to capacity as people came for the dinner.



Having the dinner at the Buffalo Dream Center also attracted many families from the neighborhood. About three hundred people attended the dinner. Nearly one hundred volunteers helped serve the food.

Lou and Joanne Williams have prepared turkey dinners for this event every year. This time, however, lasagna was served. Turkey is served so much during the holiday season in soup kitchens. This made lasagna a special treat.

Several Muslim families live in the neighborhood surrounding the Buffalo Dream Center. The Muslim families that attended the dinner enjoyed Halal chicken biryani prepared by Masud Qazi, owner of Zaiqa Restaurant.

Although this was the eleventh year for the two organizations to work together on Christmas Eve, it was also an anniversary celebration for Hearts of the Homeless. The ministry actually began feeding people on Christmas Eve twenty-five years ago.

BOXES OF LOVE HELPS MORE THAN 2,000 FAMILIES

For the past seventeen years, the Christmas season has been a special time for the Buffalo Dream Center. Like always, this year began with Pastor Eric’s week on the streets with Buffalo’s homeless. On Monday, November 23rd, Pastor Eric left his home to walk the streets of Buffalo. He stayed on the streets until Saturday, sleeping outside nearly every night, except for one night in which he sat in a chair at a drop-in center for the mentally ill.

This year was different for Pastor Eric and those who joined him during the week. The overpass where the team usually sleeps during the five nights was no longer available. Earlier in the year, the Department of Transportation installed metal bars in

the areas where the homeless live and sleep. This made it impossible to stretch out with a sleeping bag. This has forced many in the homeless community to seek other places for shelter during the night.

During the past year, many homeless

people have migrated from the downtown area to other neighborhoods in Buffalo. One of those neighborhoods is on the upper west side – the area the Buffalo Dream Center now calls the “home”. For three nights Pastor Eric



porch of the Dream Center his resting place. The entire Johns family spent the first night with him. This was the first time Johns children stayed all night with their father.

Michelle Johns led a team of ladies for twenty-four hours. They lived on the streets and stayed the night at a shelter for women and children. The team conducted the evening chapel service and spent time praying with the residents of the shelter.

After the homeless week the work began. Hundreds of volunteers wrapped gifts and packed bags of food. The gift wrapping headquarters was located at Jericho Road Community Health Center. The ministry had a large room which was recently vacated and was available for the large gift wrapping operation. Thousands of gifts were wrapped for children ages seventeen and under.

The food was stored at a separate location on Buffalo's east side. Previous to Boxes of Love, the warehouse was empty. But that changed when Feed the Hungry, an international hunger relief organization from South Bend, Indiana, delivered a semi-truck full of food.

Soon after the food arrived from Feed the Hungry, another load came from the Food Bank of Western New York. The Food Bank also donated three hundred chickens. Local churches and families pitched in by dropping off donations of canned goods too. Youth groups, sports teams, and other organizations signed up to help pack the individual bags of food. Three thousand bags of groceries were assembled at the warehouse!

Many other organizations joined the Boxes of Love team. Dobmeier Lift Trucks donated a forklift for the month of December. This enabled food to be moved around the warehouse and loaded into trucks for distribution much easier. The Buffalo City Mission supplied apple cider, wrapping paper, and hundreds of pies. Volunteers from Buffalo AmeriCorps delivered Boxes of Love to families who were unable to get to a distribution site.

Volunteers at ten distribution sites throughout Buffalo and Niagara Falls successfully put Boxes of Love into the hands of families in need. This was the first year a Boxes of Love distribution site took place at the Buffalo Dream Center. The new facility made it possible to reach more than three hundred families from the neighborhood surrounding the Dream Center. Hundreds of

people walked through the Dream Center for the first time. The church is located in one of the most diverse communities in Buffalo. Refugees from all over the world, including many Muslim families, received a Box of Love. Translators helped with the many languages represented on that day.

With a surplus of food, the Buffalo Dream Center was also able to give two truck-loads of food to other ministries. Beyond the Walls Ministries in Elyria, Ohio and Word and Worship Church in North Braddock, Pennsylvania both received food that was used to help families in their communities.

By the end of December, 2,300 families received Boxes of Love. Boxes of Love brought the church and community together to show the love of Jesus to thousands of people. Every year the event lifts up the city of Buffalo as people are encouraged and helped. Thank you to all of the churches, businesses, families, and individuals

who made Boxes of Love a success!



INNER CITY MISSIONS AND SUMMER INTERN TRAINING

What is inner city ministry really like? How can a church reach hundreds of children every week with the Gospel? How does someone effectively share the love of Jesus with a homeless man, a prostitute, a refugee family, or a gang member?

Many churches and youth groups are choosing to spend a week at the Buffalo Dream Center. These inner city mission trips have been life-changing for many people. Often team members have expressed that they arrived in Buffalo with the expectation of seeing how God could use them to change lives. However, they departed Buffalo realizing that they are the ones who have been changed by God.

During an inner city mission trip teams feed the homeless, take part in children's programs, and reach out to refugee families. The summer is filling up fast. The cost for each team member is \$100 for the week.

This does not include lodging, food, or transportation. If you want to bring a team to Buffalo, please contact the Buffalo Dream Center as soon as possible.

Maybe you are a teenager or young adult who wants to make a difference. Inner City Boot Camp may be the perfect thing for you.



This program is designed for young people who desire to be trained for leadership in the Body of Christ and serve God at a greater level. During the one-month program participants will learn from Pastor Eric and Michelle Johns. They will have hands-on experience leading teams from across America and diving into ministries to children, the homeless, and families living in poverty.

Inner City Boot Camp will take place July 3 – August 3 with an option of attending one week earlier. The cost is \$600 per person. The cost does not include spending money and travel to and from Buffalo.

Please email us at information@buffalodreamcenter.org to get more information or to request specific dates to bring your group to Buffalo. You can also request an application for Inner City Boot Camp at this email address.

THE DOOR OPENS FOR PAKISTAN

Michelle Johns has traveled to Pakistan five times. Her sixth trip was put on hold when there were problems obtaining a visa. Now, the door has opened again. Michelle will be traveling to Pakistan this month.

The schedule for this trip will include outreaches in ten schools, children's festivals that will reach more than twelve thousand children with the Gospel, and training seminars that will equip more than one thousand leaders for children's ministry. Evangelistic meetings and church meetings will also be held. Pastor Asher estimates that more than twenty thousand people will hear the Gospel.

Funds are still needed for this trip. The total cost is about \$20,000. This covers the costs of all of the outreaches, festivals, and seminars. It also includes the cost of transportation. Some of Michelle's meetings will be in the main city of Karachi. However, she will also be traveling into the interior region known as Sindh.

Michelle feels honored to be a part of

what God is doing in Pakistan. The Pakistani churches need us more than ever before! If we can train them to reach the children of Pakistan, it is possible that the entire direction of the nation will be changed.





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PASTOR ERIC AND MICHELLE SHARE THE LOVE OF JESUS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Pastor Eric and Michelle recently returned from a trip to Central America. Their two-week trip began in Guatemala as they worked alongside Steven and Karla Stoffelsen at House of Refuge Street Ministries. Their seven days in Guatemala included outreach on the streets to the homeless, serving a breakfast to prostitutes, and preaching in schools and churches. They also had the opportunity to travel to a different part of Guatemala and hold the first children's outreach ever in that town. More than

two hundred children enjoyed coloring, jumping rope, blowing bubbles, and a soccer game followed by a program filled with songs, games, and a powerful Gospel message. Many gave their lives to Jesus, including adults who attended the program with their children.

After a week in Guatemala, Pastor Eric and Michelle flew to Honduras. The Buffalo Dream Center leads teams to Honduras every year to work with Soyla Radcliff, director of His Harvest Ministries. Soyla and her staff are on the front lines reaching out to the people of Honduras. Pastor Eric and Michelle spent the week preaching in key churches in and near the capital city of Tegucigalpa.

