



I Don't Trust You !

Cross-eyed and talking to someone who isn't there . . . How do you tell a story about a person whose name you do not even know, yet the encounter has been a revealing one of continued transformation and improvement?



Let's go back to the beginning. JC's Place Ministries might have officially been on the road a month, in Aug 2021. We

crossed paths on the way along the dirt track that leads into what was known as Niagara's tent city--a scattering of about 6-8 persons living in the bush and surrounding area that the previous year had held 30-40 unsheltered residents. I asked her if she would like a sandwich, and her answer was immediately "Yes". I told her I had to go back to the van to retrieve an extra lunch.

"Would you like to wait here and I will bring it to you, or you can follow me to the van and I will fetch the lunch for you"?

It was then that I noticed that everything was not alright. Her eyes were strange, one tracking off to the right and one tracking to the left. In slurred speech, she said, "I don't trust you"!, and she began walking towards downtown Niagara Falls.

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Sometimes on the streets we are able to aid some with finding more affordable accommodations, or maybe just a helping hand with how to deal with the small amount of finances that do come their way. By chatting, prayer, and with some encouraging words, some are able to turn things around as they attempt to do better with the lives they have. Occasionally after working with these precious souls, all they have to give in return is a cherry smile, a hug, or a solid handshake. Some accept books to read and we hope that by reading they will learn to trust in a bigger power and not to rely only on themselves, and of course when we meet on the streets again they have stories to tell of their failures and success, but just in the telling there is strength gained for the next week.

There are times that our little successes seem to end in failure. Some we are able to reconnect with family or 2 persons can afford housing together. However often times we find that after a few weeks they are back on the streets again with the same issues as before. They need Jesus to change their lives before any real change can take place.

Dear Friend, it is hard for us, working on the streets, to find success followed by failure, but we must not give up hope. That is the only thing that keeps some of these folks going from day to day. Otherwise, suicide or drug overdoses are simple ways to end the misery. There are some on the streets that we have not seen for weeks and one wonders what has happened. Drugs, hospitalization, robbery, abuse, pregnancy, sickness or, worst of all, is the fact of losing hope.

On a lighter note, a phone call was received from a gentleman who had two friends wanting to start a ministry for the homeless. Why reinvent the wheel or duplicate services, and he recommended JC's Place Ministries as an organization who had already set up the infrastructure, who needed more volunteers and donations to support what is already being done to work with the homeless of Niagara Falls.

On a second lighter note our church potluck had extra food left over from lunch and so 24 meals and soup, even including desert were packaged up for delivery on Saturday (an off day for the ministry) and in a short hour and two stops all the food was eagerly accepted by those in need. Our volunteers stated "we felt bad that we did not have more so that there was food for everyone, we ran out so very quickly. Our homeless folks were surprized and overjoyed with appreciation to receive the extra meal on this day.

My wife Pam tells me that I have a lot of patience and perseverance, personally I ask the Lord for more, for working with the homeless, but what a joy to see the difference personal one-on-one talking, studying and understanding can make in a life that is slowly making the effort to change for the better. This process is not like flipping a light switch; there are no instant fixes. It takes time and patience to work with individuals who are almost down and out, but to see the small changes as they take place makes all the resolve expended worth every ounce of effort. Here is a simple story to understand, in working with this one person, he was asked to memorize the 10 commandments, not so easy a task even for those of us who have been in the church for a long period of time. Imagine the shock received when the next day he called to recite them, in his own paraphrasing but still the meaning unharmed, and sincerity and joy plainly evident as he begins a new journey.

Because of confidential matters, it is not always easy nor available for all ears to hear, but the stories above did happen and are true, some paraphrased to protect those involved, and more stories I wish I could tell you but I can't. In the long term of things, patience and perseverance are necessary items to be in this business, but most of all needed are your prayers and donations of support. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you everyone for your support and prayers.

~ John

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The next time we met was at her friend's campsite. Her friend engaged me in a pointed discussion: Will your church baptise a baby without the parents becoming members of the church? Wow! How do you compose an answer on the spot with the correct words. First, I told her our church does not believe in infant baptism as the child doesn't know what it's all about. However, we do dedicate both the baby and the parents, and no, you do not have to be a member of the church. We could do the dedication there on location, or she could come to the church and enjoy some fellowship. Comments from the friend were great. "I don't believe in infant baptism either, so a dedication would be terrific, and at the church would be fine. I don't know where the father is but I will come with the baby."

To shorten this story: All was fine with the Pastor and our position. However, the next week, on visiting the friend, it was a sad story of a person so stoned on drugs that she could not carry on a conversation. Then we lost track of her, possibly to an opioid drug overdose or something else; she has not been seen since. We hope the child is at least with grandparents.

Back to our original girl: We found her in a drug-induced state of an altered mind. Her eyes were still not coordinated and the stare was distant and unseeing, and she was talking to someone else, though no one else was present. Fast forward a few weeks. We were preparing to fly another unsheltered lady to Thunder Bay to join her daughter to await the arrival of a grand daughter, and our "I don't trust you" girl was present again. Her status had not changed but she did accept a lunch bag from us on this occasion, so we were making progress. Over the next few months, we encounter her on some street corners with others and at the Niagara Public Library which has become a major stopping point for meeting the unsheltered. She has come to the van in various states of mind, asking for shirts and pants and other items.

During the last part of July, John was able to make contact with A.J., our liaison with the Regional authority, who suggested we stop in at a new motel location and see if we can be of service there. And for the last few weeks we have been helping with clothing and food anywhere from 7-17 persons.

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Thanks for donating to help pay for our newest vehicle!

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On the 14th of August it was my turn to drive the cube van again but it was in for repairs from the hail storm damaged it suffered almost a year ago, so we were using the smaller passenger van equipped with coolers and frozen water bottles for cooling. After pulling into the new location and serving most of the first-floor residents, our "I don't TRUST you" lady showed up. Her eyes were coordinated, her mind was clear. She was cleanly dressed and had a friendly smile.

"Could I have a lunch and small halter top or T-shirt?" she asked. Wow, what a change! So yes, it can and does happen. At this location there are rules to be followed and rent to be paid, and yes, there are rules about drug use. We hope this a change for the good, one that will keep herself on the right road. Unfortunately, I did not have the clothes to give to her but asked her to ask the staff on the large van for the goods she needs.

Miracles still happen and to leave the drug scene is a difficult process, sometimes taking years. At our next meeting I hope to introduce myself and see if I can get her first name. Please, pray that I will succeed in building the relationship and that she will respond positively. Update on October 9th: We met again and had a short conversation. Guess what?! I did finally learn her name, and yes, she is making some wonderful progress, and my assistant (who knows her personally) and I encouraged her to continue.

NEEDED

Winter Coats & Gloves

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- 2. Mail . . . JC's Place 2408 Smithville Road Smithville L0R 2A0**
- 3. Phone . . . 905-975-6394 or 365-880-7229**



JC's Place Ministries

a mobile ministry of the Niagara Falls Seventh-day Adventist Church

5355 Belmont Ave., Niagara Falls ON L2H 3H6

www.JCsPlace.org

Carl: 905-975-6394

donate@JCsPlace.org

John: 365-880-0818