

Feeding Hungry Souls

Nick Damascus

NICK DAMASCUS WAS FIVE YEARS OLD when he first observed the problem of homelessness in downtown Spokane. The year was 1951 and he remembers asking his mother what some men were doing, standing in a long line down Stevens Street. She told him they were homeless men, waiting for food. Turns out, the soup kitchen he noticed that day had recently become Spokane’s brand-new Union Gospel Mission.

“That image stayed with me my whole life,” he says today. “And it came full circle.”

Today, Nick volunteers at the UGM Men’s Shelter. He serves the men not food, but faith, ministering to the hearts and minds of men who are resistant to the gospel of Christ.

“I’ll say, ‘Your Father in heaven wants to give you all that He is and all that He has. If you deny Him, if you are in rebellion to Him, how can He give you anything? That’s the one thing He cannot do, because He gives you that



Nick Damascus
UGM Volunteer

privilege – to choose.”

Nick enjoys discussing any and every question that arises in these intimate one-on-one meetings. His knowledge of the Christian faith is vast, but his desire to reach these men with the good news of Jesus Christ is even bigger.

“I like to look at life from the perspective of the ‘other side’ [eternity]. I don’t want to say when I get there, ‘I could have helped this individual or I could have been instrumental or could have been a vessel to save a soul! So, that’s why I’m here. This is the focal point of my life.” ●

Pastor Eric

Another man who lives to share the gospel with the hurting is Pastor Eric Blauer of Jacob’s Well Church.

For over 32 years, he has been neck deep in the struggles of the local poor and homeless populations. He joined UGM as a volunteer, along with members of his church, because he saw what UGM was doing as providing “critical support and services” to the population he loves so dearly.

At UGM, he met a man who impacted his ministry more than any other. “James came forward with a number of men for prayer after the message. He had given his heart to Jesus at a previous chapel service, and it was evident God was at work in this man.”

Afterwards, the man asked if he could attend Eric’s church with him. Eric started picking him up from the Shelter each Sunday and dropping him back off after service. A deep affection developed in Eric’s heart. “A



Eric Blauer
Jacob's Well Church

special grace was present,” he says. “I was bonding to this man in a way that isn’t typical.”

One day, Eric got a message from the Shelter saying James had passed away from a heart attack. Shaken and deeply grieved, Eric spent weeks reflecting on the bond he’d felt. How was this man different? Why was the connection so strong? Eric’s conclusion was that he had gotten to experience the Lord’s own affection for James.

“The whole experience left a lasting impression on my soul. It reminds me to make the most of my opportunity with the men and to never forget that these men are not problems for programs; they are not projects and statistics ...they are people with names, hearts, stories and souls that God loves. I experienced that love from God towards James, and I pray it motivates my ministry and mission to the day I die.” ●

Take Action




UGM Camp

When you send one (or more) of Spokane’s underserved children to UGM Camp, you shine a light into their lives.

Give the gift of fun and faith this summer.

Sponsor an at-risk child
www.uniongospelmission.org/camp-donate



April 26, 2022
Lunch & Dinner

Valley Assembly
15618 E Broadway Ave.
Spokane Valley, WA

Healing for trauma requires the love and investment of a safe community. Be part of that community.

Join us for the 2022 Gathering.

www.uniongospelmission.org/gathering



Upcoming Events

Tuesday, March 22 - Volunteer Orientation, Coeur d’Alene, 10:30 a.m.; Crisis Shelter, 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, April 12 - Volunteer Orientation, Coeur d’Alene, 6:00 p.m.; Men’s Shelter, 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, April 26 – UGM Gathering

Tuesday, May 10 - Volunteer Orientation, Coeur d’Alene, 6:00 p.m.; Men’s Shelter, 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, May 24 - Volunteer Orientation, Coeur d’Alene, 10:30 a.m.; Crisis Shelter, 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, June 14 - Volunteer Orientation, Coeur d’Alene, 6:00 p.m.; Men’s Shelter, 6:00 p.m.

To register for a volunteer orientation, call our offices:
SPOKANE 509.535.8510 COEUR D’ALENE 208.665.4673



Mission News

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“That’s when everything changed for me. I was somebody who He knew needed Him, so I was worth all of His attention.”

Loved by a Good God



Loved by a Good God

We are all so broken.

Sin breaks us, not just our relationship with God, but our relationships with each other and with ourselves. Sin even fights with sin. Greed and lust and pride wage war against each other. We live amidst all this sin and brokenness, and so, life is hard. We should not expect it to be otherwise. Still, God. God is the light in the darkness. The healer who binds what is broken. He doesn't make life easy, but He is with us in all its terror and beauty. He is the one who heals us from the inside out, and that makes all the difference.

Dionne's Story

"WHY WOULD GOD SPEND ANY TIME WORKING on somebody like me with all the things I've done in my past? The lies and the mask...I want to say 'mask,' but it was more than that. It was the whole other person I was trying to be or that I portrayed myself to be because I lied, cheated, stole, just as bad as all those people I was saying I was not... God would never accept all these things out of a person. Why would He want to waste His time on me because there are so many better people in the world than me? Why would He love me?"

Dionne worked in the adult entertainment industry for 14 years. She used meth to help her cope. "A big part of the use was to numb myself, so I could perform there. Then, the other side of the use was, I needed to be up all night at the job, but I also had a small child that I was taking care of."

She got out of the industry, got married and, in trying to get off drugs, she turned to alcohol, but she had no sense of the root problem.

Today, Dionne recognizes she had a very performance-based view of success: "As long as I was decent to people and didn't get in any kind of trouble, which pretty much meant keeping my drugs hidden, was able to perform right at work, keep the house clean, be there for the kids, be a good housewife,

make sure the groceries were done, laundry was done, you know, take care of all the things, make sure my animals looked good, drive an okay car... Then, I was doing everything right. Everything was going to be okay and I should be happy."

Only, everything was not ok. And she did not have joy.

"I was emotionally a mess. I spent all my time trying to live up to a standard. I put almost all of my energy in just doing that, and if that was all correct, then everything else should fall into place in terms of me being happy and other people treating me right, giving me the love that I deserved, the amount of respect that I deserved. *You shouldn't need anything more from me because what else could I possibly give you? Look at all I've done for you.*"

She and her husband of a little more than a year were fighting a lot. She decided to leave him and move in with her mom, but she was still desperately unhappy. She started drinking from the moment she got up in the morning. Then, one day, under the influence, she drove off a cliff, totaled her mom's car and got a DUI.

She easily could have died, but "at that point, the worst part in my mind was, *I can't believe I wrecked my mom's car, and I'm getting a DUI.* Those were boxes I was never supposed to check. That's when I went, *Dionne, what are you doing?*"

But she didn't immediately change. Instead, she started drinking even more. "Super drinking."

Looking back now, she clearly sees God working in her life because, when she finally reached out for help, it was to the two Christians in her life: a friend at Moody Bible and her daughter's grandmother, Judy.

"The funny thing about my daughter's grandmother, she was always trying to get me to go to church and would speak Jesus to me. I went with her sometimes because I wanted to have a relationship with her. She was my daughter's grandmother, but I didn't like her very much and didn't want to be close to her, and I think that was, subconsciously, because she was in recovery and she might know what I was doing on the side. But I ended up calling her and told her I was exhausted. I didn't know what to do."

Judy helped Dionne get into a 21-day program, but when it was over, Dionne knew she needed more. She learned about UGM Recovery, but from her perspective, it had two downsides: 1) it was faith-based; and 2) it was 18 months. Still, she was desperate. "I don't care. I don't care what it is. I need more time under my belt."



"He came for us bad people —all the people. He came for all the people."

She thought she would only stay for four months, but four months in, she fell in love with Jesus.

"I had all these perceptions of who Christians were, what God and Jesus were all about...but after I got the concept that God came to us to walk with us and to be with us—and by 'us' I mean all the 'terrible' people. He came for us bad people—all the people. He came for all the people, to educate us as to the goodness He has for us and the peace and the joy and what your life can be like... If we were good, He wouldn't have had to do what He did. That's when everything changed for me. I was somebody who He knew needed Him, so I was worth all of His attention."

Dionne said the biggest change in her life is recognizing that she's never alone. "I was so lonely. It was really really lonely. And now, I don't ever feel like I'm alone. I still have my moments when I'm sad, but I talk to Jesus all the time. We talk a lot."



The Ultimate Work

IF YOU'VE BEEN READING THIS COLUMN over the years, you know I think "work" is one of the best four-letter words around. The opening chapter of the Bible talks about God's work, and right there at the beginning of time, God gives Adam and Eve work to do: "Fill the earth and subdue it," He says. "Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Before the fall, God told Adam to work the ground and name the animals. God designed work to bring fulfillment because, in it, we partner with Him. Done for Him, work is a form of worship, "...whatever you do, do all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Jesus worked. He served. He preached. He washed feet. He healed and taught and prayed.

Work is a good thing, and here at UGM, we see it as a significant step on the pathway out of homelessness. Seeing the work of your hands, knowing you have contributed to the wellbeing of the community, earning a paycheck, restores dignity. So, yes, work is a very good thing.

In this column, however, I want to make it clear that work is not the *ultimate* thing. Work is not what saves us. In Titus 3:4-5, Paul writes: "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior was shown, He saved us because of His mercy. It was

Dionne finished UGM Recovery in 2013 and started working at UGM Motors. She has more than a decade of sobriety and has been married for 12 years. When she talks about her family and the fact that they have witnessed her life change, her entire being glows with excitement.

Dionne claimed this life verse at the beginning of her journey in recovery and holds to it to this day: "*You are to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*" (Ephesians 4:23-24) ●



not because of good deeds we did to be right with Him." More than a decade ago, UGM underwent a shift in philosophy. We started emphasizing transformation over conformity. We didn't want people to be checking boxes – get sober, get a haircut, get a job – we wanted them to meet Jesus and be transformed. We wanted the overwhelming love of Jesus to be their motivation for moving forward, for giving back. Because that's what it means to live an abundant life: Recognizing that Jesus died for me, that God did not hold back even His own Son but freely gave it all so that I might live in relationship with Him, I now take great joy in obeying Him.

Everyone gets off track from time to time, and when we do, we can start to think our work makes us worthy. From the time we are in grade school, we are rewarded when we do well, and we get things mixed up, thinking it's what we produce that proves our worth. We swell with pride when we achieve good things and hang our heads in shame when we fail. But that's a distortion of the truth.

Consider Dionne from our cover story or the men featured on page 5. They are working, not to receive the praise of men, but because they are excited to be a part of what God is doing. And that makes all the difference. God designed us to contribute to each other's lives. Sometimes that's through laughter or hugs or conversation, but oftentimes, it's through work. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Thank you for partnering with us to do the good work He has prepared each day for those who walk through our doors. ●