

Jimmy Brazell Community Impact Scholarship Award

2016 Essay submission written by Josiah Wolfe

Growing up in a Christian middle-income home, I had never experienced poverty and I assumed that it only really existed in other far away countries. Everyone I prayed for, played with, and talked to was exactly like me. I had no part in dealing with those different or less privileged than I, but one day all that changed.

Mr. Holder was in his 60's, and he lived in a trailer with no running water, electricity, or windows. His alcoholism was apparent by the countless beer bottles broken and scattered across the small yard, which he had purchased with the little money he had. He was one of the first people I met on my route delivering meals. The man that my family and I met that day could hardly stand, and was almost starving. He thankfully accepted the food that we offered, and he spoke with us for a while.

I was able to bring these meals through an organization called Meals on Wheels which provides daily meals for those in need. We were told back at headquarters that this man had cancer, and was using all the money he had on alcohol and cigarettes which worsened his condition.

We visited this man on our route for over a year. Through this time, we often stayed awhile to talk with Mr. Holder. Most often he appreciated the conversation more than the food we brought. We talked with him, and he started to open up to us, and I began to see what our friendship meant to him. He told us that he spent day after day in his trailer alone. Proverbs reminded me of him when it says, "The poor is disliked even by his neighbor, but the rich has many friends." (Proverbs 14:20) Mr. Holder had no friends, and no one to care for him. We began to bring him little things like cookies to show him that we were thinking about him. I will never forget the joy that cookies brought to this old, dying man's face. Whenever we had to leave him, he would beg for us to come back again soon.

God showed me through this man how much I have been given. I have a home, a family, and most importantly a Savior, which is what Mr. Holder, needed most. I began to pray for Mr. Holder, that God would change his circumstances, save his soul, and show Mr. Holder how Jesus is the truest friend. I was at fault for avoiding people that were not like me, but I began to see that there was a person in my life who was broken, one who needed my prayers. God had shown me seven years ago that I had needed Him; That I was broken and needed a Savior. I was more like this man than I realized.

Things needed to change. It was apparent that Mr. Holder needed to move, and a house was found that was cheaper and safer than his current trailer. With the new home, he would have running water, electricity, and someone to see to his medical needs. We told him of the house and how it was exactly what he needed, but he refused to go. Thoughts raced through my mind. "Really, why"? I couldn't understand why he didn't want this amazing opportunity. I still remember his words. He said that

he would be unable to purchase the alcohol he wanted, if he was that far from the store. I couldn't change his mind, only God could. So again, I prayed.

In a few weeks, my prayers were answered. Mr. Holder said he would be willing to move, despite the distance from the store! I was overjoyed. I knew that God changed his heart for something good. Now he is on someone else's route and I no longer get to see him as I often did. I hold on to hope that our influence and the example of others that God puts in his life will turn his heart to God. I continue to pray that when Mr. Holder comes to the end of his life he will have a Savior, and then his suffering will finally be turned to joy.

Jesus says that following God means becoming a servant and that whatever we do to serve the least of men we do for God. (Matthew 25:40) Experiences like these, stories like Jimmy Brazell's, and other Christians who have gone before me drives me to go out of my comfort zone, love more, and live a life for God. I hope that through God's power in me, I can be a "good and faithful servant" for Jesus Christ. (Matthew 25:21) I pray God will use me, whether the task is small or large to bring the gospel to people who don't know Christ. May I learn to follow in the footsteps of Christ, by loving and serving those around me!