

Bringing Light to Lost Souls



Christopher News Notes

MANY PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD ARE LOST SOULS, struggling with chaos, depression, illness, or poor choices. These are precisely the people that Jesus made a special effort to reach in His ministry: the tax collectors, the woman at the well, the outcasts. Today, we are still called to bring the light of Christ to those who are suffering and lost. It can happen half a world away or right on our block. If we open our eyes, there are plenty of opportunities to bring light to those who are wandering in the darkness.

A Light to the Homeless

“By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” —Luke 1:78-80

Randi Emmans of Los Angeles, California, has a heart for the homeless, but she took special notice of a man situated outside her apartment building. His name was Pedro Reid, and he always said “Good morning” to her. One night, as Randi went out to walk her dog, she heard Pedro talking to himself. He said, “I’m a human. Look at me. Talk to me, don’t just stare at me. Don’t laugh at me. You’ll see I’m an educated man if you talk to me.”

Randi’s heart broke at hearing how lost and depressed Pedro seemed, so she contacted her boyfriend, John Suazo, to come and talk with him, too. The couple was struck by his kindness, gentleness, and intelligence. They learned he was originally from Charleston, South Carolina, but had moved to Los Angeles, where he fell into a life of drug and alcohol addictions and ended up homeless.

Pedro told Randi and John that he would love to reconnect with his family, who he hadn’t been in touch with in 20 years, so the couple collected as much information from him as he could remember. Though they hit many dead ends, John eventually tracked down Pedro’s uncle, who had been looking for him—and praying for him—every day.

After sharing Pedro’s story on social media, Randi and John collected more than \$6,000, which allowed them to put him up in a hotel for a few nights—and to fly his uncle Pierre and cousin Mia to Los Angeles to get him. Mia told the *Washington Post*, “Randi and John are godsent people. I don’t even have words for the heart they have to stop and speak to him and then find us.”

In August 2020, Pedro finally reunited with his family. He returned to Charleston with them and has now moved to Atlanta, where he enrolled in Georgia State University to pursue a psychology degree in order to become a counselor that helps

Singer/songwriter Sarah Hart went to a coffee shop, but the young man who took her order just couldn’t get it right. He looked flustered, and she felt sorry for him. After engaging him in small talk, he revealed that he felt lost and didn’t know what he wanted out of life.

Recalling the incident on her Facebook page, Sarah told him, “When I was younger, I spent a lot of time trying to kick in doors. It was exhausting. Looking back, the doors I tried to kick in never really opened. Only the ones that God opened for me...seem to have worked out. Maybe don’t try so hard, don’t beat your head against any walls. Just look for the doors that God is opening for you, and walk through them.”

The young man was so appreciative of Sarah’s message and revealed he had just started going to church lately. She concluded, “It was such a lovely moment this morning, looking at that young face, seeing myself reflected back, being able to share a little bit of grace with each other.”

other people who might be in situations similar to what he endured.

During an appearance on *The Kelly Clarkson Show*, Pedro said, “John and Randi saw me as more than what everyone else saw me as: just a homeless person living on the streets. They believed in me, despite the situation they found me in...Diamonds are dug up out of mud...Some of the most beautiful things that this earth cherishes, they come from mud, from dirty soil. I was that diamond in the rough, and John and Randi found me. So hopefully someone else can get that opportunity as well.”

A Light to Refugees

At age 21, Rebecca “Becca” Connelly from Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, was attending St. Louis University, but studying abroad in Spain. When she saw news reports about the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Eastern Europe due to Russia’s war on Ukraine, she felt God calling her to go to Poland to help the Ukrainians fleeing their homeland.

After traveling to Poland with a friend, they rented a car and began driving refugees away from the border towns to hotels, train stations, and relatives’ homes in Krakow. “We were face to face with a lot of suffering, but also a lot of humanity,” Becca told *Parable Magazine*.

That human connection formed the strongest

bonds. Becca remembered children who would smile with joy when she gave them pieces of candy, and parents who would hug her tight in gratitude when they reached the train station. Becca and her friend returned to Poland a second time, helping more than 60 refugees overall. What’s more, Becca gave Christian witness to their plight and let them know they weren’t alone and forgotten. And in bringing light to these lost souls, Becca found more light added to her own life as well.

A Light to the Lonely

Old age can often bring increased isolation. Many senior citizens, when they lose a spouse or infirmity hits, aren’t able to drive to appointments or run errands. That’s where Gerry Munsell of Fowlerville, Michigan, comes in.

Gerry is a retiree who volunteers for Catholic Charities to drive seniors to their doctor’s appointments, the grocery store, or wherever they need to go. More than just an Uber stand-in, Gerry has become a shining light to many of Livingston County Catholic Charities clients.

“I have one lady who requests me all the time,” Gerry recently told *Faith Magazine* of Lansing, Michigan. “We end up going to the grocery store, and then we go to get her lottery tickets...This winter, we were stopping to get corn for the deer,

and then the last thing we would do is stop to get her lunch at one of the fast food places, and then I'd take her home. So that would entail about three to four hours."

One of Gerry's clients moved into an assisted living facility after he had been driving her for two years on similar errands. She no longer needed rides, but their friendship has continued, with Gerry recently stopping by to drop off her favorite cookies. And when this woman's adult son died, Gerry took her to the memorial service, not as an official driver, but "because of the relationship." Gerry is modest about his service, but his wife, Beth, sees the impact: "[That woman] needed a support, and that's Gerry to her."

A Light to Prisoners

Dillon Shaw grew up in Cedar Springs, Michigan, as one of nine siblings. His early life was characterized by violence and abuse in his family, and his later childhood by poverty and erratic physical discipline. "That darkness took very deep root in my heart, and I started to perpetuate the brokenness that I was experiencing, that was being pushed upon me," he explained to *Prison Fellowship*. "I started pushing it back out at people. I became a very violent individual."

At age 21, Shaw and a friend committed a string of armed robberies, one of which ended in a shootout with police. He was arrested and sentenced to 13-to-47 years in prison. Though all

seemed hopeless, he soon met another prisoner named Matt, who introduced him to prayer and the Bible. Over time, Shaw's heart began to soften.

Though Matt was suddenly moved out one day, he had his wife send Shaw a Bible, inscribed with Shaw's name and a personal note. Shaw was floored, explaining, "I grew up my entire life being treated like I was worthless. For decades, I fought to try to feel valuable. This man treated me like I was worth something, and it just broke me. I wanted to know the God behind these people."

One day, Shaw heard about a Prison Fellowship Academy and the chance to go to a faith-based dormitory in the Michigan prison system to take part in the Urban Ministry Institute, an intensive program of study and scholarship meant to form leaders who could return to their prisons with a solid foundation of Christian teaching.

Shaw was accepted into the program, and thanks to his training, he was able to lead other prisoners through small group studies on manhood and parenting. He also ministered to people trapped in addiction and even led some to Christ. "We were able to sow seeds into the lives of the men in that prison regularly, and it carried a certain measure of credibility because we were one of them," Shaw said.

Just as someone brought the light into his life, Shaw brought it to others in darkness—and he continues to bring it to the world. Today, he is married, out of prison, and serves as director of adult ministry at Christ Church in Muskegon, Michigan, where his experiences and faith journey inspire people to believe in the power of the Gospel message.

Each of us has the power to bring some light to a lost soul. How can you be that light today?


**"It's better to light one candle
than to curse the darkness."**

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*"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled
by a spark from another person. Each of us has
cause to think with deep gratitude of those who
have lighted the flame within us."*

—Albert Schweitzer