



STEWARDSHIP

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Be a Witness

by Jeremy Hoffpauir

His name is Tom. Tom is an alcoholic. As a direct result of his addiction, Tom was involved in an auto accident that killed his fiancé. Ravaged by his disease, he has been hit by vehicles on three different occasions after stumbling into traffic, resulting in numerous surgeries. Because of injuries sustained in these accidents, Tom is confined to a wheelchair. He is a broken man – physically, mentally and spiritually. He hates what alcoholism has done to him and he can't forgive himself for the pain he has inflicted on others because of his disease.

I met Tom earlier this year on an urban mission trip. We encountered him outside his home, a small white building with chipped siding and broken sidewalk. It was there, sitting in his wheelchair, a hint of alcohol scent lingering in his clothing, that he told us his story.

For the first time in my life, I witnessed total brokenness. Never before had I met a person so consumed by doubt and regret, hopeless to ever break out of his addiction and the pain it has caused him and his loved ones. Tom had given up.

As we prayed for Tom, I was struck by the realization that Tom's situation is not unique. Hopelessness and regret are not Tom's burdens alone. Tom is the young woman who discovered she has a debilitating disease that makes even the simplest tasks seem

monumental and life-altering. Tom is the father who lost his family because of bad choices in his life. Tom is the child who is bullied because of where he lives and the clothes he wears to school. Tom is the grandmother alone in a nursing home with no one to visit her and remind her she is loved. Tom is the refugee, fleeing the world he knows and watching his friends and family suffer and die around him.

We are Tom.

It's one thing to sort clothes at a shelter or pack boxes of food at the food bank. It's another to meet the person your efforts are helping, to get to know them, hear their story and feel their pain. It brings a new sense of purpose to your life and you truly come to understand what Jesus' ministry was all about.

When asked to name my favorite Bible verse, I usually go to Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." I love this verse because it tells us to be God's witnesses in our hometown, in the areas where we live, and even the entire world. After meeting Tom and many others over the weekend, I wondered, who is their witness? It's me. It's you. It's your church. It's the countless volunteers who keep the shelters and food banks open. It's the generous people who give money and supplies to these organizations, allowing them to reach those in need. It's the missionaries who meet the needs of the people around them while sharing the love of Jesus Christ.

How can you be a witness? How can you encourage your congregation to serve?

Volunteering. How does an organization that provides food, clothing and shelter to more than 2,000 people every day operate with only five full-time employees? It is because of the countless people who are willing to give up some of their time to make a difference. Shelters and food banks aren't the only places that need volunteers. Encourage your congregation to volunteer at church. Encourage them to help the sick neighbor who can't mow his lawn, to visit the woman in the nursing home who is alone and just needs someone to talk to. Most of all, model this servant attitude and encourage your church to come alongside you.

Giving. It's not easy to give away our hard-earned cash, but most of us can find some way to donate a little extra out of our paychecks. Teach your flock to support an organization they believe in: your church, the [World Evangelism Fund](#), a local charity or Nazarene Compassionate Ministry Center ([Click here](#) to search for a Nazarene Compassionate Ministry Center in your area). But teach them to give.

Praying. God cares about every person on this planet. Encourage your church to pray for others. Pray for those in need. Pray for those who are giving of themselves on a daily basis to serve others. Pray for the rich, the poor, the hungry, the educated, the addicts, neighbors and leaders. Ask your congregation to sign up to receive [NMI Prayer Mobilization Line e-mails](#) and pray for missionaries. Prayer is a vital component of a generous spirit.

Most of all, don't let your church become complacent. Teach them to help the hungry man leaning against the gas station wall instead of avoiding him. Teach them to encourage the stressed-out mother in the grocery store struggling to control her screaming kids instead of complaining about her. Remember, like Tom, we are all God's creations and we are loved. In Acts 1:8, God doesn't just call us to *be*. He calls us to *go*.

Model what it means to be a witness. Encourage your church to go and make a difference.



2016 Thank Offering Materials Available for Download

The 2016 Thank Offering for the World Evangelism Fund is quickly approaching. **All From Him** is the theme for this year's offering. There are a number of free resources available for use in promoting this year's offering:

- ▶ Planning guide
- ▶ Sample sermon
- ▶ Children and youth resources
- ▶ Bulletin inserts, bookmarks and posters
- ▶ PowerPoint slides
- ▶ "All From Him" logos
- ▶ Personal stories of gratitude and generosity
- ▶ "All From Him" video (will be available in September)
- ▶ And more

[Click here](#) to visit the official Thank Offering web page and download your free materials.



Missionary Profile: Enoch Tee

In this interview, Enoch talks about how God prepared him to serve as a missionary in the Asia-Pacific Region and what he is doing to reach others for Christ. [Click here](#) to read more.



Drops of Mercy

In Sierra Leone, water is something that is never taken for granted. Local Nazarene churches are responding by working with communities to establish water, sanitation and hygiene initiatives. [Click here](#) to read more.