

Slowed By A Load by Adam Hofer

A simple thing as a container of grease can open our eyes. A bold, middle-aged man once walked into the Center of Hope Bike Ministry rolling with him his black Kent bicycle, which like him saw better days. Yet, the bicycle was well-loved by this man because it was all that he had. In our initial conversation, I learned he biked to Sioux Falls from New York City and had been living on the streets for quite some time. He did not desire to live as most. Rather, he was perfectly content at that time to be a homeless traveler enjoying life on his bicycle. After a summer working with him on his bicycle and enjoying conversations about Jesus and life, he told me that he was going to start biking south to escape the winter months. He gave me a small container of grease to use on the bicycles we restore for guests. "Why give me this grease?" I asked, "You may need the grease in your travels." He replied, "The weight of the grease would slow me down." His response made me pause, and Paul's words in Philippians 3:13-14 rang true in my heart: **Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.** Often, the loads we carry, regardless of how small the load might be, slow our momentum in our pursuit of Christ.

Earlier in Philippians 3, Paul wrote that he counted everything as a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus (3:8). Everything else was dung to him. To describe his pursuit of Jesus, he

spoke in a language that the Philippians would have understood. He spoke as if he was a runner "straining" forward to win the prize, which was to know Jesus fully. The Philippians were quite familiar with the Olympian games. Hundreds of thousands of people every four years came together to



watch the best of the best compete against one another. The most anticipated event was the running race, which was one of the first events of the games. The name of the whole Olympics that year would be the name of the victor of that race. And Paul uses this language to describe the significance of knowing Christ!

As nonprofit pastors who meet with our guests one-on-one every day through our pastoral counseling program, we have found that one of the reasons why many of our guests struggle with a variety of forms of

poverty is that they carry with them a load they were not meant to carry. Maybe a death in the family led them to addiction on the streets. Maybe a trauma from their youth continually haunts them, crippling them in their adult lives. Maybe the shame and guilt of being an absent parent led them into isolation. Our hearts break for our brothers and sisters who feel trapped and hopeless because of the heavy loads they have accumulated over the years. Yet, we remind them that their identity is not in the brokenness of their pasts. Rather, their identity is ahead of them in Jesus! With Christ, reconciliation can happen! With Christ, healing will happen! With Christ, the loads we carry don't feel as heavy because you recognize that He hung on the cross with those loads heavy on His heart. When we recognize that reality, we can strain forward with intensity to Jesus for He and He alone paid it all for us to live life, not in our brokenness, but in Him.

Forgetting what lies behind means that every day is a fresh start. It means that we must focus on our present walk with Christ and not look back at our past brokenness. The pains of the past are no match to the fulfilling future you will have with Jesus.

Questions to consider: **How badly do you want to know Jesus? Are you "straining" forward in your pursuit of Jesus or are you always looking back at your past? What is slowing you down in your pursuit of Jesus? Are you keeping your eyes on the prize?**

Exciting Changes at the Center of Hope:

1. Expanded our open hours!! We are now open Monday-Friday 9am-5pm.
2. Expanded the clothing options we offer in our Care Center to include more seasonal clothing items.
3. Increased services for those transitioning out of prison (e.g. increase clothing provisions for free clothing, resource backpacks, comprehensive felony-friendly landlord and employment lists, etc.)
4. Expanded our Mercy Ministry program to better provide free clothing for households in crisis and people transitioning out of prison.
5. Started an Interview Clothing program to provide professional clothing items for those facing unemployment to better their chances of obtaining employment.
6. Hired Brian Narcomey back to be our Outreach Coordinator/Pastor to become even more radical in our approach to share the Gospel in Sioux Falls and beyond!
7. Started a weekly Bible Study at Bishop Dudley Hospitality House. Pastor Brian will be leading the study, which will revolve around recovery and God's Word. In addition, Pastor Brian will have office space at the shelter following the bible study to meet with our brothers and sisters on the streets one-on-one to talk through their emotions, spiritual walk, recovery, and more!



Annual Breakfast Fundraiser—You are Invited! Saturday, June 15— 8:00am-11:00am— First Christian Reformed Church

Start your Father's Day weekend with pancakes at
First Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota
(2901 E 26th Street)! You are invited to our 3rd annual Breakfast
Fundraiser! All proceeds will benefit Center of Hope ministries,

which includes the Center of Hope Free Evening Clinic, Geared-To-Empower Bike Ministry, Free Pastoral Counseling, Earn-Your-Way program, Clothing Ministry, and MORE! Our Breakfast Fundraiser will consist of a FREEWILL DONATION pancake breakfast, silent auction (in-person and online), door prizes, and inflatables for children. We would love to see you there!

Want to pray for our guests? Receive weekly prayer request emails by contacting Adam Hofer via email at adam@centerofhopesf.org!

Mission:

The Center of Hope exists to walk alongside people, to bring spiritual and physical health, and ultimately to change the community one life at a time.

Vision:

The Center of Hope encourages and mentors people with the hope of redemption through Jesus Christ. Our focus is holistically addressing physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of individual that can only come through creating relationship and accountability. We work in partnership with community organizations to engage in a consistent and positive interaction with guests.

Principles:

1. All people are created in God's image.
2. Self sufficiency
3. Holistic Ministry
4. Reconciliation
5. Partnering to Serve

MEMORIAL GIFTS

Center of Hope appreciates the gifts In Memory of — Lillian Meints, Ferdinand Tilstra, Marian Phelps (Brett Rockvam's mother), Warren Lee Post, Dennis Ihnen, and Marlene Sinning.

Your Gifts Change Lives:

Stock or Commodity Gifts—Talk to your financial advisor about gifting stocks and commodities to the Center of Hope.

Make it Double—Check with your employer to see if they will match your charitable contributions to the Center of Hope.

Be a Sustainer of Hope—A monthly gift will bring stability to individuals and families. Give online at: www.centerofhopesf.org

Financial Update

Fiscal year runs from April to March, for the year 2024-25

April—To Date. Income
\$52,942.14

2023-24 Budget Need
\$407,488.04

Help us save on postage by receiving your newsletter electronically! Send your email address to info@centerofhopesf.org Also, please let us know if we need to update your mailing address.