OUR MISSION
To offer life changing hope through the Gospel of Jesus Christ to homeless men, women, and children through programs to deliver food, shelter, counseling and discipleship.

IN THIS ISSUE
Jackson at Dusk
From the DIRECTOR

“Some wish to live within the sound of church or chapel bell. I wish to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.”

—C.T. Studd

Johnny is a good guy with a deep, bass voice that would rival James Earl Jones voicing Darth Vader. He is respectful and always calls me “Mr. Baker.” Johnny has come and gone through our New Life Program at Gateway Rescue Mission, but as of right now, he’s still on the streets.

The culprit? Johnny hears voices, and those voices tell him not to take the medication that would knock the voices. Such is the life of many who suffer from schizophrenia. The voices are real to them, along with the compulsion to obey them.

Gateway Rescue Mission was born originally out of a God-led compassion to work with homeless people in the post-World War II era. Nothing in our bylaws or purpose statement mentions mental illness.

Same goes for the organization that trains at-risk young people to work in the culinary field, or the after-school program that helps kids learn to read, or the recovery program designed to help recovering addicts live as a law-abiding, tax-paying citizens. Mental illness is a key issue faced by most charity nonprofits, that they are not designed to deal with in reality.

In Christian ministry, we are familiar with Christ’s teaching to “go and make disciples of all nations.” We have traditionally devised Christian rehabilitation programs with the goal of making productive disciples out of people in bondage to drugs and/or alcohol. Yet, in any given week, our New Life Program consists of people suffering with anxiety disorder, depression, bi-polar disorder, borderline personality disorder, or schizophrenia.

Some of this is addiction induced. When someone joins our program, it takes several weeks for the drug psychosis to clear before you can see if a mental issue is caused by drugs or by an underlying brain chemistry issue. At Gateway Rescue Mission, we can work with someone with a mental diagnosis if their behavior can be stabilized through medication or therapy.

You cannot treat everyone with a mental disorder the same. Some function quite well on the proper medication. For some, their depression and anxiety clear up after a prolonged period of sober living. And there are those who “play crazy”, according to some of our staff. As one staffer told me, “these guys play crazy when y’all aren’t around, (senior leadership) but when y’all show up they all of a sudden start acting right.”

Johnny is not playing. His case points to one of the dark sides of our society. Johnny was abused physically as a child. I’ve witnessed a high correlation between physical and/or sexual abuse and schizophrenia. Severely abused children learn to split their personalities to cope with the trauma. This sometimes results in schizophrenia or borderline personality disorder. Both are the most difficult types of mental illness I have personally witnessed.

Our New Life Program was not designed for a person rendered dysfunctional by mental illness. Still, God is mighty to save. Johnny believes in Jesus and tries hard at times to change his life. He is able to smile and carry on a conversation.

When in his schizophrenic state, Johnny’s appearance becomes disheveled. He lets his hair grow and may have a wild look. Then Johnny may show up to “join the program.” When asked, he’ll clean up, get a haircut and look spiffy. But he won’t take his medications and ultimately the voices drive him away from us, back into the streets and back into his insanity.

Sadly, a relatively small, but noticeable percentage of the homeless population is clinically insane. This group should be housed in a safe, caring institutional setting, but our society has failed in that category. So, they come to us, sometimes fighting the very help we try to give. As long as God allows, we will continue to minister his love and mercy as best we can to those who come to us. And I do believe when that day comes when Johnny closes his eyes in this life, he will open his eyes in the presence of Jesus.

Rex Baker
Executive Director
Gateway Rescue Mission
When the sun goes down, little pockets of homeless people on the streets of Jackson bed down for the night. On cold nights, a small group often sleeps on top of the sidewalk heating vents on West Street.

Many of Jackson’s homeless do not come to Gateway Rescue Mission. This makes it challenging for us to get a true understanding of the overall homeless community. Some subsist in different areas around the metropolitan area and don’t often cross boundaries into other parts of town.

So why is Gateway Rescue Mission located where it is? (328 South Gallatin Street) We are near both the train station and the bus station. The homeless traditionally traveled by train or bus, so several ministries now exist within a 10 minute walk from the bus station.

The homeless community of Jackson is not one, big homogenous group. It exists in pockets across the metro area. Those who seek the services of Gateway tend to be of three main groups: Those seeking help with addiction recovery; people temporarily in transition coming through the downtown Jackson area; and those with significant disability or mental issues that subsist in the downtown area. While not everyone who seeks our services fits these categories, these three groups make up our primary base.
Gateway Needs

A special note about our “Gateway Needs” section this month. As part of our New Life Program, Gateway is adopting a one-block area around the mission for cleanup and beautification. For this effort, we will need a few things such as:

- Industrial-sized garbage bags. Our initial focus will be on picking up the garbage along Gallatin Street, under the Pascagoula Street railroad viaduct, Court Street between Pascagoula and South Street, and South Street between Court Street and Gallatin. This means we’ll be picking up lots of trash and will need lots of industrial-sized trash bags.
- Protective gloves. Our guys will need gloves to protect their hands from garbage and sharp objects.
- Trash picker Pin. This is the long stick with a sharp pin on the end of it for picking up trash along the roadside. We will need several of these.
- The industrial-sized garbage bags, heavy-duty work gloves, and trash picker pins can all be purchased on Amazon and mailed directly to Gateway Rescue Mission. Our address is Gateway Rescue Mission Attn: Rex Baker 328 South Gallatin Street Jackson, MS 39203
- Any other garbage disposal tools that you can think of that we didn’t mention.

We are still blowing and going, serving three meals a day, seven days a week in our Gateway kitchen. Darren demonstrates in this picture the time-honored Gateway tradition of making sandwiches, assembly-line style.

Tuna fish, pork chops, spaghetti, barbecue, and chicken tenders make up just some of our weekly dishes at Gateway Rescue Mission.

We also continue to provide emergency shelter each evening for men seeking refuge from the street. Matthew gave us a big smile for the camera, while sitting atop his bunk in the shelter.

We’d like to thank each of our donors and volunteers who help make it possible for us to be what the Bible calls salt and light in this world.