

REAL CHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSION

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DECEMBER 2023



LEARN CONNECT



"Without this place, I'd probably be dead."
– Jonathan

Saving Grace

Before coming to the Mission, Jonathan felt trapped and hopeless.

"My life was controlled by idols, or alcohol and drugs," he says.

His addiction started early – when he was only 13. While he didn't want to blame anyone, we all know that family origin can be a part of it, especially with someone so young.

For 20 years, Jonathan lived a life he hated. His relationship with his family was strained at best.

"Everything was broken, all my bridges were burned, and no one wanted to be around me," he remembers. *"I'd be able to hold down a job for a month or two, but I always self-sabotaged."*

Wanting to get clean wasn't Jonathan's problem.

The Missing Piece

"I had gone through other programs like two or three times, 30-day programs. I had done six-month outpatient programs through the county..."

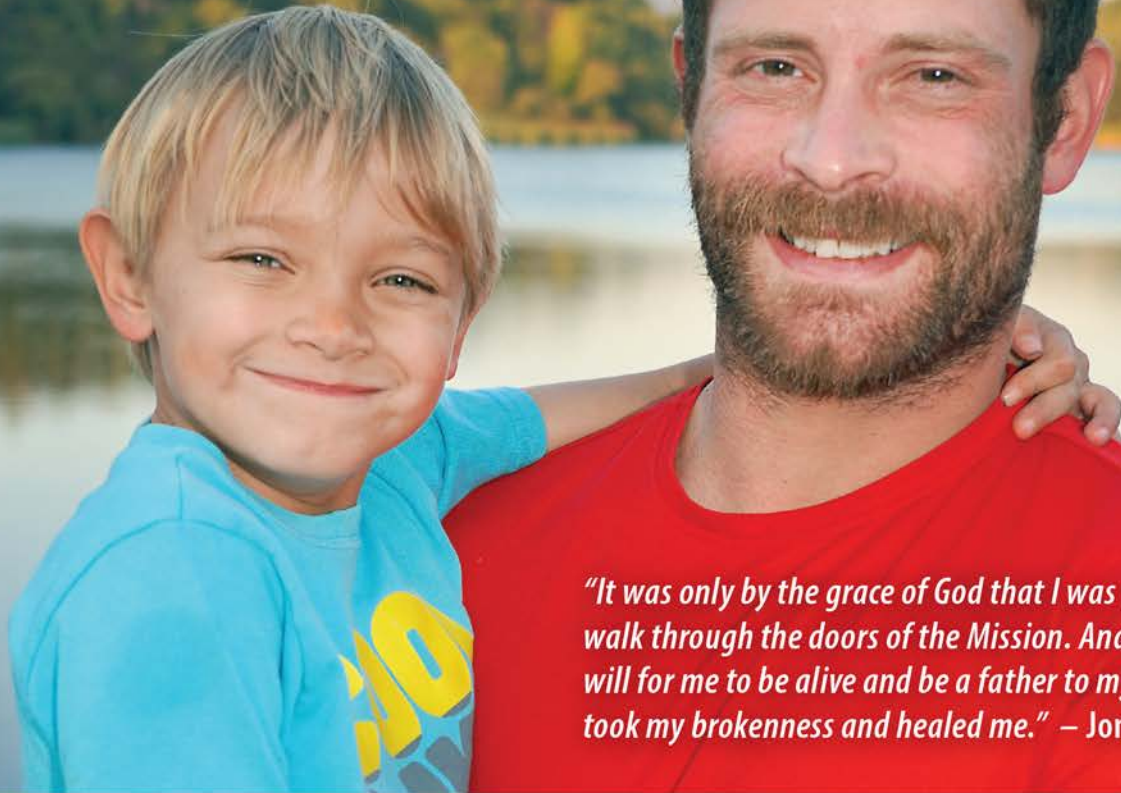
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Get involved at rmission.org/joy

Saving Grace

(Continued from cover)



"It was only by the grace of God that I was able to walk through the doors of the Mission. And it was His will for me to be alive and be a father to my son. They took my brokenness and healed me." – Jonathan

... I knew that my disease needed something more, something different, and I found it at the Redwood Gospel Mission."

You already know what that difference is.

"It's God, it's Jesus. Accepting Jesus as my Lord and Savior," Jonathan says.

At first, Jonathan was just glad he wasn't on the streets anymore.

"I was at a point in my life where I was just grateful to have something to eat," he says.

But as Jesus captured his heart, his gratitude grew and all the people who had been avoiding him now wanted to be part of his life.

A Broken Family Restored

"I've restored all my relationships, and the number one that I needed to restore was my relationship with God.

And then all the other ones just fell into place, and especially with my son."

In fact, Jonathan's son, Jacob, who is 5½, got to spend Christmas with his dad last year! And this year, Jonathan has full custody. The two of them recently moved into an apartment.

"He's got his dad showing up for him. He's got his dad right there in his corner...that's who I've been fighting for. Not just myself, but for my son."

The relationship with Jonathan's son isn't the only one that's been restored.

"I have great relationships with my mom and my dad and my two younger brothers," he says.

This Christmas, Jonathan is looking forward to celebrating with family. He knows that wouldn't be possible without Jesus Christ, the Mission and friends like you.

Each \$30.03 you give this Christmas can help someone else experience new life!



Jeff Gilman
Executive Director

It's Beautiful and Complicated

No matter who you are or what your life looks like, the holidays bring up one thing: Family.

And family is complicated, isn't it? It can be the biggest blessing in the world, or one of the biggest challenges. Even those of us who have been blessed with amazing parents carry the weight of brokenness because no one in this world is perfect. We all need a savior. And that savior is who we get to celebrate at Christmas.

It is only in Him that lives can be made new and families like Jonathan's can be restored. Your prayers, partnership and gifts make that possible.

Jonathan spent two decades estranged from his family and six years on the streets. If it weren't for friends like you, that's probably where he'd still be – or more likely, dead.

But instead, he gets to have a relationship with his family. He gets to celebrate Christmas with them, and he gets to be a dad to his son.

It's stories like his that can bring me to tears because the restoration of family – as complicated as it is – is one of the most beautiful things we get to see. And together, we can give that same type of healing to others right here in our community.

I can't wait to see how God uses you this Christmas!

More Ways to Share God's Love

Become a Coach

One of the biggest keys to lasting transformation like Jonathan's is relationship. Of course, relationship with Jesus Christ, but also relationship with other Christians.

Jeff is one of those people. He's volunteered at the Mission in numerous ways for the past 10 years, including as Jonathan's coach.

Jonathan says, "Jeff walked me through the program and was there as a great male role model for me."

But Jonathan isn't the only one who got something out of it – Jeff did, too.

"It feeds me to see changes and see miracles... These are real miracles that happen when these guys can change their lives and move forward and back out into society and be productive," he says.

Jeff continues to serve as a coach as well as with our Nomadic Shelter and our comfort ministries. Helping to wash feet at our Christmas Feast is one of his favorite ways to serve.

If you're interested in becoming a coach or volunteering in any other area, we'd love to have you! You'll love the difference it makes for those you serve and in your life.

"Go for it," Jonathan says. *"Because your story may just save someone's life. It's a beautiful thing."*

To get find out more about volunteering or to sign up, contact Tina Karns at 707.578.1830 x 314 or tkarns@srmission.org

"God gives you His love not to hold onto it, but to share it. And the only way God's love grows is if you give it away and share it." – Jeff

Is God calling you to volunteer and share your life?

Blessing Bags



Another great way to share God's love is by giving out Blessing Bags!

Here's What to Do:

Take a granola bar, a bottle of water and the Real Change Certificate that you can download from srmission.org/resources and put them into a bag.

The next time you encounter a homeless person, give them the bag and tell them there's a hot meal waiting for them at the Mission. The certificate has a map on it to help them get here, and once they are here, we can help feed them and start building a relationship and find out which of our services will help them the most.



Redwood Gospel Coffee: The Perfect Christmas Cup

Here are three reasons why our coffee makes the perfect Christmas cup – and gift.

- 1. Rich Flavor.** This is some of the best, freshly roasted artisan coffee around.
- 2. Job Training.** All our coffee is roasted as part of the Mission's Coffee Certification Program. This program provides men and women in recovery with the critical skills and confidence they need to enter the work world again.
- 3. Healthy Trade.** With our coffee, you'll know farmers in the developing world are blessed by the good prices we pay and the relationships we develop with them.

Go to: RedwoodGospelCoffee.com to get started. Our website makes it easy to order or get a monthly subscription. You can also get extra bags for the coffee lovers in your life. It makes a great gift and a big difference.





Change a Life this Christmas!

As a 100% donor-funded ministry, it's only your gifts that make helping our poor and needy neighbors possible.

"You give in a way that saves," Jonathan says. "It saves lives."

He's right. Not only do your gifts save lives, but they also change lives because people meet Jesus. *"God is my saving grace,"* Jonathan says.

Each \$30.03 you give can help someone else experience God's transforming love through meals, shelter and essential care.

But don't be surprised if your gift does more than change one life.

Just like Jonathan's story shows, when you change one life, you can change an entire family and by changing a family, you help change the community!

To help in time for Christmas, please respond by Dec. 22nd!

Any amount you can give will make a difference!

You can also give securely online at: srmission.org/joy



Leave a Legacy of Love

If you're looking for another way to continue sharing God's love this Christmas season, consider naming Redwood Gospel Mission in your will or estate plan. When you do, you'll know that you are giving the gift of new life not only today, but into the future.



For more information on legacy giving, contact Jeff Gilman at 707.578.1830.



REAL CHANGE
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