

# **Stories From The Strand**

**A collection of stories from my journal as I  
walked and prayed for others on the Strand**

**Mark Buckley**

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*And above all things have fervent love for one another,  
for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”*

*1 Peter 4:8*

## Stories From the Strand

This book is a collection of journal entries I made while walking on a road called the Strand at the beach in Oceanside, CA.

I was laid off from my job because of COVID. My plan was to work a couple more years until I was seventy, but God had another job for me. Most of my life I suffered from depression and my normal response to my predicament would be WHY ME? However, this time I stopped and prayed, “God, You gave me this time what would You like me to do with it?” That night I had a dream about a shirt, that read on the front, “Do You Need Prayer?” and on the back, “I’ll Pray with You”. The next morning, I told Teri, my wife, about the dream and she said, “Sounds like God is calling you to serve Him.” I wish I could tell you that the next day I went out to get the shirts made, but I didn’t. I continued to think how strange it would be to walk around wearing this shirt in front of strangers. Each day all I thought about was that shirt and finally after two weeks of ignoring God’s prompting, I went and had the shirts made. This is when COVID was at its height and I couldn’t think of anywhere to walk. Then God put on my heart to walk along the beach in Oceanside, a road called the Strand. I live about four miles from there but never went there to walk. My first day was July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and the following is a collection of my experiences at my new job.

— Mark Buckley

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## Introduction

When I was young, I was raised catholic so the only prayers I remember is the Our Father and Hail Mary. As I got older, I didn't have to go to church, so I didn't. I suffered from depression most of my life and tried to take my life six different times and the last time was April 6,1998. That day I had enough pills to kill me three times over and went to a beach in La Jolla, where I sat on a rock looking over the beautiful ocean. I didn't feel nervous, and in a way was glad that I would never have to worry about anything again. As I sat there, I listened to the sound of the waves as they were crashing over the rocks. I took my container of pills out of my pocket and opened it and for the first time in my life I decided to talk to God. I said, "God I understand that I don't deserve to be in heaven for what I'm about to do and the way I lived my life, but I don't believe I belong in hell either. There isn't anyone that could say I did anything terrible to them. I never was unfaithful to my wife, I treated my parents with respect and took care of the children you gave me the best I could. How about we just end it here? Let me just go to sleep and never wake up, it will be as if I was never here. Which would have been better off for everyone if I wasn't. What do you say?" I waited a moment almost expecting a response. So, the first time I decided to talk to God, I told him He messed up? You made a mistake, when you made me. You did okay with the earth, ocean, mountains and the universe, but when you made me, you must have been having an off day." Then I had one more request, "Can we make this so it doesn't hurt?" I took the drugs and only a moment passed by before I felt this terrible pain in my head as if it was going to explode and it felt as if my eyes were going to pop out, then I blacked out. God answered my prayers that day, and the answer was no.

I was taken to the hospital where my family was called in and told they were not sure if I was going to live. If I did survive, I might have severe internal and brain damage. I was in a coma for a couple of days and when I woke the doctors found that there were no internal problems and since they didn't know how much brain damage I had before taking the overdose wasn't sure if I had any more. However, my mind wasn't clear, and I was confused on what had happened. Then it came to me, and I couldn't believe I was still alive. If there was a God, why would He do this to me?

After a week I was released from the hospital and when I got home, I had no idea what to do. I didn't have a job and was waiting to get thrown out of the house we were renting. I thought I would be dead by now and I didn't have a contingency plan.

The next day I was home alone when my daughter's boyfriend, Justin, came over. He invited me to come with him and Danielle to his church the following Sunday. I thought since I've talked to God maybe it was time to visit Him at His home, and He could tell me what I'm supposed to do now.

The church was a Christian church. I had no idea what to expect, but I knew I was searching for something that was missing in my life and this seemed as good a place as any to look. I went there a few Sundays as God was working on my heart of stone. The message was about giving your burdens to Jesus and it really hit me. The pastor asked if anyone wanted a personal relationship with Jesus to raise their hand. It wasn't only my hand that went up, but my heart opened that day along with my eyes. My new life and journey were about to begin.

I started a daily routine of praying first thing in the morning and reading the bible. I would read through it each year, and I kept a journal. God didn't heal me of my

depression like He did the blind, paralytic, deaf or demon possessed, but like so many other doctors in my past He gave me a prescription. Something I needed to take each day and as many times a day as needed. The prescription was prayer and before I started getting depressed or have angry thoughts, I would pray to my Father and asked that He would calm my spirit. It took time and dedication, but it was the only prescription I've ever taken that worked and it kept me close to my Father.

My walk with God was getting stronger as I continued to serve in my church, but then COVID hit and all the churches were closed. I was sixty-eight and my plan was to work until I was seventy, buy an RV and travel with my wife, but because of COVID I was laid off. There is a saying, "If you want to make God laugh tell Him your plans." When the reality came that my plans were not to come to pass instead of going back to my old self and ask God why poor me, I stopped and said, "Lord, You gave me this time what would You like me to do with it?" The answer came that night in a dream, I saw a T-Shirt that said in the front, "Do You Need Prayer?" and the back, "I'll Pray with You" with the letter "t" highlighted in red to resemble a cross.

The next day I told Teri my dream and she said, "Sounds like God wants you to do something." I wish I could tell you that I went out the next day and had those shirts made, but I didn't. I continued to think how strange this was and where would I wear a shirt like this any way. Then that night I had the dream again and I was wearing the shirt as I was walking along the Strand in Oceanside. I live only four miles from this beautiful place, but never went there to walk. I wondered what people would think of this weird old man walking down the Strand with this strange T-shirt? Finally, I gave in and told God I'll get the T-shirts made and started my new job.

My first day was July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and this book is a journal about my journey. I look back and realize the Strand was the only place this ministry could have worked, I was still able to see people's faces, since most didn't wear masks on the beach, there where so many people desperate for prayer and the beach was one of the last sanctuaries available.

This has been the best time of my life and God's plan is so much better than mine.

— Mark Buckley

## Stories From the Strand

### Chapter 1-I'm Here to Love

#### First Day on the Strand

It was 4<sup>th</sup> of July 2020 and I got up that morning not feeling very well and doubting if I could do this. I got in my car thinking of all the negative things that could happen and turned to my Lord in prayer. I realized this is something that Satan didn't want me to do and was going to do anything to stop me. By the time I parked my car I felt as if I was having a heart attack, I was shaking terribly, sweating and felt very nauseous. I prayed to God that if this is what He wanted me to do please give me the strength to get out of the car. I finally opened the car door and got out, I took Brando, my dog, out and put his leash on him. As I walked, I was feeling much better as if nothing had happened. I prayed that God would take charge and guide me today. As I began walking down the Strand it was put on my heart that I wasn't there to judge, criticize or argue, but was put there to only love, and that the Holy Spirit was going to teach me how to do that.

There were a lot of people at the Strand, but still not a normal 4<sup>th</sup> of July because of COVID. Some people would read my shirt and look down so I wouldn't bother them, but those who made eye contact I would smile and say, "Good morning." It wasn't long until a woman saw my shirt and said, "I really need prayer." She was vacationing at one the rentals on the Strand and this was something a group of them did every 4<sup>th</sup> of July. I introduced myself and something strange happened I wasn't nervous at all but felt this peace about me as if I've been doing this all along. I asked what she needed prayer for, and she said, "My brother fell off a ladder and was in intensive care and the doctors aren't sure if he was

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going to make it. Also, my husband and I haven't been getting along and he decided not to even come this year, but stayed home. So, I can use prayer for our marriage”

As she was talking, I was thinking what should I say and what scripture I could use to sound holy. I felt the Holy Spirit tap me on the shoulder and say move aside, I got this. All nervousness left me, and she put out her hands and I held them as I started. I remember saying, “Your children come before You to tell You that we love, appreciate and trust You. We know how You love when Your children come before You.” It was as if I was standing outside listening to this love filled and encouraging prayer. I remember the one thing that I said was, “You aren't called to be the wife your husband wants you to be and your husband isn't called to be the husband that you want him to be, but you are both called to be the husband, wife, man and woman God calls you to be.” At the end we were both crying, and she gave me a hug and thanked me. As I walked away, I asked Jesus, “I thought you chose me because of my warmth, wisdom and charm.” I felt the Holy Spirit say, “No! Think of yourself as a Bluetooth speaker for Christ, I'll do the talking.”

A year later I was walking past the same cottage and a gentleman who was reading his Bible said, “I love your shirt!” As we were talking the woman I prayed with a year earlier came out and gave me a huge hug. She said, “This is the guy I prayed with a year ago for our marriage.” The man came over and gave me a hug then thanked me. They both said they are both growing closer to God and shared some of the ministries they were involved in. The husband had this wonderful passion when he talked about his faith. She continued, “When my brother was in the hospital, they did

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an MRI and found a brain tumor. Since they found it early, they were able to remove it and he's doing great and back to work. Last year has been one of our best as husband and wife. Can you pray that we will grow even closer to God and to each other?" After the Holy Spirit moved me aside and talked to His kids, we all three hugged. I said my goodbyes and continued my walk. As I continued my walk, I felt this chill running up and down my body and thanked God for allowing me to be part of this miracle.

*But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; <sup>20</sup> for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*

*Matthew 10:19-20*

### **Heaven on Earth**

I've experienced so much on my walks at the Strand. I've been able to draw closer to God as He continues to soften my heart and open my eyes to His will. I see things differently because my focus isn't on me anymore, but on what God wants to show me each day. I continue to share with those God puts in my path that this life is just a day at a time, that whatever has happened in the past is gone and only our Father knows what tomorrow will bring. We should only be concerned by what we can change and realize the only thing we can change is ourselves. I imagine heaven will be like that, no burdens from the past, no regrets, no anxiety about the future, just enjoying our life each moment. Jesus said the greatest commandment is:

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*And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. <sup>31</sup> And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

*Matthew 22:37-40*

God doesn't need anything so why does He command us to love Him in this way? I believe it's because He has so much to offer us and unless we love Him in this way will miss it. God has allowed me to enjoy the second greatest commandment to love others and I believe that will be one of the greatest parts of Heaven. I've laughed, encouraged, been encouraged, prayed, cried, listened, hugged and have been used by the Holy Spirit to speak to my brothers and sisters. One of the reasons we don't enjoy our life is because of the way we treat others and then in turn the way we are treated. Imagine if all your relationships were based on loving others as you love yourself, which is within your power. That is what I believe heaven will look like, everyone loving each other with no exceptions. Working, playing, eating, worshiping and enjoying each other. I can only imagine how blessed God would be to see His children enjoying life to that level. That will be really something to look forward to but we can start now. Look beyond yourself and reach out to someone. Say good morning to a stranger, buy someone a meal, volunteer, be respectful in all situations, listen, encourage, give someone the most precious thing you have, your time. You won't believe how your life will change for the better you will receive a joy that's almost unimaginable. Jesus called us to be

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a light may we live our life in such a way it will make people squint when they see us.

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

*John 13:34-35*

### **My Younger Brother in Christ**

When I started my walk, it was put on my heart I'm not here to judge, criticize or argue, but only here to love. One thing that I have noticed that since the issue of racism has been in the spotlight people don't interact, the way they used to. People seem to be uncertain on what to do or say. Unlike me, super Christian, where I treat everyone equally or so I thought. I was walking along the Strand saying good morning to anyone that made eye contact with me. Then up ahead I saw a young man a few shades darker than me with no shirt, several tattoos, sweaty and a lot of energy. He was jumping up and down on this picnic table yelling. He saw me coming and yelled, "Prayer!" and ran towards me. I thought Lord if this is the way I'm coming home so be it. He came right up to me and said, "Brother we all need prayer!" Then he grabbed my hand and started to pray. He first thanked God for breath, health, the ocean, and the people he was surrounded with. Then he asked for a blessing for everyone at the beach that they would be safe and enjoy the time they have here. Then he asked God to bless me and that I would continue to do His work and for a hedge of protection around me. When he was done, I was choked up and just looked at

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him. I told him how much he blessed me, and he shook my hand. I asked if it was okay to give him a hug. He said he was sweaty, and I told him that it wasn't sweat but Holy Water and I hugged him. I told him that I loved him, and he said, "I love you too, take care." As I walked away, I felt the Holy Spirit laughing and saying, "I told you not to judge, these are my children." I must have cried and thanked God halfway down the Strand until He put someone else in my path. It's amazing we ask God to bless our day and when He does, we're surprised. Our Father sure knows how to give good gifts to His children. How can you not love a Dad like that?

*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*

*Matthew 7:11*

### **Praying for a Dead Goldfish**

It was a cold walk at the Strand and I was more of a spectacle than normal. Everyone else was wearing jackets and gloves and there I was wearing my T-shirt. I've learned a lot about myself, my relationship with God and what He has called me to do. One thing I've learned is never judge a person or situation, that's not my job, but my purpose is to love and pray for them. On my way back on the Strand there were four teenagers, two boys and two girls. The one girl yelled out, "I need prayer." I stopped and asked, "Do you want to pray now? She looked at her colleagues and said, "Yes." I knew she wasn't sincere, but I left it to the Holy Spirit to decide what to do. I asked, "What do you need prayer for?" As she thought she said, "My fish died and I want prayer for that." I

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said alright and with heads bowed and people passing by the Holy Spirit took over. The prayer was about how God gives us gifts to use to help others and we each have a purpose. He then talked about God's love and that no one will love them as much as God does. Then we prayed that God would help the girl through the mourning of her late fish. When I was done the girl still being the leader said, "I can feel my fish getting better already." Then I looked down and the other three still had their heads bowed down. Two of them eventually looked up, but the one boy's head was still down, and it appeared as if he was crying. I said have a great day and that it was a pleasure to meet them. I'll most likely never know how God used that encounter with that young man while I'm here on this earth but will keep him in prayer. I'm sure when I get to heaven, I'm going to hear a lot of great stories about the people I met on the Strand.

*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

*Romans 8:28*

### **Bible Study at the Harbor**

As I was walking at the harbor a man on a bicycle stopped and said, "We need to have a bible study." He wasn't wearing any shoes and appeared he might be homeless. I said, "Great" and he handed me a small New Testament bible and said, "Open the book and pick a passage." I did as he requested and my finger landed on

*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

*Colossians 3:2*

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I said, “With everything that is happening in this world this is the perfect scripture.” I think we were both astonished by the selection and we started our bible study. The man said, “I’m going through a lot right now. I had a good job driving trucks in Utah, but the job allows a person to think too much. I quit my job and came to Oceanside for a little vacation before I decide what to do next.” I don’t think I could have found a better scripture to choose as the Holy Spirit prayed for this man and me. The prayer reminded us that God has a plan for our lives, and He has already given him the gifts and abilities he needs to make that plan a success. Our bible study was about 15 to 20 minutes and was one of the best I’ve ever attended. He hugged me and said, “I’m still planning on being here tomorrow and I hope to see you.” I told him I should be here unless God has other plans. God knew what we needed to hear. I haven’t watched the news in years, but I’m still on Facebook. Most of the posts are regurgitated news stories and opinions. I easily get caught up and turn my attention to the negativity of the posts and the hopelessness of the condition of this country. Colossians 3:2 was God’s reminder for me that my attention needs to be on Him and my heavenly home. I’m on God’s timeclock now and He has called me to earn rewards in this life until it’s time to go home and reminds me:

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

*Matthew 6:21*

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### Doing for Jesus

I'm praying for more people and getting to know the regulars that come down daily. Even though this is very rewarding there are times I feel my prayers aren't answered. When I first started my walks, I met and prayed with this woman. She was painting rocks and giving them away. She was very nice and told me she was off work and enjoyed being at the beach. I would see her from time to time and she would say hi and we would talk for a while.

Some time had passed and I saw her sitting at a table crying. She appeared very agitated, and I asked her what was wrong. She pointed at her car and said, "I have a flat tire." I asked her what I could do to help, and she said, "You can fix my f---in tire." I told her to calm down and not use such foul language and I would change her tire. I got her keys and went to change her tire and a man who saw me asked if he could help. While changing her tire she was screaming and swearing at other people especially a man that was sitting in his truck. I went over to her when we were done to give back her keys and she was swearing at someone else. I sat her down to calm her and she just broke down in tears saying things that didn't make sense. Before I left, I prayed for her and asked for peace in her spirit and walked away. I found out after I left the police came and took her away and towed her car.

A few weeks went by and as I approached the same spot on my walk. There were two police officers talking to her and she pointed to me and said, "That's Mark, he prays for me." They looked and recognized me and said, "Good morning." I felt so helpless and didn't know what to do.

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A month or so went by and I saw her sitting at a picnic table on the beach. Next to her was a mother and her three teenage sons. They were setting up for a baby shower for her daughter. The lady was yelling at them as the four tried to ignore her the best they could. As I walked past, she yelled my name and asked for prayer. She came up to me cursing and saying, "Those people don't care about me and won't give me anything." I told her as sternly as I could, "They don't need to give you anything especially the way you're talking to them. God calls us to treat others the way we want to be treated. How would you feel if they treated you the way you're treating them?" When I was done speaking to her the three young men came up to me. I thought they might ask me to get her out of there or they would call the police, but that wasn't their request. Instead, they asked if I would pray for them. I asked what they wanted prayer for, and they said they wanted a closer walk with God. I was amazed after what they experienced, that they would come up to a stranger for such an honorable request. The prayer was amazing and afterwards the four of us hugged. When we were done the lady continued to swear and say that she needed some food because she was hypoglycemic. I told her I would take her to one of the vendors down the road to get her something to eat. She continued to yell, and I told her if she didn't behave, I wouldn't get her anything to eat. She finally stopped and went with me. I told the family it was nice meeting them and I hoped the shower would be a big success. I took the woman down the Strand and found a vendor open and had her choose something and paid for her meal. I said, "I'm leaving. I want you to eat your meal here and don't go back and bother that family." As I was walking away it was if

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Jesus had his arm around my shoulders and said, “Just keep loving others.” I had to stop for a moment and compose myself before going on. I don’t know what happened to that woman that changed her, but my responsibility is to treat others as I would want to be treated. That’s the least I can do after the way my savior has treated me.

Over time she continued deuterate into this foul mouth, out of control person who was consistently being picked up by the police. One day I saw her and didn’t recognize her at first, she weighed less than a hundred pounds, had only a few teeth left, and appeared to have aged twenty years. I noticed she had a black eye and cut under the other eye. I asked how she was doing, and she said alright and started to cry. I held her in my arms and started to pray as the Holy Spirit assured her, she is precious in His sight. She asked if I could help her get her things together, which wasn’t much. She said goodbye and with a final hug thanked me. That was the last time I saw her and I have no idea what might have happened to her.

I’m not sure why God didn’t answer my prayers for this woman. I know He loves her and I will continue to pray for her. Before Christ I would never have acknowledged that woman, probably would have gone out of my way not to make contact but not anymore. She’s my sister and deserves the love Jesus has given to me.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

## Stories From the Strand

### **I Found out Why**

What a joy it is to walk each day at the Strand. I meet so many wonderful people. I met a family of five who stopped me and asked for prayer. The oldest child was about eight and I asked what they needed prayer for, and they wanted God to bless their day together. Just before I started the mom gathered the kids together and said, "Come, we're going to talk to Jesus." We all held hands as I began to pray a blessing on this wonderful family. After we prayed, they thanked me and I told them what a wonderful family they have and that it was a blessing to meet them. It really touched my heart and I know it touched Jesus' to see His children gathered before Him.

When I got to the harbor, I met a mom and her four-year-old child who was riding a bicycle. The child was excited to see Brando and said, "Can I walk him?" I looked at her mom and said, "Sure," and gave her the leash. We walked down the sidewalk as I talked to her mom. The mom shared with me how she had been addicted to drugs and alcohol before having her child whose name is Grace. She gives all the glory to God for her recovery, new life, and Grace. I've been wearing a knee brace and Grace asked, "What happened?" I told her I'm old and things just hurt. Her mom said, "Maybe you should pray for him." She gave me the leash, put her hand on my knee and said, "God please heal Brando's dad's knee." Before I left them, I looked at the mom and said, "What a wonderful mom you are, Jesus must be so proud of you." She said, "I don't understand why He never gave up on me, but I'll love Him forever." I told her, "I know exactly what you mean."

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This is how I live my life now, praying, sharing testimonies, giving and receiving encouragement, laughing with others, crying with some, listening to the hurting, rejoicing with the blessed, being a part of someone's life even for a moment, giving love, receiving love, and trying to be the light God has called me to be. There is a quote I love from Mark Twain "The two most important days in your life is the day you are born and the day you find out why." I now know why.

*But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*

*Exodus 9:16*

### **Witnessing to a Jehovah Witness**

There are always a couple of groups of Jehovah Witnesses at the Strand and harbor. God has put on my heart just to love others so each day I say good morning and usually they want to say hi to Brando. Typically, we just have a pleasant conversation and they don't approach me with their beliefs. The other day however I met this family and again the children wanted to pet Brando, but the gentleman started asking questions. I prayed feeling this is the time I should defend my beliefs. He recited some scriptures in Revelation 21 then started asking about Heaven. I felt this is my area of expertise since I've taught classes about heaven at my previous church. He would recite a scripture and I would counter what the scripture meant and supported it with another scripture. We talked for about fifteen minutes and I was having fun thinking that I was making a better

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point then he was. Finally, he said “Well I don’t want to hold you up.” I was feeling pretty good about myself and then the Holy Spirit convicted me. Most of the time we spent was arguing about what heaven was going to be like and I didn’t discuss the most important part which is how do we get there. I should have said, “What does it matter what we think heaven is going to be like? We should just trust our loving Father that it’s going to be so great we can’t even put it in words and only focus on making sure we get there.” I hope I see him again on my walks to tell him how I felt after our talk and make sure he is heading in the right direction.

On another day I came up to an area where Jehovah Witnesses were stationed and there was a man and woman sitting there. The woman waved me over and said, “I was just talking about you. This is my brother, Dan. This is the first time he came down to the Strand and about an hour ago a man came up to us yelling, cursing and saying some awful things. When he left my brother asked if most people were like that here? I told him no there this guy who walks here with a shirt that says do you need prayer and how nice you are.” I introduced myself and he asked about my ministry. I told him what a blessing it is to meet, pray and know so many people here at the Strand. I shared a few of my divine encounters and how God guides me each day to walk in this beautiful place. I shared when I first started my ministry it was put on my heart I wasn’t here to judge, criticize or argue put was placed her to only love others. Then I went on to share my depression ministry and how Jesus saved me and is using me to touch the lives of others. After talking for several minutes, I shook his hand and told him how great it was meeting him.

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On another day at the harbor I saw two men who were Jehovah Witnesses that I've met before. Today they wanted to discuss how bad the state of the world is in and it won't be long before the end. He said you know what the bible says about the last days. I said yes and recited 2 Timothy 3:1-5

*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: <sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, <sup>4</sup> traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*

*2 Timothy 3:1-5*

They appeared surprised that I memorized those verses. I said, "It's important that people should know this but I believe we are here to love others, because without love why would anyone trust what we say." Just then a family with three young children came up and one of them asked if they could pet Brando. I said, "Of course you can pet him, just don't bite him, he doesn't like it." That made the parents laugh. I told the children that Brando likes carrots for a treat and asked if they would like to give him one. They were all excited so I told the first little girl to tell him to sit and ask him to shake hands which she did. I gave each one a carrot and they had him do a trick for his treat. After that they hugged him and the mother looked at me with this wonderful smile and said, "Thank you." I told them to have a wonderful day and she said, "We're off to a

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great start.” I then turned to the two men I was talking to and said, “We’re here to love.” Then Brando and I continued our walk.

A few years ago, I would have been ready for a theological battle, but God has put a new purpose in my heart. He has called me to love others and to witness by sharing what He has done in my life and He’ll take care of the rest

*And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”*

*1 Peter 4:8*

### **Better Because of Me?**

Nothing more rewarding than walking each day with my Lord at the Strand. As I began my walk a car stopped and the man inside said, “I’m really hurting. I’m going through a divorce and I know it’s my fault and I need prayer.” Since there were no other cars coming at that time with my hand on his shoulder, I prayed with him. When the prayer was over, I looked up and there were several cars lined up so I asked him to pull to the side of the road if he wanted to continue talking. As soon as he pulled off to the side he got out of his car and came over and hugged me. I held him as the Holy Spirit continued to speak to his heart. The Holy Spirit reminded him that this life is to be lived a day at a time and whatever has happened in the past is gone and to learn from it. That he should only be focused on the only thing that he could change which was him. The Holy Spirit is always with him and he just needs to ask for the strength and

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guidance to live each day. Before he drove off, I told him that I loved him and he gave me another hug and thanked me.

Shortly after a young woman asked for prayer for a relationship that she was in. She asked for God's guidance and wisdom. I told her whenever we pray in God's will He hears and answers our request and her prayer was definitely His will. He tells us if we lack wisdom that He will give it generously without finding fault and all we need to do is believe that He will and not doubt. After praying she asked if she could hug me and I told her that's one of the best perks of my ministry.

I only walked a few feet when another car stopped with two gentlemen in it. The one asked for prayer and came over. I asked what he needed prayer for and he just said, "Just pray whatever God puts on your heart." God was ready for him and spoke directly to my new brother. He told him that he had all the gifts and talents he needed to fulfill God's purpose, that He was always with him guiding him each day, but he needs to spend more time with his Father to hear His directions. When we were finished there were tears rolling down his face. He hugged me and I told him that I loved him and he held me tight and told me he loved me too.

Before I made it to the pier, I met another lady that I've seen before but never talked to. However today she asked, "Would you please pray for me? I'm struggling with a situation of betrayal and I don't know what to do." I held her hands as we began to pray to our Father. The prayer was beautiful and reminded her that God calls us to trust only in Him and that we are called to love others no matter what. That each day brings another opportunity to draw closer to her Father. After praying she thanked me. I said, "The only

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thing we have control of in this world in ourselves. We can't control anyone else or our circumstances but we can control how we deal with them and we have the help of our Father to accomplish that. Thank Him now that He's going to get you through this situation of betrayal as He has gotten you through so many other things. Satan's plan is to focus on the one negative thing that brings us sorrow while forgetting all the blessings God has given us." She then smiled and asked for a hug. Since I've been doing this ministry, I received hundreds of hugs from both men and women. There is something very special about the connection we receive when we hug. It's a moment that we make a special connection with a brother or sister.

On my way back a lifeguard that I see often was running towards me. He gave me a fist bump and said, "This beach is so much better because of you." Then he went on his way. I stopped and didn't know what to think. Most of my life nothing was better because of me it always seems to be worse. So why now is it so different? It's because it's not about me anymore, but it's about the One who changed me. People aren't seeing this old man walking along the Strand, but noticing a light that shines illuminating the joy of the Lord. I remember one of my first prayers after I was saved, I told my Father, "I'm so tired of living this life for me, show me how to live it for You," and He answered my prayer.

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

*Galatians 2:20*

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### **I Wasn't Planning on Being Here**

Often when I talk to people, they would say how amazing it was that they met me at that specific time. Some have said that they weren't planning on walking that day, vacationers were going to leave the day before, or they were going to walk somewhere else. That's what happened yesterday when a young lady saw me. She was astonished to see me and introduced herself. She asked me questions about my ministry, how I started, how long I've been doing this, how many people have I prayed for, what were some of the prayers and many other questions. I love to talk about how God has worked in my life and answered all her questions. I told her about my depression ministry and how faithful God has been in my life. She appeared to hang on my every word while retaining this beautiful smile. Then she told me she usually walks at Carlsbad, but today she felt led to walk here at this time. She asked, "Would you pray for me?" I asked what she needed prayer for. As she thought about it her smile disappeared and a look of anguish replaced it. She said, "I've been in the hospital for a few weeks with a condition. I sell real estate, but haven't been able to work for a while and I'm running out of money. I'm forty years old and I thought I'd be married by now and have children. I haven't even had a serious relationship." She started to cry and apologized for not trusting in God, because at times she feels as if He abandoned her. When she was finished, I said to her, "Why do you think you were led to walk her today? God loves you so much that He sent this old man to tell you that He hears you, He knows where you are and that He has a plan for your life. He'll never give up on you, don't give up on Him. One of my favorite sayings is if

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you want to make God laugh tell Him your plans. If I had my way I wouldn't be alive today, but that wasn't God's plan. Our lives are much more than ourselves, it's reaching out and helping others, that's our purpose. Allow God to continue to guide you on His path, being focused on Him. When you see His plan developing tell others how God is guiding you and encourage others with His love." I held her as we prayed and the Holy Spirit had us both in tears. I gave her my card and told her whenever she wanted to talk to someone just call. She continued to thank me and I said, "This has nothing to do with me all I am is a blue tooth speaker for Christ, He wanted to use me to comfort you today." As she looked at me that beautiful smile returned. She then gave me one last hug before leaving.

As I continued my walk, I thanked God for this amazing life He has given me and thought of a quote from Max Lucado, my favorite author, "Sometimes we need Jesus with flesh on." God has given us that opportunity each day to be Jesus with flesh on for somebody. To be that someone that can bring love, comfort, understanding, to listen and encourage in someone's moment of need. When I got home, I looked in the mirror and said, "Lord I would have thought you can wear a better suit then this." I felt Him say, "No, this one fits me perfectly."

*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

*1 Peter 4:11*

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### Shining My Light

I can't stop but smile lately because of the joy that my Lord has put in my heart. Just a couple of days ago Brando and I were walking in my neighborhood. A couple of my neighbors stopped their car, rolled down the windows and said, "Your smile makes our day." I told them, "God has filled my heart with so much joy I can't help but smile."

When I got down to the Strand, I saw about fifteen young mothers who do an exercise class jogging with their children in strollers which always brings a smile to my face. There was a time they would ignore me and look away, now they are the first to say good morning. As the one mother passed, I yelled, "It's great to see you with your children." She yelled back, "We look forward to seeing your smile. Please pray for us."

As I continued my walk a man stopped and said, "I can use prayer. I'm going through some trials right now, but I know God is still working in my life." After praying with him he said, "When I saw your smile I knew God wanted me to talk to you."

Down at the harbor I met an older gentleman, and he was going back to Oklahoma and wanted prayer for a safe trip. After I was done praying, he started to pray for me to bless my ministry and that I would be a light to others. Each day I do a journal entry picking a verse in a chapter and writing about it. Yesterday I was in the book of Luke and came across

*"No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light.*

*Luke 11:33*

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When you see a light in the darkness, you notice the light, but may not be sure of its source until you get closer. The same holds true with our light, people may need to get closer until you can tell them the source of our joy. May our light shine so bright others would have to squint to look at us.

### **It's A Lot of Fun on the Strand**

I know if I did God's will, my life would have joy, purpose, and a closer relationship with Him, but what I wasn't expecting that it would be so much fun. I truly enjoy each day and never had a day that I didn't laugh and make someone else laugh. I know so many people and they'll stop, and we'll talk, and tell stories. A mother and daughter were carrying a box of donuts and as they were going to pass by, I yelled, "Donuts! I love donuts as a matter of fact donuts and love are about the same thing." The young girl said, "Yes, I believe donuts is a synonym for love too." We talked for a little while and before they left, I said, "I really donut you guys." and they said, "Ahh and we donut you to."

I then came across three surfers that I talk to often. One of them asked, "Why do you think that not all prayers are answered?" I said, "They are, but we don't want to hear no as an answer. When I was I child I heard no more than yes to my requests and as a parent I think I told my kids no more than yes to theirs. Since God is the perfect Father, He knows what is best for us. When Jesus was healing what did the person have to have to be healed? Faith! Jesus would tell them because of their faith their prayer was answered and when the paralytic's friends lowered him through the roof, Jesus said because of his friend's faith he was healed. Prayer is effective if you believe that it will be answered." As we were

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talking a woman approached me and asked if she could take a picture of my shirt and I said, "Of course." After she took a picture of the back I turned around and posed for a front view. Everyone laughed and she said, "Excuse me for bothering you." My three friends said, "No problem we can see Mark any time." When they left, I talked with her and she said, "Seeing your shirt really blessed me. I could use prayer for my husband who's very sick, but the doctors aren't sure exactly what's wrong. He continues to lose weight and isn't digesting food properly." She then shared what her and her family have been going through, and depression came up on the list. I shared my testimony of depression and what I felt he was going through. I said, "Depression is focusing on ourselves and the circumstances we are going through. That focus causes us to see only the problem and we forget what God can do. We get so wrapped up in our thoughts that it doesn't only affect our mental state, but also our physical. It's like anything else in life if we are thinking of good things we feel good, but when we are thinking of bad things we feel anxious. Depression is the constant focus on the bad and not the blessings God has given us and not trusting Him in our situation." I then gave her my card and suggested that she check out my website. We prayed and the Holy Spirit gave her comfort and hope. She asked, "Would it be alright if my husband called you?" I told her I would love to talk with him either on the phone or in person. She told me, "I know God put you in my path today, because the only reason I'm here today was to pray and seek His face." I told her I'm sorry about the face He chose, and she laughed and hugged me then went on her way.

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*“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.*

*Matthew 7:7-8*

### **Being Part of Someone’s Day**

It’s been beautiful at the Strand with clear skies and temperatures reaching the seventies. This wonderful weather always brings out more people walking. I have regulars that I see often, and we stop and talk about whatever is on their hearts and others that see me for the first time will stop wanting to know more about my ministry. I love talking about my Dad and sharing where I was when I didn’t know Him. Then they feel safe to share their own stories with this old man offering prayer.

Brando has his own fan club of children and adults that love dogs, which gives me an opportunity to talk and joke with them. Speaking of joking, I love to share a laugh with those that I meet nothing better than to see a smile on someone’s face and hear laughter. The most rewarding time is when someone asks for prayer. It’s that special intimate time spent with a brother or sister and Jesus. The time when the Holy Spirit takes over and speaks to our hearts. I’ve realized the honor it is when someone allows me to be part of their life even though it might only be for a moment but in that time, I have the opportunity to allow God to make that moment special. God is always encouraging me by putting someone in my path that tells me they heard of me through a friend that I prayed with and how blessed they were.

We all have those moments that we can make someone’s life a little better by being loving, kind and sharing

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our time. These moments aren't random, but arranged meetings set up by God to introduce you to someone He wants you to meet. May we look at these meetings for what they are, a privilege to share a moment in someone's day. Unfortunately, we can also have the opposite effect by being rude, uncaring, and standoffish. The second impression seems to last longer and can ruin someone's day. Just the other day someone driving by stopped and said, "Hi! Thank you for praying for me. It really helped me that day." I told him that it was an honor to spend that time with him. He smiled back then another car stopped behind him and honked his horn and drove around him yelling. The smile quickly was replaced with anger, and he drove away. I wonder if he'll remember the moment we shared being joyful in the Lord or the honk of a horn that broke that moment. In this world we hear a lot of horn honking which distracts us from hearing our Lord. Our God speaks to us in that still small voice and not the loud noise of this world so we need to make the effort to be still and listen.

*And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake;<sup>12</sup> and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.*

*1 Kings 19:11-12*

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### Chapter 2 - Sharing My Testimony

#### God's Timing and Love

God's timing and love is always perfect. I've seen it more and more as I walk the Strand. Today seemed as if God wasn't going to have me pray with anyone as I walked up and down the Strand. I talked to a few people, and we shared our faith in Christ and what He has done in our lives. I was walking to my car when this young couple walking their dog came up to me. She said, "This is our third time we passed you today. We've been working up the courage to ask you to pray for us." I asked what they needed prayer for. It was general request for health and for our country, but nothing specific. We prayed for their marriage, comfort, guidance and wisdom. I'm not sure how it came up, but I brought up my struggle with depression and how I tried to end my life over twenty years ago. The young lady stuttered a little and said, "If you wouldn't mind could you tell me what was happening when you decided to commit suicide. I'm asking because I'm suffering from depression and the strain is taking a toll on our marriage." I shared my testimony and what I went through and how God freed me from depression with prayer. I told her, "There is a moment when you feel the anxiety coming and then the moment turns into depression. In that short moment before going into depression I would say a short prayer like; God I can't take this burden please help me, I know you are there please comfort me, I know You will never leave or forsake me or whatever the Holy Spirit would put on my heart at that time. Then instead of focusing on whatever was causing my anxiety I was focused on my Father and His love for me. I remember when I first started doing this, I

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would pray over a hundred times a day, because the devil didn't want to let go."

With tears in her eyes, she nodded to let me know she knew what I meant. After talking for a while, I gave her my card and we were close enough to my car so I gave her a copy of my book. She was amazed that God would put on their heart to ask for pray after passing me three times. I said, "That's God's love. He never gives up on us and He knows exactly where we are and what we need. He even picked this spot where we're close enough to my car to give you this book." She asked if she could give me a hug and I told her that would be wonderful. As she was hugging me and crying, I looked over to see her husband with tears in his eyes mouthing the words, "thank you."

When I suffered from depression it was the worst time of my life, six suicide attempts, institutionalized seven times, more pills than I can remember, and electroshock therapy. However, God has used this terrible time in my life to help comfort others and I would gladly go through it again to make the difference God has allowed me to make. Can't wait to hear some of the stories when I get home.

*And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.*

*Mark 5:20*

### **God Loves His Children**

It amazes me how God cares for His children. He knows where we are and what we need, and He loves using His children to help each other. The definition I like for coincidence is a miracle God didn't get the credit for.

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Yesterday I left a little later than normal. I walked down the Strand taking time to talk to people and finally made it to the harbor. On the way back from the harbor I was passing a restaurant. People were coming the other way, so I got close to the patio area and a lady was sitting by herself having lunch and said, "I need prayer." As she said it tears came from her eyes and I asked, "What do you need prayer for?" She looked at me and said "I'm dealing with depression and I don't know what to do." I smiled thinking how God arranged this meeting. As she sat at her table facing the harbor I stood on the grass and the Holy Spirit came to comfort her. After praying I told her that depression is real as any other physical condition and shared a little of my testimony. She started to cry and said, "Everyone keeps telling me to basically suck it up and get over it." I told her, "I know you can get over it, but you're going to need help from God and instead of feeling depressed He will replace those feelings with joy, love and purpose, but you need to spend time with Him." She thanked me as the expression of despair was replaced by a smile. As I was walking away, I thought what are the chances of me passing by at that time when she would see my shirt and ask for prayer? The chances are one out of One. When God is involved, there is no long shots but He plans everything perfectly. One prayer that will always be answered is, "God use me today."

*Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:*

*"Whom shall I send,*

*And who will go for Us?"*

*Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."*

*Isaiah 6:8*

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### Remembering Her Sister

There is a young lady I see often and she would wave and smile from her bicycle as she rode by. Today she wanted to stop and talk. She said, “My sister died of a drug overdose about four years ago and today would have been her birthday. I’ve been struggling with my sister’s death and I used to live that same type of lifestyle. I have two kids and I want to be a better mom for them and that’s the only reason I stopped doing drugs and going out. It’s been a real struggle and today just made it worse. When I saw you, I felt led to come over and ask for prayer.” She was trying to compose herself as I held her hand and we went before our Father for comfort, strength, guidance and hope. God showed up in a big way as we prayed. He told her we have a choice to suffer with our trials or learn from them and use them for His glory. He has always been with her and would never leave or forsake her and she needs to grow closer to Him and He will guide her on her journey. After praying I shared my testimony on depression and said, “God has used the worst part of my life to help others and I know God wants the same thing for you.” We talked for a little while longer and she asked if she could give me a hug. I never say no to a hug. As I was holding her, I felt as if I was holding my daughter and this was an opportunity to comfort her. This was something I rarely did with my real daughter, because depression is a very self-focused condition and all I thought about was me. However today God allowed me to experience what I should have experienced a long time ago.

I continue to see this young lady but now she stops and talks with me. She thanks me for being there and when we talk or pray it brings her peace. She talks about being a single

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mom and about her two children that she loves. As time went by instead of asking for prayer, she would ask me if she could pray for me. I would always say, "I never pass up prayer." Over time I could see the change in her as she drew closer to God and trusted in Him. She would always have this awesome smile on her face as she passed by on her bike yelling, "Hi Mark!"

Recently she told me she was moving out of state and how God opened a door for a terrific job and an opportunity to own a home. The day before she left, she searched for me to say goodbye and that she loved the times we talked. I said, "I love you and that I know God has a great adventure for you and your family. Thank you for sharing your precious time with this old man." We shared a final hug before she rode off.

God has allowed me to be part of other people's lives and I can't tell you what an honor that is. The Strand isn't only my church, it's also my family and every day is a family reunion as I meet new brothers and sisters. I have these reunions every day and my Father never misses one. He sure does love being with His kids.

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*

*1 John 3:1*

### **We're God's Messengers**

Church at the Strand was great as always. Most days Satan tries to stop me with sickness or pain in my body, but once I get out of the car and moving, I feel God's presence. However, the last couple of days my back has really been

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hurting making it difficult to walk. I walked to the end of the Strand today and wasn't sure if I could make it to the harbor. I stopped and prayed and felt led to go on. Pain started to subside a little and I continued to the harbor. As I was coming back a gentleman, who lives on a boat, said, "I don't need prayer, what I need is a dog." I stopped with Brando and the man came over and petted him. He told me. "I had to put my dog down a couple of months ago and I'm really struggling with it. You probably wouldn't pray for me to die, would you?" I said, "If God thought that would be the best thing for you, we wouldn't be talking right now." I shared some of my testimony with him and told him, "People that commit suicide don't really want to die they just can't imagine living another day. Satan's greatness weapons are depression and suicide and he's a great con man, convincing so many we shouldn't be here. What he does is have you focus on your pain and when you're not watching he steals your joy. God has given you gifts and talents that He still wants you to use. What do you think yours are?" He thought for a minute and said he was a teacher and told me a story about an unruly five-year-old boy and how his mother swears at him, and he would swear back. I said, "It's interesting when you were talking about the pain you are going through that you thought of this young boy. I'm guessing you made a difference in his life." He broke down and cried and I said, "God's not done with you. Don't you think your life would be worth living if you could help someone else like you helped that boy?" He then spoke and I just listened. Sometimes the best thing you can give someone is to simply to be there for them. He thanked me and went down to his boat. God loves us so much

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and knows where we are and what we need. He sent me today to remind His child of that.

Over time I would continue to see him and he would stop to talk and tell me what was happening in his life. As the encounters got more frequent, he began to ask for pray, but not just for him but for others God has surrounded him with. He eventually got another dog and would wake up early in the morning to walk him instead of sleeping in. He would occasionally go to Arizona where he had a girlfriend, then come back and tell me about his adventure.

As time went by his health was getting worse and you can see that his body was getting more and more fragile. I stopped seeing him assuming he was spending more time in Arizona. A woman who also lived on a boat in the harbor came up to me to tell me that he passed away a few days earlier. She told me he talked about me a lot and that he enjoyed the times I prayed with him. When I first met him, I don't think that he was a believer and I'm hoping the time we spent together opened his heart to our Lord and Savior. I pray that I'll see him again when I get home. I'll be able to tell him about the people he touched at the harbor including me.

*And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

*Ephesians 4:32*

### **God's Loving Touch**

I walked down the road to begin my journey and stopped at the restroom. When I got out to wash my hands a lady tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Can we pray?" She was standing there with her two adult daughters, and I said,

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“What should we pray for?” She said, “My stepfather committed suicide a year ago and we’re still struggling with that.” I must have looked surprised. I told them my testimony of depression, my suicide attempts and shared how God is using my testimony to help others. As I was speaking the younger one and her mother started crying. They both suffer from depression and have attempted suicide. Then the mother and daughter showed me a tattoo that was on their wrist which said, “I Can Do This.” We held hands as the Holy Spirit led us all in a prayer of love and purpose. He encouraged us to seek God’s purpose using the gifts, testimony and talents that He has blessed us with. The Holy Spirit assured us that God doesn’t make mistakes and we have been created perfectly in His eyes.

After praying and wiping the tears from our eyes, we talked about how hard pressed, we are because we don’t see the faces of others because of the masks some people were wearing and how touching others is forbidden because of COVID. They asked if they could hug me before they left, and I said, “I would love it.”

There is something special about a hug, it’s comforting, loving and peaceful. When Jesus said when two or more are gathered, I am in the midst, so it was a group hug with my Lord’s arms around us all. I believe touch is important to God when Jesus healed, He didn’t stand six feet away, even though He could. He touched the leper, a person no one would touch, the blind first felt His loving touch before being healed and the paralytic that people would ignore was touched by their healer before being cured. It’s going to be exciting when I get to heaven and meet the wonderful people

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God has put in my path and share the stories of His loving grace. What a group hug that will be.

*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*

*Matthew 18:20*

### **No Is an Answer**

God has put so many wonderful people in my path from all over the country and world. A lot of the prayer requests deal with depression and anxiety which is understandable with all that is happening in our world. I find myself not only praying but sharing my testimony and what God has taught me over the years.

The other day I prayed for a mother and her adult daughter. The daughter was suffering from anxiety because of the struggles of raising her young child and trying to be a good wife. She said, “I’ve been praying but I haven’t seen any answers to my prayers.” I shared my testimony and said, “My last suicide attempt was on April 6, 1998. Before I took the drugs, that should have ended my life, I decided to pray for the first time. I told God I didn’t feel that I belonged in hell I’ve done the best I could, I was faithful to my wife, met my children needs and really didn’t do anything that bad. I understand however I don’t belong in heaven either, and I don’t blame You for not wanting me there. Please let me just go away, it would be like I was never here which would be better for everyone. That was my first prayer and God answered it.” They looked a little confused and I said, “His answer was no. No is an answer. We’re like children and don’t like to hear it, but when raising children, we say no

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more than we do yes to their requests, because we know what's best for them. So, when God says no, listen to Him, and He'll show you why. Instead of telling God what you want, ask Him what His will is for your life. We have the privilege of talking to the creator of all things. I think He would know what's best for us. Next time you pray tell Him your concerns, then lay them at His feet and say Your will be done. After all that is what Jesus did.”

The three of us held hands and went before our Father. I prayed for wisdom knowing He gives it generously according to His word, I asked for the fruit of the spirit which is already in His children, peace, patient, joy, faithfulness and self-control. I then asked that this young mother and wife would spend more time with her Father than her problems. Then ended with not our will but yours be done. After praying I suggested, “Find time before you start your day to pray and read God's word. That's how you are going to hear God talk to you. He'll place verses on your heart to get you through each day. A verse you might want to take to heart is:

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup> and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 4:6-7*

They thanked me and both hugged me before I went. I felt this overwhelming peace about me and stopped and thanked God for saying no the first time we spoke.

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### **Our Trials Can Be Someone Else's Gift**

God has turned my mourning into dancing. Before Christ I was the worst person I knew. Suffering from depression made me so self-centered I didn't have time for anyone else, including my family. I read in a book, "The opposite of love isn't hate, but selfishness." My life has proved that statement true. Being born again is truly that, God took my old heart of stone and in return He blessed me with a heart of flesh. I'm still a sinner and without Christ's love and the Holy Spirit I could have easily slipped back into that horrible person. Have you ever felt as if you are hanging on by a thread? Don't worry God is holding onto the other end.

God has blessed me with such an unbelievable life there is no words to show my gratitude. I get up each morning with Him and spend time walking in one of the most beautiful places I know, meeting and talking to wonderful people. God uses me to talk to His children, but the greatest thing I have to offer is the pain I went through suffering from depression. Yesterday as I was walking just enjoying another wonderful day a couple came up to me. They told me how much they loved my shirt and asked how my ministry began. I explained how God put me on this path and how I suffered from depression most of my life. I told them about my six suicide attempts and how God decided to keep me around for a while. The woman began to cry as her husband held her. Through the tears she said, "I suffer from depression and I'm having a hard time getting through it. My 22-year-old son committed suicide a year ago by shooting himself. I can't comprehend his decision to do something like that." I spent almost an hour sharing the things and thoughts I went through. I was

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able to tell her what I felt she was going through, and she was amazed that I knew her pain. I said, “It was no one’s fault that your son decided to take his life. People who commit suicide don’t want to die, but they are in so much pain they can’t imagine living another day and dying seems like the only way to escape that pain. Satan was more than happy to reassure your son that ending his life was the only way to avoid more pain. I can only imagine what you’re going through, but instead of asking why my son, maybe you need to pray and ask God how do you want me to use this pain to help someone?” With arms wrapped around each other you could hear her quiet sobs as we prayed. Afterwards we hugged and they thanked me. I told them if there is anything I can do please feel free to call me and I gave them my contact information.

One of the greatest gifts we can give someone is to share how God worked in our lives through our greatest trials. Lord thank you for getting me through my darkest times may it be a light to those who need to see You.

*And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;<sup>4</sup> and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

*Romans 5:3-4*

### **Man in the Mirror**

Yesterday on my walk I heard someone call my name and as I looked around there was a mother with her adult daughter. I must have prayed with them before but didn’t recognize them. The mother said, “We were hoping to see you today. We rented a cottage here for the week. We’ve been

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having problems and was hoping this vacation would help, but it's not. I don't know what to do and was hoping that you would pray with us. My husband suffers from depression, and he is very abusive to both me and our daughter. He doesn't hit us but the verbal abuse is more than we can stand and I don't think I can take it any longer." I told her, "Men with depression have uncontrollable anger, they act superior, don't allow others to explain or talk when they are in these moods, belittles their family and doesn't spend much time with them. Men that are depressed hate themselves and that hate turns to anger, lashing out at others releases some of that self-hate that they have. They don't spend time with others because they're so self-consumed, they need to hide, can't show affection because they don't know how, and they feel as if they are in a pit with no way out. The most important thing to remember that this is not your fault." They just looked at me with tears rolling down their faces and asked, "How do you know so much?" I said, "I used to be that man that your husband is now. I never actually knew the pain I caused my family, because I was so wrapped up in my own pain and didn't think of them. The most important thing you can do now is exactly what we are going to do and that is to pray. This will be something you'll need to do often." She looked at me and said, "I can't believe you were that kind of man." I said, "I was probably worse, but if God can change me, He can surely change your husband." We held hands as the Holy Spirit spoke to them. He gave them comfort, peace and let them know He is always there. After praying, the three of us hugged and cried, I gave them my contact information in hopes her husband might want to talk. The last few days the verse that kept coming to mind was:

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*But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good,*

*Genesis 50:20*

The evil of my own depression God is using for good. There is nothing He can't do.

### **Sharing My Story with a Brother**

There is a young man I meet on occasion; who works at one of the condo complexes by the Strand. He's been a Christian for a little over a year and is on fire for the Lord. He's involved in the youth ministry for ninth and tenth graders at his church and one day he asked if we could get together and talk. We set up a time and met at a coffee shop on the Strand. He asked, "How did you become a Christian and what has it been like?" I must have talked for an hour sharing my testimony, things that I've done, trials I've gone through, my walks on the Strand and how God has always been faithful getting me through every situation. When I thought he might have heard enough he would encourage me to go on. He didn't ask many questions, but just listened. I encouraged him to seek God and follow whatever He tells him to do. I prayed for him, and the prayer was the Holy Spirit telling him, he will be used to glorify God. I was flying after our meeting and sat down for a moment with Brando. I thought about the things that I shared with this young man both bad times and good and I started picturing how God was always with me. Sometimes I don't remember seeing Him when I was going through the hard times, but then there were days I saw Him so vividly putting me in the right place at the right time protecting me from myself. The stroll through

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memory lane was humbling and opened my eyes even further to His grace. When I use to teach my depression class I would say, “The past should be a guide post helping us go in the right direction and not a hitching post that won’t allow us to go further.” God is now using my past to help guide others closer to Him.

I looked forward to seeing that young man as I passed by the condos. He would share how his ministry was doing and how much he liked to give the message to his youth group. He applied for a part time position at his church and he became the assistant pastor for the junior high ministry. I would share about my encounters at the Strand while he shared special moments in his ministry. He told me he applied for a full-time position and asked if we could pray that God would guide him. The Holy Spirit told him that he will be used to glorify God.

A few months went by and I didn’t see him, and I wondered what happened to this young man. I finally asked one of the other workers and they told me he was in the hospital. I found out that his mother worked there and went to the office to talk to her. She told me that he had a rare blood disease and that he was in a coma. I kept checking with his mother on his progress. He was getting better, but still in the hospital. When they finally released him, his mother asked the workers at the condos if they see me to tell me he’s home and getting better.

A few more months went by and I saw him at work. He was much heavier because of all the medication he was on and still a little weak. He said, “I’ve been looking for you to tell you I’m getting better.” I said, “You have quite a testimony

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to share. The Holy Spirit said you were going to be used to glorify God and He often uses trials to accomplish that.”

As time went by, he got the full-time pastor position at the church and now only works a couple of days a week at the condos so I don't see as much. Each day I pass by that little coffee shop where we spent the morning sharing God's grace thinking one day I'll see him sitting there with someone else sharing how God worked in his life. I know God has great plans for him and will use him to touch the lives of His children.

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

*Matthew 28:19*

### **Don't Mess with the Temple**

As I walked down the harbor a man was yelling, “Sir!” I turned around and he said, “Do you really pray for people? I said, “Yes.” He asked if I would pray for him. I said, “What do you need prayer for?” He told me he was contemplating divorce and suicide. When he said suicide, it seemed like everything went black for a moment. He said, “My wife makes me feel like I'm nothing and just the thought of being with her makes me depressed.” I shared my testimony on depression and my suicide attempts then said, “The reason you're depressed is because this is all you think about. I learned no one can make you mad, angry, sad, happy or make you feel bad about yourself you have to give them the power

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to do that. You're here in this beautiful place living in the past and imagining a terrible future and not enjoying the blessings God has given you. Believe me if you thought about all that God has given you and His blessings that would conquer your anxiety. I bet you're even imagining if you commit suicide how bad that would make your wife feel and that comforts you in some way. I know I went through the same weird thoughts when I was suffering from depression." He looked surprised as I spoke. I held him as we went to our Father and the Holy Spirit pushed me aside and spoke to His child with love and understanding. He told him that there is a plan and a purpose to the life God gave him. He was reminded when he gave his life to Christ, so it's no longer his own, he is now the temple of the Holy Spirit and has no right to destroy that temple that God had built. Since he is that temple, he has access to God and can go to Him whenever he wants. He was reminded that he was loved more than he could imagine, to be patient and wait on the Lord and to trust Him. At the end of the prayer, he was crying, and I held him for a moment. I said, "Only worry about what you can control and realize the only thing you can control is yourself." I gave him my contact information and told him to call me whenever he needed me. As I walked back, I thought about the prayer and realized it was everything the Holy Spirit has been telling me all along on my journey and then He put it on my heart.

*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

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### Where Does Suicide Lead?

The other day I was talking to a dear brother who knows my past with depression and my several failed suicide attempts. He asked me what I thought about a believer who commits suicide. I said, “When I tried to commit suicide, I was not a believer and would be burning in Hell right now. If I was a believer, I thought I would go to heaven because Jesus said:

*And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. “*

*John 10:28*

He said, “I feel we can’t automatically believe that they were still saved but that it was up to God to judge, and we really don’t know. If that was true why would any believer not take their life and get home sooner and not go through the pain they might suffer here? To tell others that there is a shortcut to going home may be a fatal mistake and that we don’t know what God’s judgement would be.” I agreed and started my walk again while thinking of our conversation.

I thought of John 10:28 again that no one can snatch us out of God’s hand, but it doesn’t say anything about us jumping off on our own. He calls us a new creation *we are the Lord’s Romans 14:8, His masterpiece Ephesians 2:10, His children 1John 3, His temple 1 Corinthians 3:16 and we were bought with a price 1 Corinthians 6:20.*

We are God’s and not our own. When we are saved, we typically say, “I gave my life to Christ.” So, when someone takes their life, they are taking something that doesn’t belong to them any longer. I agree with my brother that it’s not for

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us to say what happens to God's children in this situation, only God knows. For myself I don't want to stand in front of my Savior on judgement day and admit I didn't have the faith to finish the race. I live to hear the words well done good and faithful servant and not where was your faith.

*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? <sup>17</sup> If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.*

*1 Corinthians 3:16-17*

### **The Jogger**

What an amazing day I had today. I only walked a few yards at the Strand when a young man who was jogging on the other side of the road came over to me. He told me, "I really need prayer, I see you each day and feel God leading me to pray with you." I asked him what he needed prayer for, and he said, "I'm suffering from depression and just a few months ago I tried to commit suicide. I'm struggling with my relationship with my girlfriend and to be honest I don't treat her very well. I'm also having a difficult time finding a job." As he was telling me his story, I got chills and when he was finished, I shared my testimony of depression. We were both in tears seeing how God had put us together that day. The prayer was from a loving Father comforting and encouraging his child, giving him hope, that He has a plan for his life and to have faith. I said, "God guided me out of depression by drawing close to Him. Every morning, I read my bible, journal and the most important thing is to pray throughout the day. Praying keeps your mind on Christ and not on this world or your problems. Get involved in a church and serve others

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using the gifts God has given you.” He was very sweaty, but I didn’t care I needed to hug him and hugged we did. I gave him my card and we hugged one last time before he continued jogging.

A few weeks later I was talking to Steve, a brother I see on a regular basis. As we were talking, I saw the gentleman I prayed with jogging past me. He stopped and came over and gave me the greatest praise report, he said, “I was hoping to see you today. God is really working in my life and I’m in His word, praying each day and attending church like you said. For the first time in a long time, I feel hope and purpose.” He couldn’t stop thanking me for my help and love. He gave me a hug and continued jogging. I tried to compose myself and told Steve I better get going. I talk to many people but I don’t know whether they are saved or not. I’m not sure what kind of impact is being made when they see me praying for others, but God knows. The next day I saw Steve and after we talked for a while, he said, “You better get going you’re making a difference in people’s lives.” I said, “It’s all God He just likes using the foolish things of this world.”

Since the beginning of my journey walking at the Strand God blesses me each day, but even if He didn’t yesterday’s encounter would have been more than enough. As I was walking my jogging brother came up to me and gave me this great hug and said, “I came down today looking for you. I didn’t want to call or email you but wanted to talk to you in person. God has been working in my life, my relationship with my girlfriend is the best it has ever been since I’m putting her needs before mine. I even prayed with her and her friend who was sick which shocked both of them. People are noticing the difference in me. I’m going to be

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starting a new job this Monday and it's a job I really wanted and I know I'll be good at it. My life is changing now that I'm putting God first in my life and it's all because of you." I stopped him to say, "It's all God, He just wanted to use me to open your eyes to His love for you." He hugged me again and told me he loved me. We were both excited then prayed, thanking God for His love, mercy, and giving Him the glory. Then he looked at me and said, "You were right, life is worth living." He pulled out his wallet and showed me the card I gave him the first day we met. It's now tattered, and he said, "I pull it out and it reminds me to pray, and that God has a purpose for my life." After the hundredth hug he said goodbye and went on his way. As I was walking and crying, I thought about the first time I thought that life was worth living and remembered the night I prayed to my Heavenly Father thanking Him for making me, me. I thought if this man was the only reason God had put me on the Strand it was worth it, but He continues to show me there is more to be done.

*However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you."*

*Mark 5:19*

### **Suicide By Train**

There's a brother who works at a coffee shop on the Strand and confided in me that he is having difficulty dealing with some people. He asked for prayer for patience and forgiveness. He told me there are people in his life that he trusted and have turned on him. I told him, "The bible never

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tells you to put your trust in others but only to love them. When scripture tells you to do on to others as you want them done onto you, there is no stimulation that they would have to treat you in a special way before you do that. God's Word tells us how we are supposed to be no matter what our circumstances are." We prayed for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, strength and wisdom, then hugged.

The next day I saw him again and I asked how he was doing? He said, "I'm actually doing pretty good. I took your advice and whenever I feel I'm swaying from God's will I come before Him with a short prayer to get me back into His will." I told him, "We are here only to please one person and that's God and the more time we spend with Him and in His Word, He'll show us how to do that."

As I continued my walk a lady I see often was with two other friends. She asked me if I heard of the man who just the other day was killed by a train nearby. I told her I didn't and even though the news didn't say we assumed it was suicide. She said, "When she heard it, she thought of me, because of my depression testimony." I shared my suicide attempts and my past suffering from depression with the other two ladies and explained, "I feel that people who commit suicide don't want to die, they just can't imagine living another day. People lose hope and feel there is nothing good for them and they decide to quit. At times the idea of living another day is as close to hell as they want to be. Our society spends so much time and money on trying to heal depression instead helping others find their purpose in this life." I continued to share parts of my life with depression and the one lady had tears rolling down her eyes as I spoke. She shared that her brother committed suicide

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just a year earlier. I gave them my card and told them to share it with anyone that they feel it would help.

When I started my walks at the Strand it was the height of COVID and one of the most frequent prayer requests was because a loved one took their life. God puts me in the path of so many either suffering from depression or someone close to them is battling with it and it's a battle you can't win alone. The enemy is too strong to defeat without the help of God. I learned that firsthand.

*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

John 16:33

### **God's Perfect Timing**

A few days ago, I was walking past the driveway of a condo complex when a young man comes out yelling, "I need prayer!" He seemed amazed to see me and said, "I can't believe that you're here. I'm struggling and suffering from anxiety. I was just praying that God would help me and then I saw you." I told him, "I would love to pray with you." With hands on each other's shoulders, he began the prayer saying, "Lord please forgive me, I'm sorry for my lack of faith." When he was finished the Holy Spirit picked up the prayer it was from his Father telling him that he is loved, he has a purpose, that he is exactly who he was supposed to be and He would like to spend more time with him. When we were finished, we hugged and cried. I shared my testimony on depression along with my numerous suicide attempts.

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He broke down and confessed, "I tried to end my life last night by taking an overdose, but when I woke up, I was still alive. I asked God, "Why am I still here, if I'm supposed to be here, give me a sign. I then walked out and saw you." I said, "God loves you so much that He sent this old man to let you know that He loves you, and He knows where you are and what you need." I shared some things that I've learned on my journey but two things I emphasize that our life is only a day at a time and the only things we should worry about are the things we can change and realize the only thing we can change is ourselves. He seemed comforted by that, and I told him whatever is in the past is over, now today you can spend your time being the man God has called you to be. He gave me this huge hug and thanked me for praying with him and I said, "It's always an honor to be used by God." I gave him my card and told him to call me any time. I left in awe knowing how God orchestrated that encounter and continued to pray for this young man as I walked along.

The next day as I was walking, I heard someone yelling my name, it was that young man. He was on an electric scooter as he drove by, he yelled, "What a great day to be alive." I started to cry thinking how God used this old fool to help this young man. As I continued my walk I thought to myself each day is a great day if we only take them one at a time knowing our Lord is walking by our side. This life is only temporary and each day is a step closer to being home.

*"For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come".*

*Hebrews 13:14*

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### Using the Comfort God Has Given Me

It's been amazing how God continues to use my old life of depression to help others on my walks. There are two men that walk together that I've been seeing for a few weeks. They introduced themselves and we talk about anything that comes to mind. The other day one of the men asked, "Why do you seem to be so happy all the time?" I shared that my joy comes from my close walk with God. I explained to him what my life was before God and how I suffered from depression and my many suicide attempts. The next day one of the men was looking for me. When he found me, he said, "I'm suffering from depression and all I can think about is ending my life. I don't feel I can share the way I feel with anyone including my wife and because of that my marriage isn't doing well." We must have talked for over thirty minutes on the sidewalk as I tried to comfort him and give him hope. Before he left, I gave him my card and contact information and told him, "I'll make myself available whenever you need me."

I saw him a couple days later and he still seemed down. I asked how he was doing? He said, "I don't like the way my wife treats me. She makes me so mad and I think that what causes my depression." I said, "That's a good excuse not to take any responsibility for yourself. No one can make you mad, sad, happy or depressed, they don't have that power over you unless you give it to them. You should only be concerned by what you can control and the only thing you can control is yourself. God gives you this life just a day at a time so you have an opportunity to be the best you can be each day. Who knows by being a better man it might change the way people treat you." He then said he was going

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away for a while to help sort things out. I said, “If you’re going to be by yourself, you might be keeping some bad company unless you spend that time with God and prayer. If you read God’s word when you’re away you might hear Him directing your path.”

I saw him a few weeks later as he returned from his getaway. He came up to me and I asked how he was doing. He told me he was doing much better and was working on his marriage. I told him the only thing you need to work on is you and everything else will fall in place. After talking for a while he hugged and thanked me. Before parting I reminded him just a day at a time.

*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

*Matthew 6:34*

### **An RV Encounter**

Today God had a special assignment for me. I went down to the harbor where the RV Parking is and a couple were there sitting in lawn chairs. They looked up and I said, “Good morning.” She said in a sorrowful tone that she could use prayer as her husband held her hand. Then said, “I’m very anxious and planning to get off my depressant medication and I’m not sure what’s going to happen.” After she spoke, I said, “God must really love you to send this old man to let you know He is watching over you and whatever you’re going through He’ll be with you.” I shared my history of suffering from depression and how God lifted me up out of that pit. I said, “The prescription God gave me to cure my

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anxiety was prayer. As soon as I felt anxious, I would say a simple prayer like; Lord, please take this burden from me, I know you're there because You would never leave me or forsake me, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me and whatever else the Holy Spirit put on my heart. Then instead of thinking of the circumstance that was causing me to be anxious I was thinking of God and that comforted me. We can talk to God anytime and as His children it pleases Him. Whenever you feel troubled, you can just set those burdens at His feet. Now instead of troubling thoughts racing through your mind God will comfort you as He reminds you of how precious you are in is sight." The three of us went into prayer and the Holy Spirit knew what she needed to hear. After the prayer we were all teared up but they wanted to hear more on how God worked in my life. I shared my website information and the book I had written. I said, "I discovered our moods are dictated on what we focus on. For instance, if you focus on bad things, you feel bad and in turn if you focus on the good you feel good and you can't do both at the same time. You're here in this beautiful place and you're missing the beauty because you have clouded your mind with negative thoughts. The bible tells us our lives are to be lived only a day at a time and today is the day the Lord has made and we should be glad and rejoice in it. The past is gone and there is nothing we can do to change it, but if we choose to live there, we will experience all those terrible feelings over and over again. However, if you decide to live today you can look around, see your husband who loves you, see God's beautiful creation and think of all the blessings you have. Just us talking and breathing are blessings from God we take for granted. As far

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as our future if you allow God He will guide and protect you.” When I was about to leave, she said, “We were supposed to leave last night but felt led to stay one more night. Now I know why. He wanted me to meet you today.” I left praising God with tears in my eyes not knowing why He blesses me so much. When I started this journey, I thought this is going to be a sacrifice for me to do this each day, but He showed me something different. What I’ve been doing is His will for my life and by doing it I found my purpose, my joy, the closest walk I’ve ever had with my Lord, love for others, peace and so much more. For God wasn’t looking for a sacrifice from me but simply obedience to His calling.

*So Samuel said:*

*“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,  
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?  
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,  
And to heed than the fat of rams.*

*1 Samuel 15:22*

We worry about the things of this world that we have no control over, instead of focusing on that small circle of people God puts in our life where we can make a difference. The prayer that started my journey was simply, “God, you have given me this precious time what would you like me to do with it?” Ask Him and listen to what He says. He has such a wonderful plan for your life, let Him fulfill it and enjoy the journey.

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### **I Guess I Wasn't a Mistake After All**

Yesterday I was invited to speak at a retirement home. I love speaking because I know God has opened a door for me to speak to His children through me. The week before He put on my heart the things he wanted me to say and I didn't have to write it down on paper God wrote it on my heart. I shared my depression ministry and the last day I tried to end my life. I said, "I talked to God for the first time and explained to Him that I didn't feel I deserved to go to hell. I was faithful to my wife, took care of the children He had given me and felt I didn't do anything terrible to anyone else. I then said I wasn't worthy to go to heaven and I understand why You wouldn't want me there. So, would You end this miserable life? It would be as if I was never here, which would be better for everyone. Basically, I told God He made a mistake when He created me. Shortly after I received Jesus as my Lord and savior, God continued to show me that He doesn't make mistakes. We are all God's workmanship and I know at times especially at this time of our lives we don't feel that way, but God has put in us talents He wants us to use for His glory until it's time to go home. We may look in a mirror and not see it but to God we are His masterpiece and He wants to show off His work. Unfortunately, the greatest piece of art would be worthless if no one ever sees it. We are called to be a light may it shine so bright that when others see us, they would have to squint." When I was finished the people applauded and came up to talk to me. Afterwards I thought about that time at the beach when I told Him I didn't belong here He must have laughed knowing I was right where I was supposed to be.

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*your eyes saw my unformed body.  
All the days ordained for me  
were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.*

*Psalm 139:16*

### **Be Anxious for Nothing**

For over a year I would periodically see this mother with her teenage daughter. The first time we met the daughter was very quiet and didn't look directly at me, but the mother was curious about my prayer ministry at the Strand. I shared how God directed me in having my shirts made and how each day was planned with the people He wanted me to meet and what to say. I explained this was the best part of my life as God continues to introduce me to new people and that I never have gone a day without meeting someone new. Then I shared my depression testimony and how I continued to try to end my life because I didn't want to go through the pain of living each day. As I was speaking the young girl looked up. I could tell this must be what she was going through and it must have been what they were talking about before we met. The mother said, "We're Catholic and I've been telling my daughter that she should be going to church." The daughter finally broke her silence and said, "I'm not very religious." I told her, "You know who else wasn't very religious, Jesus?" She looked confused. I said, "The only people Jesus criticized was the religious leaders of that day, because their manmade rules were keeping people away from knowing God on a personal level. God loves you more than you can know and has a specific plan for your life, but to discover that plan we need to speak with Him each

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day. When I tried to commit suicide, it wasn't because I wanted to die it was because I felt my life had no purpose and I felt worthless. If something is worthless you throw it away and that was my plan. In God's word it tells us that we are all made exactly as we are with gifts and abilities, we need to fulfill God's purpose. He wants to walk with us each day filled with His Holy Spirit to help us fulfill that purpose." By now she was crying and shaking as her mother watched with tears in her eyes. I said, "If you want to know why you are here, ask the One who created you." She looked me directly in my eyes and came over and gave me this amazing hug and it was as if she didn't want to let go. As I was hugging her, I looked over at her mother as she mouthed the words, "Thank you."

I would see them periodically, and they both always seemed excited to see me. The mother called me Mr. Mark and she would ask how I was doing. I would share the stories of the people I met and prayed with and how God has filled my life with joy and love. They would both listen intently and would ask questions afterwards.

Just the other day I saw them across the street and you can hear the mother yelling, "Mr. Mark!" I walked across the street and it appeared they must have been having a rather serious conversation. They asked how I was doing and I told them of the marvelous things God was doing in my life. The mother looked at me and then down at her daughter as if to say she's not doing that well. I said, "God is using the worst parts of my life to help me draw closer to Him and to help the people He surrounds me with. I would go through all of those difficulties again so God could use them to help others." The daughter looked down and the mother asked,

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“What do you think my daughter should do?” I answered, “There is no one solution for everyone because God made each one of us different and the only solution is to draw closer to our Father and ask Him. I discovered the more people you ask for advice, the more confused you get. They can only tell you what they think is best from their experiences, which aren’t the same as ours. When you get that special relationship with Jesus that is where you are going to find your joy and purpose, but like any relationship you are going to need to put in the time and effort to make it work. You’ll need to get into the Bible so you can understand your part in this relationship, pray as often as possible so you can hear from your Father and enjoy each day as it comes.” By now both were crying and she looked into my eyes and I said, “God doesn’t make mistakes, you’re a masterpiece He created and He wants you to see that through His eyes.” She came into my arms and held me tight while her mother looked on. I told her, “I love you but not nearly as much as God loves you.” I gave the mother my card and told them if they ever need me. After thanking me several times they went on their way. I stopped to thank my Father for using me and I began to cry. I thought I shouldn’t be here according to my plans I should have been dead a long time ago, but He never gave up on me and I know He won’t give up on her.

Every time the young girl would see me, she would smile but still didn’t talk very much. One day I met them near my car. After talking for a while I asked if she would like a copy of my book? She said, “Yes.” I went over to my car and got a copy and handed it to her. A month went by and I saw them while I was talking to someone else. They waited

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until I was done and came over to me. The mom appeared to be really excited and said to her daughter, “Tell him or I will.” The young girl with this awesome smile on her face said, “I read your book in just two days. It was wonderful. I didn’t realize all that you went through and the feelings you had are similar to mine. You were right I am here for a reason and I’ve been asking God what that reason is.” I stood there trying to hold back tears while her mother was unable to do that. I wanted to just hold her in my arms but before I could ask for a hug she said, “Can I hug you?” I held her as I would my own daughter and she whispered in my ear, “Thank you.” Her mother then came up and asked for a hug. To calm my emotions, I made a joke and said, “Yes as long as you don’t get any snot on me.” She said, “I can’t make any promises.” We hugged and said our goodbyes. I sat in my car for a moment crying uncontrollably, thanking God for using me. If the only reason God had me write that book was for her, in my heart it’s a best seller.

*My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness  
And Your salvation all the day,  
For I do not know their limits.*

*<sup>16</sup> I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;*

*I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.*

*Psalms 71:15-16*

### **Always Something New**

Even though I do the same thing every day, each day is different. My life has become this amazing journey God has me on and He shows me new things each day. Today at the end of the Strand a lady came up to pet Brando. We

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talked for a moment about the weather and how beautiful it is at the beach. I then continued my walk and, on my way, back I passed the pier and that same lady came up to me. She said, "I have something strange to tell you. I saw you about two years ago. At that time, I had some terrible health problems. I felt God calling me to talk to you, but I chickened out. I couldn't get it out of my mind so I went the next day looking for you, but couldn't find you. I then looked for you a couple of other days, but again I didn't see you. I finally had to leave to go back home to Tennessee, but you were still on my mind. Earlier today I saw you and when I went to talk to you, I backed out again. I felt led to talk to you so I've been following you and finally got up the courage, but I'm still not sure why." I asked her how her health problems were. She said, "I'm doing much better, but still have a little way to go." As she continued to talk, I was praying to see what God wanted me to say. I shared my testimony on how God guided me through depression and how He is using that today to help others. She shared that a couple of relatives took their lives, because of depression. I said, "I don't know why God does what He does and I always fall back on

*As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

*Isaiah 55:9*

So, I don't try to figure it out, but only trust Him. Maybe the reason God had us meet was so that I could share my testimony and to tell you He wants the same for you. One of the most important things that God has shown me on my

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journey is that we are here to love and help others. One of the best ways is to share how God works in our lives. God is guiding you through your illness and by sharing your faith with others He will guide you through to the end. We might not have met earlier because God wanted you to spend more time with Him and reveal what He desires of you. The scripture God has put on my heart and the reason I share my testimony is

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, [4] who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.*

*2 Corinthians 1:3-4*

The way God uses me brings me more joy than I could ever express.” She then said, “Can we pray?” I held her hands and we went before our Father asking for wisdom, courage, guidance and a complete healing for His daughter. After praying she looked up at me and said, “I see why God wanted me to talk to you.” As I left her, I prayed to my Father thanking Him for the comfort He gives me each day and to continue to use His child to comfort others.

I couple days later I was at church greeting people as they came in. I was wearing my prayer shirt and a young lady came up to me and said, “Are you the guy who prays at the beach?” I told her, “That’s me.” She said, “You just prayed with my friend, Linda, a couple of days ago. She told me how she had been wanting to talk to you and finally got up enough courage. Linda was amazed about the things

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you told her and how you prayed for her, it really encouraged her. She just left to go back home to Tennessee. It's amazing I got to meet you." I said, "I've been doing this for years and any help that others receive comes from God. God arranged my meeting with Linda, because He had something to tell her and I got to listen in on the conversation." She wanted to know more about my ministry, but service was about to start. She hugged me and went into the church. I stood there for a while taking in what just happened and how God had to orchestrate both of my meetings. I wonder what it will be like when I get home and meet all the people He put in my path and hear all the stories because God changed the heart of this sinner.

*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

*Ezekiel 36:26*

## Stories From the Strand

### Chapter 3-Going Through the Trials of Life

#### **I Should Have Done More**

I met Nick over three years ago. He was twenty-five years old and a surf instructor at the Strand. One day as I walked by his kiosk he came out with this great smile and told me he loved my shirt. He started out by saying that he was a Christian and how much he loved Jesus. Then he asked about my ministry and I was happy to tell him how God had guided my life. Afterwards he proudly told me that he was going to be a father and that he and his girlfriend were going to get married. I said, "The most important thing is to become the man that God has called you to be and to do that you need to grow close to your Father through the word and prayer." He then asked for prayer over his new family. The prayer was awesome reminding him that his relationship with Christ will determine the husband and father he'll be. He gave me this great hug, thanked me and told me that he loved me.

I would see Nick often as I passed the kiosk and he would always come out for prayer. A couple of months later his daughter Paisley was born and he wanted to make sure I met her and his wife. He was such a proud dad.

Time passed without seeing him and I found out that he got another job as a cook in a nearby restaurant. The next time I saw him he was very different he seemed as though he might be high on something. I asked how he was doing and he told me he didn't like his job, was also working part time as a bartender and he was tired all the time. I asked about his family and he told me everyone was good. He then asked me

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to pray for him and his family. After praying I held him and asked again if he was okay and he told me he was fine.

A year must have passed before I saw him again and this time you could tell he was high. As he talked to me it was hard to understand what he was trying to tell me, but I did make out he got fired from his job. I looked him in his eyes which were glossy and asked again if he was okay. He told me he was fine and I asked if I could pray for him. He said, "Please." We went to pray to our Father for guidance, wisdom, peace and strength. Like every other time that I talked to him he always told me he loved me and I told him that I loved him too.

A few more months went by before I saw him again. He was dressed up and told me he was going for an interview. There was still something wrong as he garbled his words as he was speaking. This time he said he wanted to pray for me. I held him as he prayed and the prayer was hard to follow as his mind seemed to wander. Before he left, I asked him are you sure you're alright. He hugged me and told me he loved me as he went on his way.

Several more months went and he came up to me and said he was applying for a security job at a nearby condo complex. He seemed much better and I knew they would have to do drug testing before they would hire him. He asked for prayer and we came before our Father asking that this job interview would go well and that he would get the job. Later I found out that he did get the job. I would see him more often since I pass that complex each day. When I saw him, he didn't appear to be happy and never asked for prayer again because he said he was working.

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Yesterday as I was passing the kiosk he used to work at, his wife was there. She came over to me and asked for a hug. As I was hugging her, I asked if everything was alright. With tears running down her face she said, “Nick is dead. He died of an overdose. I wanted to make sure you knew because he loved you. We are going to have a paddle out tomorrow and I hope you’ll be there.” I hugged her again and told her I was sorry. I found somewhere close by to sit down and cry. I thought I could have done more. I could have confronted him when I knew he was high, but it took less effort to just ask how he was doing. I’ll never know if I did confront him if that might have saved his life, but I didn’t even try. Each time I saw him I told him I loved him, but love would have gone beyond my comfort and would have put his needs above mine. I was too busy trying to be that old guy everyone seems to like instead of the man God wanted me to be. It’s a little ironic that his paddle out is happening on Father’s Day, because his now three-year-old daughter no longer has a father. I know in my heart Nick made it home and is celebrating Father’s Day with his perfect Father. Satan used drugs to end Nick’s life here on earth, but He can’t snatch him out of Jesus’ hand.

*And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. <sup>30</sup> I and My Father are one.”*

*John 10:28-30*

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### **God Guides a Young Mom**

It was a very special day at my church on the Strand. Just a little while in service a young lady stopped and said, “Hi Mark! Can I give you a hug?” I prayed with her a month earlier. She came to California to get married, and was excited about the thought of being a wife. She told me she has been walking close with the Lord, seeking His will, attending a nearby church, and was trying out for the choir. She looked so joyful. We prayed together before she left, and God just used her as a reminder that He is answering prayer.

A couple of months later she called me. She was very distraught and wanted to talk to me. She said, “I’m in the worst predicament I’ve has ever been in. My fiancé left me because he found out I was pregnant. I should never had sex with him and I understand why God would punish me this way.” I said, “God didn’t punish you; He loves you more than you can imagine, but when we do things there are consequences to our actions. God is your heavenly Father, and He is always watching over you and He’s there whenever you need him. This is not a time to alienate yourself from Him this is a time to go to Him for forgiveness, guidance and comfort.” The Holy Spirit prayed this beautiful prayer with her over the phone, I remember part of the prayer was telling her that the child isn’t only hers, but it was also God’s child, so the baby does have a Father.

Each day I would think of her and pray to Dad for comfort and protection. Months went by and I wondered what happened to her. Then the other day I saw her at the Strand. She said, “I hoped I would see you here so we could talk. I decided to call my father who lives in Hawaii, whom I haven’t spoken to for a long time. I told him everything that

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was happening to me, and he told me to come out to Hawaii to live with him. All the talk we had about my heavenly Father led me to call my earthly one. Would you please pray for me and my baby?" We prayed for a hedge of protection around her and her baby, for wisdom and courage. she hugged and thanked me. I said, "I'm going to miss you but you'll always be in my prayers."

Months went by, and I would wonder if everything was going well with her and prayed that she was okay in Hawaii. My prayer was answered the other day when I saw her pushing a baby stroller. She was so excited to talk to me and to show off her son, Noah. He was so cute sitting in his stroller only a few months old. As I was looking at him, he smiled, and she told me, "He just started smiling. I decided not to go live with my father in Hawaii, but to make our home here. Noah and I are doing well. I'm so blessed to have him and he brings me so much joy." She smiled at me and asked if I would pray for them. As always, the Holy Spirit was there and offered a wonderful prayer. She hugged me and thanked me for being there for her. As she left, I thanked God for allowing me to be part of His daughter's life and blessing her the way He did.

I can't explain the privilege God has given me to be able to be a small part in some of His children's life. I guess this is what God made me for and I wouldn't want it any other way.

*But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

*Hebrews 13:16*

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### Stage Four Cancer

One day a man ran past me as I said, “Good morning.” He turned around and asked if I would pray for him. He seemed desperate and I asked what he wanted prayer for? He said, “I’m in the middle of a divorce and found out I have stage four Pancreatic cancer. I feel I have cancer because of the sin in my life.” I told him, “If that was the case, we all would have stage four cancer. Do you believe in Jesus?” He said, “I used to walk with Him, but it’s been a long time and I’m not sure if I’m still saved. I’ve been contemplating suicide and I don’t want to live any longer. I can’t imagine going through the pain that I’ll most likely have to endure.” I smiled and said to him that God had ordained our meeting. I shared my testimony, my failed suicide attempts and how God is using the worst part of my life to help others. I said, “You don’t want to do anything that might decide your eternity.” We went into prayer, and I stepped aside to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to him. The prayer wasn’t what I expected but the Holy Spirit gave him a guided tour of his true home, Heaven. After this amazing prayer he broke down and cried. I hugged him reassuring him that God loved him more than he could imagine. As the Holy Spirit guided me, I said, “You have a unique opportunity to help others, because of what you are going through. One of the most powerful gifts we have is our testimony and God will put you in the path of people that might only listen to you. It may be in doctor’s office, hospital or just jogging on the Strand. They’ll listen to you because you are going through the same terrible thing that they are going through. If you will allow God to work in you and fill your heart with joy not because of your circumstances but because of the love of your Father, God will

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use you to bring a child home to Him. God put us together today for a reason.” I shared more of my testimony of depression and how God guided me through Satan’s minefield. While still crying he recommitted his life to Jesus and thanked me then went back on his run.

It’s been over 25 years that I tried to end my life for the sixth time on the beach in La Jolla. There is no reason I should still be alive, but God had other plans. Just think God knew I was going to meet this gentleman today and share the hope that only comes from Him, even before I was born.

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

*Ephesians 2:10*

### **Summer Is Here**

It’s been busy on the Strand. The new beach resort is open, kids are out of school and the beach is getting full. A day doesn’t go by without meeting or praying with someone I’ve never met before. There is such a variety of prayer request from guidance, health, dealing with a death of a loved one, marital, substance abuse, protection for children, praise reports and more. I love talking to families, joking around with the regulars, watching as some are blessed just to pet Brando, sharing smiles and hugs. I can’t believe I’m so blessed to have this life. Some people God puts on my heart more than most like this one young lady that has gone through her share of troubles. She was suffering from Lyme disease and she looked like she only weighed a hundred pounds. Her husband hung himself in their house, and she

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was the one who found him along with her young son. However, with all that she had gone through she still had the joy of the Lord in her heart and just wanted to pray for wisdom and guidance. We prayed and praised God for His goodness there on the Strand as people passed by. After praying she asked if she could hug me and came into my arms. She rested her head on my chest and I could feel the peace in her spirit.

People keep saying what a coincidence it is that I was there at a specific time when they needed help. I tell them a coincidence is just a miracle God didn't get the credit for. As I was walking down from the harbor there was a young man working construction. He looked at me and with this great smile came running up and shook my hand. He said, "I've been clean of drugs for two months and I believe with God on my side I'm going to beat it." He got me so excited I just hugged him and felt his joy. He asked if I would pray with him and I said, "Of course." The Holy Spirit took over and prayed for strength, wisdom, guidance and joy in his life. He encouraged him to continue to seek God with all his heart, mind and soul and that he would be used to help others. After we prayed, he hugged me. I just told him that he was going to do some great things and thanked him for the joy he brought me by just meeting him. Teri was with me and said, "Did you ever think you'd be doing something like this?" I told her, "No, but now I can't imagine not doing it."

*who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,*

*2 Timothy 1:9*

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### Lymphoma Cancer

It rained all day on Tuesday, so I missed going to the Strand. The day after was sunny but still a little cold, but I was so looking forward to seeing what God's plan were for the day. It was wonderful saying good morning and talking with those that I see on a regular basis. One gentleman I enjoy talking to is Phil. Phil is in his mid-seventies, has only one arm, just went through treatment to remove a tumor from his lung and rides a two-wheel Segway. He's always upbeat and an inspiration to me. He's hard of hearing so I always look at him as I speak and speak loud, but we still end up having some weird conversations.

As I made my way to the harbor a gentleman about my age, old, came up to me and asked if I would pray with him. We were standing in front of the restaurant where he was about to go to work, and I asked him what he needed prayer for. He said, "I have Lymphoma Cancer, and it is getting more aggressive. I'm about to go through a more complex treatment procedure. I was reading about the side effects and I'm very anxious and scared." I said, "I have no idea what you must be going through, but I know God does." We went before our Father and the prayer was comforting. He reminded my new brother that this life here is only temporary and there is a home waiting for us that is so wonderful we can't even imagine it. I said, "You're not alone the Holy Spirit will be with you through your journey." When I was done, he picked up the prayer and prayed for me and expressed his love for our Heavenly Father. He then offered to buy me breakfast. I thanked him but told him I should be on my way and then he said, "The offer stands, anytime I wanted." I said, "How about we have breakfast

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once God heals you and then we'll have something special to celebrate." He smiled and gave me a hug and told me to please keep wearing that shirt. The rest of my walk I continued to pray for him, and thought would I be as faithful to God if I was going through that? I hope I will have the courage to go through anything on this earth knowing that God has a purpose for it. I just need to realize whatever I go through that I'm not going through it alone.

*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

*Joshua 1:9*

### **The Strength of Family**

The last couple of days really ended a wonderful year for me. The other day as I was coming down the stairs there was a homeless gentleman who saw my shirt and said, "God bless you." I said, "God blesses me every day." He then asked if I would pray for him, and I said, "I would love to. What would you like prayer for?" He said, "For success in the future and that I would grow closer to God." The request really hit my heart and the heart of God as he assured this man that He is always with him, will never leave him or forsake him and that he is loved beyond anything he could imagine. He then gave me this wonderful hug and thanked me for not ignoring him.

As I continued my walk to the harbor there was a gentleman with a grown son that appeared to be mentally challenged. He told me that he loved my shirt and I told him that I loved wearing it. He introduced himself as Joseph and

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his son wouldn't look at me but was focused on something in his hand. He told me that his son was the youngest of triplets and asked if I would pray with him. I told him that I would be honored and asked what his prayer request was. He said, "My family has been growing away from God and I would like us to start attending church again." I told him that it was an honorable request and something that God would like to happen as well. I put my arm around him, and we prayed for wisdom, courage, guidance, and peace. The Holy Spirit told him if he and his family draws near to God that God would draw near to them, but they need to make the first step. After praying I said, "You are called to be the head of your house and you know How important it is for your family to seek God. You should set some time aside for you and your wife to pray before you go to bed." He agreed and thanked me for praying with him.

A couple days later I was walking back from the harbor, and someone yelled my name from a car, and it was Joseph thanking me again. I yelled are you going to church Sunday and he yelled, "Yes, we are." Then he named the church. I smiled and thought another answered prayer.

On my way a mother and grown daughter asked if they could pet Brando and I happily consented. The woman had this amazing smile and said, "I would like prayer. I've been sober for three weeks and with God's help I know I can conquer my addiction." I said, "God's Word tells us we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. So, let's go to Him and ask for His strength." I put my arm around her shoulders while we prayed. The Holy Spirit talked to her as a loving Father that will help her along her journey and that she was loved above anything that she could imagine. After

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praying and wiping our eyes she said, “This is my daughter, Angie. She is the reason I want to be the mom that she could be proud of.” They both smiled at each other and hugged. I said, “Each morning before you even get out of bed speak to your Father for the strength and guidance for that day. We only live a day at a time, the past is gone and can’t be changed and our Father holds the future. When you both have an opportunity to pray together do so, because when two or more are gathered Jesus is there with you.” We all gathered for a group hug and I could feel my Lord there with us. God’s presence is so real to me if someone told me they didn’t believe in God, I could look next to me and say to them, “He’s right here.”

*teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.*

*Matthew 28:20*

### **God Calling**

One day I got back to my car from walking the Strand and discovered I had a message on my phone. After listening to the message, I hit call back caller. A person answered, “Hi Mark.” I recognized the voice of a brother that I haven’t talked to in about three years. I had no idea how I ended up calling him instead of the call I was trying to return. Bill was an elder at the church I attended, him and his wife Lala were always serving and loving others. They were at almost all the events I put on at the church, when I spoke on Heaven on Wednesday nights they would be sitting in front, when I was doing the depression study, they were there supporting me and when I would organize a community outreach, they

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were the first to sign up. I had no idea how I reached him, but it was good hearing his voice. I asked how they were doing to find out that Lala was suffering from palsy and could no longer walk, she's having difficulty talking or using her hands and was barely eating. He was really struggling to keep it together. He said that no one stops by or checks on them and he had to take a leave of absence from his job to take care of her. I asked if there was a good time to come over and he told me any time just call first to make sure everything is okay. The next day after my walk I called and asked if Brando and I could stop by. He told me he wasn't feeling well and discovered that he had COVID. I kept in touch and when he felt better Brando and I stopped by for a visit. I met Bill at the door, and he greeted me with a big hug. He walked me into the living room where Lala was sitting on the couch. It was hard to recognize her because she was half the weight I remember her being. I said, "Hi Lala." She struggled to say, "Hi Mark." Bill and I talked then reminiscence about times past when we did the outreaches while Lala sat there. What Lala is going through is worse than Alzheimer's because she is aware of what is happening but can't do anything about it. I watched Bill take care of the love of his life with patience, care, understanding and a heart that I can only dream of having. When Bill got up to go to the bathroom, I kneeled beside Lala, and I told her the important part she played in my life. Bill got back and filled a straw with some water so Lala could drink. I looked as she couldn't hold back the tears and looked at Bill and said, "I want to go home." Bill looked into her eyes and said, "I know, and I want to go with you." Only God knows when she'll be go home. Some of their family had come to visit, and Bill had

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arranged for Hospice to come to help. Throughout all that Bill has been through he still walks close to his Lord. He depends on Him for the strength and the courage to make it through each day and even though he doesn't understand why they must go through this; he still trusts his Father.

A few weeks later Lala's prayer was answered and she went home to the Lord. During Lola's celebration of life service, I was able to speak. I told everyone how Lola and Bill affected my life and the support they always gave me. I was also able to share the love I saw when I visited and how Bill took care of his bride.

On my walks I get a lot of encouragement from others with words may God bless you, that I'm an encouragement to them, that God is using me and other encouraging words. No matter what I do I will never be the Man of God my friend Bill is. Is there someone you should reach out to? Don't wait until God dials the number, reach out before it's too late.

*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

*Galatians 6:10*

### **A Brother's Love for His Sister**

Walking towards the pier, there's a parking lot where people can sit in their cars and look at the ocean. As I was walking past a car, I noticed a girl with her mother smiling at me. Most of the time that means they are looking at Brando, actually all of the time. I passed by a man I prayed with before and he asked if I would pray with him because he was going through a divorce and wanted wisdom and peace to do what was right. After the prayer a boy came up to me

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and asked if he could pet Brando. While he was petting him, he asked, “Do you pray with people and if you do would you pray for my sister.” “I would love to,” I said. He pointed to the girl that was sitting in the car with her mother that smiled as I walked by. The gentleman I was praying with asked if he could come and pray with us and I looked at the boy and he smiled and said, “Sure.” The girl was about fifteen and was clutching on to a well-worn bible. I came up and said, “I hear you need prayer.” A little embarrassed she said, “Yes, I have a medical condition where I can’t get enough blood to my brain and I pass out and the doctors don’t know what to do for me.” I said, “All of Jesus’s healings were because people had faith to be healed and it appears not only you, but also your brother have that faith.” We all held hands as people passed by and we went before our Father. The Holy Spirit already knew about this moment and He brought to remembrance the healings Jesus preformed because of the faith of His children. The words of hope, love and compassion that came through me were unbelievable. When it was over, I looked at the girl and mother who was sitting in her car they had tears flowing from their eyes. They wanted to know more about my ministry so I began to share my testimony on depression and how God wouldn’t give up on me. I shared stories about all of the healings I’ve seen, how God has my days planned and that I meet people on His schedule. I said, “Today is just another one of those days God has heard your prayers and just wanted you to know He is listening and sent this old man to tell you that He loves you, knows where you are and He will never leave or forsake you. I believe God will use this trial you’re experiencing in your life as He did mine to help

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share his love with others.” I gave the mother my card and said if there was anything I could do to help to contact me.

The gentleman, who joined us in prayer was trying not to cry as we left them. He told me he thought he had problems and felt ashamed. I told him it doesn't matter what trial we go through as long as we stay close to the one that can overcome it. He said, “I'll keep her in my prayers.” I said, “I think Dad would like that.”

*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

*James 5:16*

### **A Faith that Jesus is looking For**

As I was walking, I saw a canopy set up that had a Happy Birthday sign on it. I stopped to talk to the husband, wife and dad that were there. The man told me he sees me as he rides his bike and always wanted to introduce himself. As we were talking, they both told me about their 29-year-old nephew, Pete, who would be back shortly from parking the car. They would like to pray for him, because he has stage four colon cancer and they asked me if I would wait for him to return. As I was waiting a young man came walking towards us and they said this is Pete and introduced us. Then they walked away to greet other guests. I told him I was sorry for what he was going through. He said, “I'm having a good day. The doctors had to stop the chemotherapy because my blood count is down, but no matter what happens I'm blessed. I know God is always there and if my time here on this earth was coming to an end, I'm looking

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forward to being with Jesus.” I stood there and listened to him and thought of the words of Jesus when He was astonished to find such great faith the day, He met the centurion. He talked about his condition maybe one tenth of the time but he praised God the rest. I asked him if I could pray with him, and he said, “Please.” I don’t remember all the words, but I do remember for a healing because this world needs more Pete’s in it. We hugged and you could feel Jesus’ presence. I said, “All of the healings Jesus did on this earth were because of the faith of the person or friends that made the request. He would constantly say because of your faith it will be done for you. Pete your faith and love are amazing and I know you have the kind of faith that God can use to heal you if that’s His will. Your faith is that light God has called us to have and yours shines so bright, I’m glad I’m wearing sunglasses. It was a great joy to meet you and that I will keep you in prayer.” We hugged and told each other that we love them. As I walked away, I thanked my Lord for meeting Pete and asked Him to increase my faith, the faith of Pete.

*When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!”*

*Matthew 8:10*

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### Chapter 4- Our Unique Church at the Strand

#### Limiting My Conversations

Ever since I've been attending my church on the Strand, I have a fellowship that grows every day. I'll stop and talk, but I've made a rule that I won't discuss anything that I don't know is true or can't change. You can imagine that restricts conversations drastically. People come up to me wanting to discuss what is happening in the world and I must stop them and explain the limit I put on the topics I'll discuss. We are now forced to share what is happening in our lives, which is much more interesting. I spend more time discussing how God has blessed me and if they look back, they can see how God has worked in their life. It seems once God comes up in a conversation there is peace, love, and hope, even though we may be surrounded by the opposite. Our lives are like a camera, the pictures we take are the things we focus on. So, do we focus on the things that we don't know for sure and can't change or do we focus on the One that knows all and can change anything.

*You will keep him in perfect peace,  
Whose mind is stayed on You,  
Because he trusts in You.*

*Isaiah 26:3*

#### Our Kid's Ministry at the Strand

One thing about our church is that we have the best kid's ministry around. I love walking down and seeing the families playing with their children, whether playing catch, playing on the playground, swimming, making sandcastles,

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volleyball, riding bikes and many other activities. There is something so special about seeing a parent taking the time with their child and enjoying that time. As I was walking a young boy, about six years old, asked if he could pet Brando. I didn't see his parents but told him sure and introduced him to Brando. He petted him and looked up at me and asked, "Do you love God?" I said, "More than anything." I asked him if he loved God and he said, "Yes. I want to be good and follow the commandments." When he was finished petting Brando, he thanked me and got back on his scooter. I thought how wonderful it was that his parents are teaching him about the love of God.

My next prayer request came from a young girl around the age of twelve. She wanted prayer for her brother who was about to have surgery. I wanted to make sure I stood far enough away and not to touch, because of what people might think. I'm afraid I was more concerned about the proper appearance than the prayer, but what a blessing to see this young girl seek God for her little brother. She thanked me and went off to play.

On another day a young girl about ten came across the street from where they were staying and asked if she could pet Brando. As she was petting him, she said, "Isn't God creation beautiful? I really love God and I love that you wear that shirt to remind people of Him." I was speechless and didn't know what to say except, thank you. She told me that this was their last day here and that they were going home. She got up from petting Brando and said, "Have a blessed day." As I walked away, I wondered what my children's lives would have been like if I raised them knowing Jesus. I suffered depression when they were young and only thought

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of myself. I didn't know Jesus myself so couldn't teach or show them that God loved them. I wasn't even able to show them what love was at all.

God has given us the blessing of raising His children and an awesome responsibility to raise them right. This country continues to grow further away from God, and we as parents and grandparents grow further away from our responsibility to teach them about God. Take some time and bring your children to the kid's ministry at the Strand, I guarantee you it will be time well spent.

*Train up a child in the way he should go,  
And when he is old he will not depart from it.*

*Proverbs 22:6*

### **God Provides**

What a privilege and joy it is that God has me praying and talking to people every day. I'm praying and sharing my testimony with more people lately and I love when God shows me answered prayer. The other day I was talking to these two lovely ladies. One of whom I met before, and today she brought a friend to walk with her. After talking the lady handed me twenty dollars for my ministry. I told her I don't take money, but she said she felt led to give it to me. I told her I would give it to someone that was in need. As I was walking at the harbor a gentleman walking his dog stopped and said, "Do you really pray with people?" I said, "Yes, what do you need prayer for?" He told me, "Someone broke into my car and took my phone which was also my wallet. All my credit cards and ID was in there and without those I'm stranded." After praying I asked, "Have you had any lunch?" He said,

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“No I’ve spent the little money I had in my pocket already.” I gave him the twenty dollars and explained how a lady felt led to give it to me and now I feel that God wants me to give it to him. He broke down and cried as he continued to thank me. I said, “It’s not me. God arranges my days and He put that lovely lady in my path. Then He put it on her heart to give me the money to give to you. This was not a coincidence but God’s plan.” As I continued my walk, I ran into those two ladies again and told them what just happened. I said, “Isn’t it amazing how God uses His children to help one another? He made sure we met today and you felt called to give me the money, then He arranged my meeting with this gentleman at his time of need. I have the privilege of seeing this each day and wanted you to know how He used your generosity.” They both hugged me and thanked me for what I’m doing. I told them, “This has nothing to do with me. We just have the blessing of being used by my Lord.”

*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

*1 Peter 4:10*

### **The Strand Has the Best Worship**

I pray each day for a closer walk with my Lord and each day I feel His presence as if His arm was around me as I walk. This worship has been some of my best times. I meet brothers and sisters on my walk every day and we’ll stop and share our testimonies on how God left the ninety-nine to come after us. We’ll stand around and talk about our Father in the most intimate and personal way then express our love for Him. At times we’ll cry and hug each other as if He was

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right there, which He is. I can only imagine how blessed our Father is as He hears the praises of His children in these moments. I also wonder what others might hear as they walk past our little worship service.

I proceeded on my way down the Strand and to the harbor praying and talking to people. On my way I met Jim and Dan. Jim and Dan are both in prison ministry and on Tuesday they wear a T-Shirt similar to mine that also says do you need prayer? I love meeting up with them and sharing our experiences on how God is using us. Today we were talking about the wonders of God and as we were talking a gentleman and his son came up and he introduced himself as being a pastor from San Antonio, then requested prayer for his church. We got together while Jim led the prayer trusting God to answer his request. After he left three young men came up to us and explained they came down today to evangelize. We shared testimonies, scriptures, and the love we have for God. We prayed for all our ministries and that we would be used to glorify God. As we were talking another young man came up on a bicycle to tell us he was a believer and how great it was to see so many brothers gathered at the beach. He started to share some of his current struggles and began to cry. We again all went into prayer for this young man and laid hands on him. He thanked us and had to leave to catch a bus down to La Jolla. We all were amazed how God put us together that day then Jim and Dan went their way, and the three young men there's as I headed back to my car. I thought to myself, now there was a worship service that glorified God.

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*Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*

*Hebrews 13:15*

### **Missing Dennis**

My day started with meeting Dennis. I typically see him on Saturday sitting in the same place with his electric bike. He loves petting Brando, so we spend a couple of minutes talking, which is difficult for him. Dennis has Huntington's Disease, similar to Parkinsons. He sits alone because he doesn't fit in with the homeless and others think there is something mentally wrong or that he's on drugs, so they keep their distance. His daughter made him a sweatshirt that reads on the back, "I'm not homeless, I don't take drugs or drink, I have Huntington's Disease." Today was special for me because he asked if I would pray with him. He had a colonoscopy and he had to go back to have something removed. The prayer was special as always and afterwards he hugged me the best he could and said, "Your prayer gave me peace. Thank you.". I told him that the prayer was from God and He wanted to spend this time telling him that he is loved and not to worry.

A couple of weeks later I saw Dennis again and he had this great smile on his face. I came over to say good morning and he shared the best he could that the everything went well. He continued to thank me as he was petting Brando. He asked for another prayer to thank God for answering his prayer. We came before our Father with grateful hearts thanking Him for answered prayer and protection. After praying I hugged him and told him that I loved him while he was holding my hand.

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The next time I saw Dennis, he told me he needed to find a new home because the group home he lives in now has become unsafe and he felt the woman who ran it didn't like him. I said, "We each have a permanent home when our time here comes to end and he'll forever be surrounded with love. There we'll be no more pain or sorrow and all that Jesus asks if we believe and receive Him as our Lord and savior. All you need is to receive Him into your heart, repent and ask for His forgiveness." He started to cry and I held him. I said, "You might want to spend some time with Jesus today. Just you and Him and tell Him what's in your heart and ask Him to guide you." After saying goodbye, I continued my walk and met another gentleman. As I was talking to him, Dennis stopped his bike behind me. The man I was talking to pointed to Dennis. I turned around and Dennis said, "I just wanted to thank you again. Your prayers for me are very special and give me hope." I hugged him again as the gentleman looked on. After riding away, I told the man I was talking to, "You have no idea the joy God gives me each day spending time with His children."

A few Saturdays went by but Dennis wasn't at his usual place. I would stop where he usually sat and say a small prayer for him. I never saw him again, but he'll always have a place in my heart.

Over the years I've met so many people that I would see on almost a daily basis and all of a sudden, they disappear from my life. There have been several homeless people that I no longer get to say good morning to, brothers and sisters who we would share how God is working in their life and friends who smiles I miss. No matter what has

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happened to them there will be a great celebration at home and my prayer is that that each one received their invitation.

*In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

*John 14:2*

### **A Miraculous Day**

One day I met three men, a father, his thirty year old son and his nephew. The father said, "We've seen you before and wanted to meet you. I just finished a series on love and realized I'm not very good at it." He then looked at his son and put his head down. "I need prayer to be a better man, a man that would honor God." "I can't imagine a better prayer request," I said. The three of us prayed as the Holy Spirit spoke into our hearts. As we finished the son looked into his father's eyes and gave him this awesome hug. I said, "Looks like you're on the way to being a better man. Life is just a day at a time and a step closer to being home. We are called to let go of the past and enjoy each day. You have this beautiful day at this wonderful place, and what a great start spending it with your son and your Father, enjoy it."

I headed back down the Strand and met this couple from Palm Springs. They stopped me and said, "We saw you last year when we came and was hoping to see you again." We then had our own little worship session as we shared God's love, faithfulness and how He has been working in our lives. As we were talking a young man stopped to say, "It's great to see other believers. I just came back from a mission trip in Africa. I went with a group from Reaching the Hungry." I told him, "I know pastor Carlos and I've gone on

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several mission trips to Mexico with him.” As we were sharing our stories a man came up and just hugged me, he was with two other ladies. He didn’t look familiar and he said, “I heard about you from several people and a local pastor and I feel as if I know you.” The three of them were on a prayer walk that day and we shared our faith and love for our Lord. I must have been in that one spot for over thirty minutes before we all went our ways. As I headed to the harbor, I came across others I’ve known from my journey. We hugged, laughed, and shared our love for each other.

As I made it to my halfway point, I met a man who looked at me and said, “Brother, I sure could use some prayer. I’m from Chicago and just survived a stroke and my wife is in the hospital with lupus. I’ve been struggling with the VA for medical help and I’m just exhausted. I need prayer for strength and wisdom.” I put my arm around my new brother’s shoulder and began to pray. The Holy Spirit spoke encouragement, love and hope. We prayed for a healing for his wife and that God would open doors to meet the right person that can help him get his VA benefits. He looked into my eyes and said, “I want you to know what a great thing you did for me today.” I said, “It has nothing to do with me. God wanted to remind you that you’re not alone on this journey.” We talked for a bit, and I gave him my card and told him to call if he needed someone to talk or pray with.

I headed back to the Strand while others stopped me to talk and pray. When I got back to the pier there were two young ladies that I met the day before. One of them just had her divorced finalized a couple of days before from a man who tried to kill her. The other woman was someone she recently met who was a Christian. The first time I met them

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she asked, "Would you pray with us?" I told them there is nothing I would rather do. We all held hands and went before our Father to tell Him that we loved and trusted Him and that we wanted His will for our lives. After praying I talked with them sharing my testimony and how God's grace as changed my life. The one girl said, "You must be an angel." I told her, "Not even close, but we do have the same boss and I know He arranged our meeting."

So, today when I saw them again, the one young lady who was recently divorced said, "Since we met, I feel much better and that something is happening in my spirit. Thank you for helping me." I told her, "This has nothing to do with me, I was just used so God could let you know you are loved, that He has a plan for you and wants you to draw closer to Him. If you want to thank someone, thank God He deserves all the glory." Her friend looked at her and said, "I told you he would give God the credit." We all three hugged before I went on my way. As I walked back to my car all I could think about was when Jesus said I came to give you life and have it to the full. I stopped to thank Him for keeping His promise.

*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

*John 10:10*

### **Free Hugs**

I haven't gone a day since I've been walking the Strand without meeting someone I've never met before. Whether they come up to meet Brando, tell me how much they like my shirt, ask about my ministry or ask for prayer I

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get to make new friends every day. The other day a mom, dad and their four children who I never met before came up and asked, "Is this the dog who eats carrots?" I broke out my bag of carrots and gave each child one. I told them to have Brando do a trick. One of them had him sit, another to him lay down, another to have him shake hands and to the last one to have him sit up. When they were done, I told Brando to sit and all eyes were on us. Holding a carrot over his head I told him, "Say spaghetti." They all watched in suspense. Finally, I said, "He can't say spaghetti he's a dog." They all laughed, but before leaving each one gave this crazy old man a hug.

As I was walking down the Strand there were about twenty children ranging from five to twelve years old with their parents. They held signs saying "Free Hugs." As I approached, the children saw me and ran to me each giving me a loving hug. I stood there engulfed in love and didn't want to move. I said, "This is great. Whose idea is this?" One of the moms spoke up and said, "They just wanted to show love to others." I said, "They succeeded. I can't feel more loved than I do at this moment. I got my hugs from your children what about you moms?" They came up and surrounded me as I put my arms around them. I thanked them and told them how amazing they were.

If you watch the news, you would think family values don't exist or there is no love left in this world but on the Strand that just isn't so. It's so special as I stop and talk with families to share our love and hope in Jesus. The joy God gives me to stop and pray for them and to listen to what the Holy Spirit has to say is beyond measure. After talking or praying there are plenty of hugs to go around and I feel like

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grandpa to so many. Before I leave, I always tell them what a beautiful family they have and encourage them to continue on the path that God has chosen for them. Each day I try to sanctify myself to be a little more like my savior, which is God's will for our lives and every day I reap the rewards of loving others and receiving that love back.

*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*

*Luke 6:38*

### **Preview of Heaven**

My family is growing as my Father continues to introduce me to new brothers and sisters. Yesterday as I was walking, I met a brother who was getting food ready for a family gathering. When he saw my shirt, his eyes lit up and invited me up. He seemed so blessed to see me that he gave me a hug and asked for prayer for the success of the gathering. After praying God's blessing over his event, he invited me to join them later and I told him I would be passing back through and I'd see him then.

As I continued my journey a sister that I prayed with before came up excited to see me and told me our prayer was answered. The prayer was for her son in law, who was going to have surgery to remove cancer. The doctor told the family they weren't sure how many of his organs the cancer might have attached to and the surgery would take several hours. The surgery took less than an hour because the cancer didn't

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affect any of his organs and he wouldn't have to go through chemo therapy. He has a wife and two children and the family gave God the glory for his miraculous healing. As we were talking, a new brother jogging by saw us and came up praising God and His greatness. He was jogging and sweaty but I needed a hug and a hug I got.

Walking down to the harbor I met another brother who was camping in his RV. As soon as he read my shirt he came over and told me how blessed he was to see me proclaiming my love for our Father. We talked for a while sharing our love for our Lord. Then I shared my depression testimony how God delivered me from the pit of depression. He looked surprised and pointed to a lady sitting on a beach chair on the sand. He told me that was his wife and she suffers from depression. I asked if he wanted me to go over and speak to her. He said I think she is praying. I put my arm around him and we prayed that she would receive the love and peace that God has given me through my struggles. I gave him my card and suggested to have his wife look at the website. I told him I would be there the next day if she wants to talk.

Continuing my walk at the harbor, I met five new sisters who wanted to pet Brando. As we were talking five more ladies joined us. Here all ten ladies were widows and they meet at different places and today they were going on a boat tour. We all shared God's faithfulness and I prayed that they would have a wonderful day. Then each one took their turn giving me a hug before they left.

As I went along, I met a brother carrying a kayak on his back. He saw my shirt and told me how wonderful it was to meet me. With the kayak still on his back he took pictures

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of my shirt and we shared our love for the Lord. He asked for prayer to grow closer to God. I said, "That's already an answered prayer since that's our Father's will for your life." We prayed that he will continue on the path that God has already prepared for him and that the enemy wouldn't distract or tempt him off that path. Then he was reminded greater He is in you than he who is in the world. After the prayer it was difficult to hug since he still was carrying his kayak so we did an awkward fist bump before leaving.

Just before I got to the pier there was a church group setting up and when a brother saw me, he flagged me down. He told me how blessed he was to see me and invited me to join them. I told them I could only stay for a short time and needed to get home. While I was talking children came over to pet Brando and I met a few more of my new found relatives while I was there. As I was leaving, I ran into another brother carrying a cooler and when he read my shirt, he praised God. He introduced himself as the pastor of the church I was talking to. I told him how great the people were and then he also invited me for food and fellowship. I regretfully declined his offer since I had to get going and told him I pray they have a wonderful day.

All along my walk I was greeted with love and curiosity. When I was going back to my car, I saw my brother that owns a food stand on the Strand. There is something special about him. He was just opening up so we talked for just a moment and before I left, I gave him a hug and told him that I loved him. He said, "Not as much as I love you." As I was heading back, I thought this must be what heaven is like. Being treated with genuine love and wanting to be with my brothers and sisters. Now all those people I've been

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talking about represent many nations and if you took a family picture of my new family you would not be able to make out a family resemblance. Except for our Father each of us bares His image. I continue to get sneak previews of heaven and can't wait to see the real thing.

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

*Philippians 3:20*

### **More Precious Than Gold**

Each day seems to become more remarkable as I walk with God on the Strand. Just yesterday I prayed with a couple from Florida, the man was dealing with back pains. After praying we spoke for a few minutes of the goodness of God and the blessings that He has already given us in our lives. He emailed me this morning to tell me how blessed he was that we met and that his back felt better. What a great way to start the day.

At the harbor I met a group of six people who asked about my ministry. I shared some of the special moments God has given me and then shared my depression testimony. They then asked for prayer. Their pastor had stage four cancer and didn't look like he had much more time here. The words the Holy Spirit spoke to them were so comforting. He told them their pastor is finishing his race and will hear his Lord say well done good and faithful servant. Soon he will be reaping the rewards of a life serving our Lord.

I then came up to seven ladies and said, "Good morning." One of them read my shirt and said, "I always need prayer." We gathered together and I asked, "What do you need prayer for?" They all agreed for their children to

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stay close to God. With heads bowed down we went to our Father with their request. The Holy Spirit took over and told them how pleased He was with their request and to continue to pour into their children the word of God. We were standing at the end of the Strand by a large condo complex where there were people sitting on their balcony and people passing by. What a sight we must have been as we lifted our voices in worship to our Lord.

After saying good bye to my new found sisters a man I see often who lives in those condos was sitting on his second story balcony. He waived me over and said, "My brother just passed away, drinking himself to death. I would like to pray for his family he left behind. I see you all the time praying and talking to people. It brings me joy every time I see you. This beach is better place because you're here." With tears in my eyes, I told him, "This has nothing to do with me God is leading my way. At times I don't understand why God loves me so much to allow me to do this." We prayed as he stood on his balcony to ask for protection and comfort for his brother's family.

A young man that I prayed with a couple days earlier came up to me. His father committed suicide the day before we talked and he stopped and said, "Thank you for praying and talking with me that day. I appreciated you sharing your testimony and how you felt when you tried to take your life. It gave me peace knowing there are things in this life I can't control and not to take any blame for his decision." He came up to me and hugged me and as I was hugging him the Holy Spirit told him that he was loved beyond measure and that he will always have his heavenly Father.

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Going a little further I saw about twenty people gathered together and a gentleman looked up and motioned me over. When I went over, he introduced himself and told me how much he loved my shirt. The group was a small church from an Indian reservation and they wanted to know about my ministry. I shared my prayer walks and my testimony on depression. They asked if I would pray for them and I told them I would be honored. We gathered together as family and the Holy Spirit showed up to bless all of us reminding us we are all brothers and sisters with the same Father. After several hugs I continued on my walk.

While I was walking back, I thought to myself how blessed I was and that if someone offered me a million dollars to stop this ministry, without hesitation I would decline. There is nothing I could buy, no experience that would be greater or any vacation grander I could take that would give me more joy than doing God's will here on the Strand.

*Teach me to do Your will,  
For You are my God;  
Your Spirit is good.  
Lead me in the land of uprightness.*

*Psalms 143:10*

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### Chapter 5-Prayers of Comfort

#### **Vet in Need of Prayer**

As I arrived today and got out of my car. A young man came up to me and asked, "Would you pray for me and my friends?" I said, "I would love to." The four of us were standing there, different colors in God's palette. God has shown me He needs all kinds of colors to paint His masterpiece. I asked what they would like prayer for, and they all just wanted a closer walk with God. I could only imagine how pleased God was with their request. The Holy Spirit reminded us that we are all different with special gifts and talents and we have a mission to complete. That we are called to be a light in this dark world and we need to shine and that we have a power source that will never die. After the Holy Spirit was finished with His prayer, we all hugged and thanked God for His goodness.

When I got back to my car to leave, I heard a man in the car behind me say, "I need prayer." He was a marine recently discharged and had been sitting in his car for a while. He said, "I was praying and can't stop crying. I told God that I messed up my life and I don't know what to do. I asked God for a sign and I saw you wearing a shirt that asked Do You Need Prayer?" The young man was suffering from depression, had a wife and 3 children and has been having a difficult time adjusting to civilian life. Since I knew a thing or two about depression, I was able to relate to what he was going through. While sitting in his car I placed my hand on his shoulder and began to pray. The Holy Spirit took over and said, "God has a plan and a purpose for your life. You are created for a specific purpose and you have all you need to fulfill that purpose, but

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you need to stay close to your Father.” The prayer was full of love, hope and compassion for this young man. After praying I said, “Each day God puts on my heart we are to live this life a day at a time and throughout God’s Word he confirms it, even in the Lord’s prayer it states our daily bread. Whatever has happened in the past is already gone and there is nothing that can be done to change it, but be grateful God has gotten you through those rough times. The future is in God’s hands, not ours so instead of worrying about it we need to have the faith to trust in Him. So, here we are today in this beautiful place God has given us and instead of spending this precious time worrying about things we can’t control, use it to think of all the blessing you have. The only thing you can control is you. So today you have an opportunity to be the best you can be whether that is the best husband, father, friend our child of God.” I spoke with him for at least 15 minutes and gave him my contact information if he needed me for anything. He got out of his car and held me tight while thanking me for being there for him. I said, “This has nothing to do with me, but your Father wanted to spend some time telling you that you are loved beyond anything you can imagine.” After saying goodbye, I got into my car and sat there in amazement that God felt I was worthy of helping this young man, which was His plan all along.

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

*Jeremiah 29:11*

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### Losing a Loved One

It looked like 4<sup>th</sup> of July at the beach it was so busy. There were several large groups and plenty of families enjoying the beautiful weather. I made it part way down the Strand when an older lady, about my age, yelled out, "I need prayer!" Just about then her son came up and told her, "I saw him too." She said, "My son died in September, and we're having a paddle out to celebrate his life. Would you mind praying for us?" I told her I would be honored. A few more people saw what was happening and joined us in prayer. The Holy Spirit came and comforted all of us describing our eternal home, where her son was and the knowledge, we'll all see him again. After several hugs and handshakes, I continued on my walk.

I only walked a few steps when I saw a gentleman and two ladies sitting in chairs looking out over the ocean. The gentleman waved me over and introduced the two ladies and said, "I'm not sure if you remember me." Unfortunately, I didn't and he introduced me to the two ladies. He said, "You prayed with me about a year ago. My son just died and I was in a terrible place and desperately needed some peace. You took the time to comfort me and told me my son is home now and that I'll be with him again." As he was talking, I was trying to remember and I believe his son committed suicide. He went on to say, "The prayer you said really touched my heart that day and gave me peace. Whenever I think of my son, I remember your prayer and it always comforts me." He then gave me a hug and thanked me. I said, "That day like every other day has nothing to do with me. Our Father put us together that day, so He could comfort you. The words were from the Holy

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Spirit and He always knows what to say. So next time you think of that prayer think of our Lord who gave you comfort that day.” After the ladies stopped making a fuss over Brando, I said, “God allows these trials in our lives and He wants to use them to help others. You have a testimony to share so you can help someone else.” He hugged me and said, “I will.”

I started walking and didn't get far when I met a man and his adult son riding their bikes. They stopped and turned around and the man said, “I was hoping to see you today. I see you often and I was hoping you would pray for us. My other son has just passed away and my family is a mess and I need prayer to help lead my family through this crisis.” The Holy Spirit was expecting them. He gave them love, guidance and hope assuring him that his son is in a place so beautiful and wonderful we can't even imagine it. He assured him that he and his family are only temporarily separated from his son and in God's timing they'll be back together forever. After the prayer I said, “Stay close to God and allow Him to guide and strengthen you, so you can help others that might be going through what you are going through now.” They gave me this wonderful hug and I reminded them again that this life is only temporary and he will be seeing his son in a place where there is no more tears and sorrows.

We don't know how many lives we touch and won't find out until we get home. It's going to be a great celebration as Jesus introduces us to all that He puts in our path while we were walking on this earth. Hopefully my memory will be much better when I get home.

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*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”*

*Revelation 21:4*

### **Not a Coincident**

Yesterday at the Strand was special because Teri and Idina (the puppy Teri is training for Canine Companions) joined Brando and me on our walk. It was another beautiful day as we walked and I was able to introduce Teri to some of my friends. As we walked, we met an evangelist and his wife. For an hour we shared testimonies, worshipped God, and encouraged each other, it was wonderful. As we were walking back from the harbor towards the Strand, we met a couple with their two little girls standing in the driveway in front of their condo complex. As I said good morning the lady looked surprised and said, “We could really use prayer.” She told us she was suffering from depression and was dealing with unforgiveness and pain from the things her mother did to her. When she was finished talking, I said, “Unforgiveness is like taking poison and expecting the other person to die. It only hurts you.” The Holy Spirit knew what she needed to hear, and we went before our Father. The prayer was custom made for her and reminded her the best part of the past is that it’s over and to praise God for getting you through it. After praying I talked for a little while saying all the things the Holy Spirit put on my heart. Since Teri was with me, she looked after the two little girls, so we had time to talk. The lady was amazed the girls were being so well behaved, but thanks to Teri and the dogs they kept them occupied. She said, “We weren’t planning on being here today. Our plans were to go

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to Colorado, but we stayed an extra day and I'm so thankful that we did." Before we left, we hugged each other and the girls gave the dogs a hug goodbye.

Let's see their plan was to be in Colorado, they just happened to go for a walk the moment Teri and I walked by, she was suffering from the one thing I know something about, and Teri was with me to watch over the children. A coincident? The definition of coincident is a miracle God didn't get the credit for. I think God deserves the credit.

*"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

*Matthew 6:14-15*

### **Giving Peace to a New Mom**

What a perfect day at church on the Strand. It was seventy degrees; beautiful blue skies and the crashing of the waves were so powerful you could only stand in awe. There are still many people at the beach and harbor and a day doesn't go by that I don't meet someone new. A young couple with a new born baby stopped as they were driving and asked for prayer. I had them pull off to the shoulder so not to block traffic. The young woman was suffering from postpartum depression. She looked so wiped out from all the stress and didn't want to take care of the baby. The young father told me he was also looking for work, but with no success. I leaned on the window of the car and let the Holy Spirit do His job. He spoke love and hope to this young couple, reminding them they are not alone on this journey and that God is watching over this family. He told them the baby wasn't only their

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child, but it was God's and that He entrusted them with him. I gave them my card with my contact information in case they need someone to talk or pray with on their journey. The young man was very grateful and the young mom looked up with her tear drenched face and said, "Thank you."

About nine months later as I was walking a car pulled up and the same young man asked, "Do you remember me? I was hoping to see you again." In the back seat was Donovan, his now ten-month-old son. He said to his son, "This is Mark, the man who prayed with mommy and me. My wife and I are doing great and I'm the chef at a restaurant. I wanted to find you to thank you for your love and compassion the day we met and to let you know God answered our prayer." I thanked him for stopping me with this great praise report and to enjoy his beautiful family.

A couple more months passed by and that same young man stopped his car. He told me he was glad to see me and rolled down the back window so I could see his son who was riding along in his car seat. He said, "Look how big my son has gotten," with the smile of a proud father. I looked at his boy and said, "He's beautiful he looks like his mother." He laughed and I said, "You are truly a blessed man." He shook his head in agreement then gave me a hug through the car window and went on his way.

I would see them often driving down the Strand and they would both yell out the window, smile and wave at me. Time went by then one day they stopped and pulled over. The wife said, "I wanted to tell you what happened the day my baby was born. After I gave birth, I found out my mother died in a car accident. I was struggling with that and wasn't sure if I wanted my baby. Then God put you in our path that

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day and the loving prayer that you said gave me peace for the first time in a long while. Would you please pray for our family again?” I leaned into the car and the Holy Spirit took over. The prayer was beautiful, comforting and full of hope for this new family. I said, “I can picture your mother standing next to Jesus looking down with a smile on her face saying, that’s my grandson. There will come a time when the whole family will be together again and I look forward to meeting your mom when I get home.” The three of us just held hands and cried for a while. Since then, I see them often as they pass by or stop for a moment to show off their wonderful son. It’s always wonderful seeing them as they smile and wave, you can see their joy.

One day I met them outside their car for the first time at the harbor. They had their son and an older daughter which I didn’t realize they had with them. They greeted me with so much joy and excitement I was humbled. She asked for prayer for her brother who just had a child but he went back to drinking. The four of us, five if you count Brando, formed a circle and prayed for strength and wisdom for her brother. When I was done the young father said, “We drive the Strand a lot because it gives us peace and we’re always hoping to see you. When we see you, it gives us joy and hope. You’re special in our lives and when I grow up, I want to be just like you.” I said, “Old, fat and ugly that’s not much of a goal.” We all laughed and with a final goodbye I continued on my walk. All I could think of was the man I was before Christ and that nobody ever looked forward to seeing me. I never brought much happiness to anyone including my family, but now people tell me how happy they are to see me and the difference I’m making. I know it has nothing to do

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with me God just replaced that heart of stone with a heart of flesh and continues to change me to be more like His son.

*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

2 Corinthians 3:18

### **Helping with a Friends Son**

When I first started my walks, if someone said, “We can all use prayer!” I would ask them if they would like me to pray with them. They would make some excuse why they couldn’t at that moment or they just prayed, so now I only pray when someone asks. On my way back from the harbor a young lady stopped and said, “I love your shirt. We all need prayer.” Today however I felt led to ask, “Do you want to pray?” At first, she said, “No” but looked at me and said, “Yes, I do.” I asked her what she needed prayer for, and she said, “My best friend just died the day before. She had cancer and leaves behind a husband and a seven-year-old son. I would like to pray for them and for wisdom for what I should do to help.” As I began to pray, she started to cry and held on to me. The Holy Spirit just covered her with love, and I felt this was the first time she was really dealing with the loss of her best friend. After praying I held her for a little while as she continued to cry. She told me, “I was praying about moving to Florida to help my friend’s son and husband get through this. I was planning to stay for as long as it takes. God must have put you in my path today.” I said, “He does that every day. God just wanted to use me to tell you that you’re loved and not alone on your journey. I can’t imagine

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what that boy must be going through as he had to experience the death of his mother and her husband has plenty of struggles of his own. The son's memory of her most likely is clouded by the pain she must have gone through in her last days and it might be difficult to remember the good times he spent with her. You're not going to be able to share those memories of her being a mother or wife but you can share the stories of your best friend. Your friend must have been awesome to have the love of a friend that is willing to move and help raise her son. I think it would help her son realize not just his mom, but also the amazing woman she was. You'll be able to share your faith and that one day he will see her again and the three of them can share the stories he was told." She looked into my eyes thanked me and gave me one last hug before going.

As she left, I found a place to sit for a moment and with tears in my eyes thanked my Lord for not giving up on me. I shouldn't be here enjoying the best part of my life, I should be spending eternity in a place of pain with no escape, but that's wasn't His plan. He decided to leave the ninety-nine and search out this lost sheep. However, this time it's not the shepherd that's rejoicing, but the sheep.

*"What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? <sup>13</sup> And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. <sup>14</sup> Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.*

*Matthew 18:12-14*

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### **Fulfilling Our Purpose**

Yesterday I met up with a brother that I met over two years ago at the Strand. He is a recovering alcoholic and has been sober for fifteen years. He's a wonderful man but can be negative at times, actually most of the time. We have all experienced seeing the expression on someone's face and know when you ask how are you doing it's not going to be good. I asked anyway and his response was as if his world was coming to an end. He started to say, "My relationship with my girlfriend is not going well as a matter of fact it's terrible and I don't know what to do. If she would only treat me better, not bug me and not be so negative, my life would be so much better." I run into this situation frequently, where people are expecting someone to change their life so theirs would be better. After listening for a while, I stopped him and said, "You should only worry about what you can control and the only thing you can control is yourself. If you took the energy trying to change someone else and put it towards changing yourself for the better, you would be a lot happier and content. Focus on being the best you can be, not for someone else but for God. Your joy is going to come from doing God's will and not your own."

As we were talking a man came up and asked if we would pray for him. He was a little disheveled and anxious. He said, "I'm battling alcoholism and I was doing okay but the last couple of days have been rough. Please pray for help, strength and guidance for me." All three of us went to pray as God guided the words that were shared. After we prayed my friend shared his testimony of alcoholism and gave the gentleman the name and number of a local AA group. He gave this man love and hope using the testimony of what God had

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got him through. He hugged us both and went on his way. As the man left a lady came up to us, waiting until we were finished. She said, "It's wonderful that you're praying for others. Can I pray for you?" The prayer was inspiring and encouraging asking God's grace in our lives. When she was finished, I could see my friend tearing up and before I could say anything another man walking three dogs came up to us. He asked, "Do you remember me? You prayed with me about a year ago. It's great to still see you out here praying with others. I could use prayer for direction and wisdom to do what is right in our Father's eyes." The three of us held each other as the Holy Spirit spoke to all of us. He then hugged and thanked us before going on his way.

As he left, I asked my friend how he felt. By now he was crying and said, "I'm not sure so much is going on." I said, "You did great and I can only imagine how proud our Father is of you. You weren't focused on anything except to help the people God just placed in your path and your focus drifted away from what you wanted for yourself and went to what you could give to others." He hugged me as I prayed for God's guidance and love on him. He thanked me and said, "What do I do now?" I told him, "God has given us this beautiful day, continue your walk in prayer and ask the one who loves you so much what He wants you to do." After I left him, I took my own advice and thanked my Lord for revealing the purpose he had created me for and that He will continue to use me each day until it's time to come home.

*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

*Philippians 2:13*

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### **You Have a Choice**

One day a man asked me, “You always seem to be so happy. When you get up do you go to your mirror and put on a smile?” I said, “Do you think that I could look in a mirror and see my reflection and have enough strength to smile on my own?” We both laughed then I said, “My joy comes from the Lord and not my surroundings. We all have the ability to be what we want to be no matter what the circumstances. I’ve learned if you are going to focus on negative things you are going to have a bad day and if your focus is on God and the blessings He has given you, you will have a blessed day. God’s word tells us it’s a day at a time, from manna being provided each day to the Lord’s prayer which tells us to ask for our daily bread. I’ve made a promise to myself to only be anxious for things that I can change and then I realize the only thing I can change is me.” After we talked, he smiled and told me to have a good day. I smiled and said, “I always do.”

I stopped at this booth that gives out chairs and umbrellas to the guests of the new beach resort. There is a young man that always seems glad to see me and likes to talk. Today was a little different it seemed that he was more desperate to talk to me as if something was wrong. As we were talking, he said how do you stay so happy. I said, “How you feel is a choice and that circumstances or people shouldn’t dictate your feelings. I only worry about the things that I can control, and I realized the only thing I have control of is me. I focus on the many blessings God has given me and His desires for me, which are always good and that gives me joy.” He looked at me and said, “That’s great advice.” I can see that he had been struggling with something. I shared my testimony on depression and my

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suicide attempts. Then said, “Those were the times I was focused on myself, was worried what others thought, worried about the past, the future and thought about the negative things in my life, believe me you wouldn’t want to talk to that guy.” He was almost in tears when he thanked me. I don’t believe that he is a believer, but I believe God took him one step closer that day.

I talk to many people and hear how someone has made them angry, sad, afraid, or humiliated and I tell them no one has that power over you unless you give it to them. So many people are so concerned what other people think of them and would be surprised to find out they’re not thinking about them at all, but are focused on their own life.

Most of my encounters are positive and loving, but there have been some negative moments on my walks. One day a young man jogging by me yelled, “No one needs that.” I thought how rude, then thought I know how to get him, so I prayed for him as I walked down the beach and asked God to open his eyes to Him and soften his heart. Many other people when I say, “Good morning,” they turn their head and don’t respond. So, I would just ignore them and go my way, but God has put on my heart that I don’t know what anyone is going through and the burden they might be carrying at that time. They are the ones who need prayer and His love. Now as soon as I pass them, I say a little prayer and ask God to touch their heart and to help them with any struggle they might be going through.

The other day I was walking down the Strand and a man yelled something from his truck and gave me the one finger salute. There was a couple behind me and they started yelling at the driver. When they caught up to me, they

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apologized for him. I asked, “Why are you apologizing I assumed he told me that Jesus was the only way and pointed up, but he must have had some deformity in his hand.” They laughed and said, “We don’t think that’s what he was doing.” I said, “So what? My way I continue my walk feeling I’m doing God’s work instead of getting myself upset about someone I’ll most likely never see again.” They asked if I would pray with them for that same peace in their lives. After praying I continued my walk thinking how God just orchestrated that meeting and how he turned an insult into a blessing.

One day I was walking over the bridge to the harbor and a man riding a bike yelled, “There is no God,” and without thinking I just yelled back, “You’ll find out.” He continued riding and turned around and as he passed me again yelled, “I don’t believe in a God who would send people to hell.” Again, I yelled, “You’ll find out.” He came back yet a third time and yelled, “I’m too intelligent to believe there is a God.” Once again, I yelled, “You’ll find out.” As I continued my walk, I thought that was the right thing to say, because if he doesn’t repent, he will find out. Maybe that short comment might get him to think. Who knows I might have just planted a seed on hard soil and I prayed that someone else will water it.

*Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

*2 Timothy 3:12*

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### **A Message of Hope**

A man and a woman stopped me while they were driving and asked for prayer. I had them pull over to the side of the road so not to block traffic. The woman just came from the hospital after having surgery to remove a brain aneurism and was sitting quietly in the passenger seat. The prayer was for healing, comfort and that she would spend this time recuperating drawing closer to God. After praying she looked up and thanked me. I reminded her that He is always with her and will never leave or forsake her and the more time she spent with Him will be less time she spends worrying.

As I continued walking a woman, I prayed with a few months earlier stopped me, she was with her mother. She wanted to give me a praise report. We prayed that the old car they had would make a long trip that her husband had to go on, but God decided to get him to his destination quicker, safer, and cheaper. She then asked for prayer for her husband who was now recovering from heart surgery. As I leaned into the car the three of us prayed. I started out the prayer as I always do tell our loving Father how much we love, trust, and appreciate all He does for us. We thanked him for the love He has for us, a love that we can't totally comprehend but receive with thanksgiving. We prayed for a quick recovery for her husband and peace and wisdom for her.

After they pulled away another woman walking with her mother stopped and said, "My mother can use prayer. She is going through a big change in her life and having some difficulty adjusting." Her mother, who was looking down finally raised her head and looked at me and nodded. We held hands and the Holy Spirit knew exactly what she was going through and gave her hope, guidance, and encouragement.

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He assured her that there is a plan for her life and she has all she needs to fulfill her calling and as she does, she will experience more joy than she could imagine. The mother looked at me as if to say how did you know and gave me this huge hug. I shared my testimony on how I suffered from depression and my suicide attempts and how God started me on my journey of coming out to pray and the joy I receive each day by doing His will. I said, “We look for happiness and conformation in this world and we don’t find it. Our joy and purpose comes from our Father and we can have it whenever we want, because He is always there.” Before leaving she asked if she could give me another hug and I told her that hugs were one of the best perks of my job.

After leaving them a gentleman stopped me and commented, “I see you when I come down here. I’m going through some struggles right now. I’m a pharmacist from Las Vegas, but the store closed, and I lost my job. I was offered this job in Carlsbad, but I miss my friends and family in Vegas.” Then he shared how God has worked in his life and got him through some rough times. I love when people first talk about how down they feel and all by themselves they start talking about the blessings God has given them and you see their joy restored. After he was finished talking, I said, “I had the exact same thing happen to me, I felt God calling me to Kentucky and I didn’t want to go. When I was there, I felt miserable and lost but God had a job for me to do and he sent me there to help this one lady in a nursing home to receive Jesus as her Lord and savior right before she died. God knows exactly where you are and if you focus on Him and His will you can enjoy this journey, He has you on.” We prayed and the Holy Spirit gave Him hope and love. I gave him my card with

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my contact information in case he wanted to get together and talk some more. We hugged and he went on his way.

One thing I know there are no accidents at the Strand, God knows where we are and He schedules my divine appointments each day. When I got back in the car, I checked my phone since I don't take it with me and there was a message from a young gentleman I prayed with a few days earlier. The message said, "I called to tell you how blessed I was that we met, it has really changed my life. I knew God put you there for me and talking with you helped me get my focus back on God. Since our meeting I got back into the word, I'm attending a church and I've been praying a lot. You prayed for me that a door would open for a job and that door did open. It was a job I was hoping to get. Thank you again for taking the time with me. I wish I was there so that I could give you a hug. I thank God that He put you in my life." I hung up the phone and broke down in tears and thought how unworthy I was to have all this joy in my life. I know I don't have it because I'm worthy but only that it pleases God to give it to me.

*You will show me the path of life;  
In Your presence is fullness of joy;  
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

*Psalm 16:11*

### **Will's Awesome 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

It was a beautiful day at the Strand, clear blue skies, and awesome waves. On my way I met up with a brother in Christ who does street evangelism. As we were talking and sharing God's love we looked out into the ocean and there were three dolphins leaping out of the water, trying to get the

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attentions of the nearby surfers. As I looked out, I saw them swimming in the wave as if they were surfing, it was a beautiful picture.

I turned and looked down the Strand and I saw a woman pushing her adult son in a wheelchair. I prayed with them several months earlier. At that time, it was her son Will's twentieth birthday. Will is blind, can't use his arms or legs, his head is almost twice as big as it should be, he sits in a fetal position and the worst part is that he is in constant pain. She shared that her husband divorced her because he wanted a more normal life, as she put it. She added she was blessed to have two older sons that are always there when she needs them. The day we met she was waiting to go to a doctor's appointment to see what could be done for her son's pain. I remember praying for them and saying, "One day when you get to heaven, you'll experience a blessing most of us well never be able to experience. The day you see your son running up to you giving you a hug and saying how much he loves and appreciates you." When she came up to me, I said good morning and asked how Will was doing. She was surprised I remembered her and her son. I reminded her that we met on Will's birthday. She said, "Oh my gosh, that's right, let me tell you what happened the rest of that day. Somehow; I was able to push the wheelchair up the ramp to the pier and sitting on the bench there was someone playing a guitar. He looked up and told me you are truly loved by God and asked if he could play a song for Will. I told him he loves guitar music, and it would be a wonderful birthday present. When I got to my car to put Will in, a car came around and a man came running out. He hoped that he didn't startle me, but that he was a believer and felt called to tell her that she

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and Will were blessed. Then he prayed with us. Since that day I got into a Christian support group, which has been a God sent for me and that the doctors are making progress to relieve Will's pain." I put my hands on Will shoulders and he smiled. She said, "I remember your prayer and what you said about seeing Will running to me. I think of that often and it helps me get through some of the tough days." As they left my brother said, "How can anyone not believe in God?" I said, "Some just choose not to, but God but us here to shine a little light so maybe a few more can see."

*But the path of the just is like the shining sun,  
That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.*

*Proverbs 4:18*

### **Listening Is a Gift**

As I was walking over to the harbor an older woman stopped me to talk. She said, "I don't like the way I treat my friends, but I'm unable to stop being rude." I looked at her and told her, "That's not true." She insisted that it was impossible for her not to be rude. I asked her, "Do you believe that the bible is true?" She said, "Yes of course." I continued to say, "What about Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. There are a lot of things that we can't do on our own, but nothing is impossible for God. Do you think God would prefer you to be nicer to not only your friends, but to others He puts in your path?" She answered, "Of course." I said, "So, let Him show you how you can do that." We must have talked for about fifteen minutes, and she thanked me. The next day I got a text from her saying that I was right that surrender is a

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wonderful thing to do and thanked me again for listening and being so uplifting and thoughtful.

As I was going to the harbor a gentleman stopped me and asked, “Do you remember me? My wife and I were here a year ago and you spent time talking with my wife.” I told him, “I’m sorry I can’t remember what I just had for breakfast.” He laughed then described her, the cottage they were staying in, that she was knitting and how I took the time to listen and pray with her. He said, “That really blessed her and I wanted you to know that. My wife passed away last April and I really miss her.” I told him “When I get home to heaven, we’ll have something to talk about and maybe she could teach me how to knit.” I hugged him and continued on my walk.

Something that I used to be terrible at was listening. If I was talking to someone, I would be so busy thinking about what I was going to say next that I didn’t hear what the other person was talking about. God has given me the gift of listening and it is a gift. The joy it brings me that someone else can trust me with their thoughts, time and feelings is amazing and now that I’m listening, I can ask God to speak through me to them and we both can benefit. There is no way I could do the things that I do unless the Holy Spirit was doing them through me.

*for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*

*Matthew 10:20*

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### **A Time to Mourn**

There are two lovely ladies I've seen for years that walk together. I always enjoy spending time talking with them. The one lady has been taking care of her sick husband and the last time we talked she told me she had hospice come in to help. It's been a couple of months since I've seen them, but I ran into them yesterday. When I saw her, I assumed her husband had gone home to the Lord. I asked how she was doing and she tried to hold back the tears without success, then apologized. I said, "Don't apologize Jesus said blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. You've been through a lot and you need God's comfort now." She said, "It's been hard. We met when we were sixteen and have been together all these years. It's strange I've been taking care of him the last year or so and now I don't know what to do. I know he is with Jesus now and no longer suffering, but not sure what I'm supposed to be doing." I said, "Right now this is your time to spend with your Father. When you think of your husband think of the wonderful things you did together, how you raised a family and made a life together. Then go to your Father and thank Him for all of those blessings and for all the tough times you went through together, and how He got you through them. God has a wonderful plan for your life and is going to use all the things you've learned over the years. We seem to learn the most when we are going through the trials in our lives and God wants to use those experiences. I found out God will never give us a ministry that doesn't involve people, because that's why we're here. It's like a master craftsman who made the most exquisite and beautiful table ever seen, but no one ever saw it, because he locked into a room and it was

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never seen or used by anyone. God wants people to see His masterpiece in you. I believe He is going to use the pain you're going through now to help others that are going through similar situations. I know the most precious gift I have to give to others is the most painful part of my life when I was suffering from depression. As you let God use you, He will give you an unbelievable joy. You know that you'll see your husband again where there is no more pain or sorrow, but God will use you to be that comfort for others. Who knows heaven might be a little more crowded because of the love you gave someone else." By now other people came up to me asking questions about my ministry and the two ladies excused themselves and continued their walk.

I've prayed with several people that have lost loved ones. One gentleman's wife passed away three years earlier, and he still misses her each day. They were married sixty-four years. Another woman was mourning the loss of her husband, it was one year ago that he left her to go home. Another man was in tears telling me about his amazing wife of twenty years who also passed away exactly a year ago. The other day I ran into a man sitting on a rock staring out at the ocean. He stopped me and asked, "Would you really pray with me? My wife of forty-four years just died three days ago. She had a wonderful faith and loved God. I know that she is in heaven, but it's still hard not seeing her each day." We prayed and I said, "This life here is temporary and this wasn't the place we were created for. God has something so wonderful in store for us we can't even imagine it. The Bible says this life is a race and your wife crossed over the finish line into the arms of Jesus first." He stood up and gave me a hug and didn't appear to want to let go as he quietly sobbed on my

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shoulder. When he let go, he thanked me and I told him that God just wanted to use me to comfort His child whom He loves.

There have been many others and when I come across these situations my first question I ask if they were believers. Most of the time I get a resounding yes, but I've had a couple that hung their head and said they weren't sure. The prayer for the believers is a prayer of rejoicing that they finished the race well and are simply at home waiting for the day they see their loved ones again. I'll ask what their loved one's name is in case I get there first I can ask Jesus to introduce us. The people that aren't sure if their spouse believed in Christ, I'll ask them if they believe. The few who told me they weren't sure I told them there was a reason they stopped me to ask for prayer. The prayer the Holy Spirit has me pray is of hope, love and that He wants no one to perish. That He loves them so much He sent this old fool to pray with them letting them know that their Father is watching over them. I then explain how easy it is to receive Jesus into their heart, but that the commitment must be real and not simply repeating words. I'll suggest that they find a quiet place to pray and talk to our Lord and Savior in private. I'll give them my card and tell them to call if they need me. What an honor it is for me that God can use this old sinner to be a GPS (God's Prayer Servant) to guide others home.

*that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

*Romans 10:9*

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### **God Continues to use this Old Sinner**

I received this email this morning from a young lady that God introduced me to yesterday. She walked past me at first then God tugged on her heart to turn around and she called to me. She looked at me with unbelief and said, "I can use prayer." She then broke down crying and hugged me. She told me that she is suffering from depression and didn't know if she could go on any longer. I smiled and said, "God loves you so much and is watching over you. The Holy Spirit is the one that had you turn around so we could talk." I shared my testimony on depression and how God guides me each day to meet His children He wants to talk to. I told her about my website and that she could access my book on depression. While hugging me I prayed while the Holy Spirit comforted her and told her how much she was loved.

This is the email she sent:

*We met today at the beach. I just wanted to write a short note before I laid down for bed this evening. I wanted to let you know that I appreciate you sooo so much. Today was God that intervened in my life with you and for that I am so very grateful. We don't know one another but God knew I needed you today in my life to change the trajectory of my life. I have felt all day long that God used you to give me a hug from Him and know that He is with me. I had been praying just before we walked past one another and I know it was Him through you. Thank you for that. Thank you for praying for me and with me. I have begun reading your book and let me say once again that God KNEW I needed you and your testimony. We share very similar stories. I look forward to gaining knowledge and*

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*learning from you. I hope we can meet again soon. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart. I love you. Good night.*

She wrote me again to tell me she finished reading my book and how much it helped her, which encouraged me to go ahead and have it published. She called me and asked if she could walk with me. I wrote back and set a day and time to meet. As we walked, she said “I’ve been doing more to draw closer to God and I attend a nearby church and attend both Wednesday and Sunday services. I’m also going to join a home fellowship.” I told her, “Keep your eyes opened today because I believe God has some divine meetings for us as He always has for me.” The day was amazing as I said hello to the friends I’ve made at the Strand and introduced my new friend. Then something wonderful happened we met a minister and his wife. After we talked, he wanted to pray for us. He started the prayer praying for me and my ministry and then his wife started to pray for my new friend. The prayer was about her struggles and how God was going to lift these burdens from her. The man continued and told her what her struggles were, sexual abuse especially at a young age, abandonment, and other things I didn’t know about my new sister. Afterwards she was crying and she hugged and thanked both of them. As we continued on our walk, she told me about her past and the struggles she’s had. I told her “It’s great God got you through all of that and that it is all in the past now. Now when you think of your past instead of the pain it caused you, now you can glorify God for getting you through it. All we have is right now and we can lean on God to guide us.” It was amazing I was repeating scriptures I didn’t know I knew. Several other people

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stopped me for prayer and she joined in and every time we were done, I asked how she felt and it was always wonderful. When we got back to our cars she hugged and thanked me for a wonderful day. I reminded her of the things she said she was planning to do and that she should write them down when she got home. I got in my car and humbly thanked my Dad for a wonderful day and allowing me to be used by Him.

*Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [12] No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

*1 John 4:11*

### **I Was Hoping You Be Here**

As I was walking, I saw a woman sitting on her bike. As I got close, I said, “Good morning.” She said, “I came down here looking for you. I see you all the time when I’m here riding my bike and I really need prayer.” I asked, “What do you need prayer for?” She started to cry and said, “Everything seems so hard. I’m a struggling single mom, I have some relationship issues and I need some guidance, but I hate asking for help.” I said, “We are about to come to our Father in prayer and actually the bible says Abba, which means Dad. What if your child was going through the pain you’re going through now, but they didn’t want to ask you for help? Our Dad has told us that in Him is peace, joy and a love will never totally be able to comprehend. He calls us not to fear, be anxious but to trust in him.” Then I recited:

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*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him and he will make your path straight.*

*Proverbs 3:5,6*

As we went to our Father the Holy Spirit spoke to her heart reminding her, we live our life a day at a time, the past is gone, God only knows what is going to happen tomorrow and we should enjoy the present. He reminded her that God has always been there for her and that He's not going to forsake her now. All during the prayer she was hugging me with her head on my shoulder crying. When the prayer was over, she looked up and thanked me. I told her that this has nothing to do with me but that God just wanted to use this old man to speak to her today. I told her my ministry is Getting Over Depression and gave her my card. I told her a little of my past dealing with depression, my suicide attempts and how God used prayer to get me through my struggles. She was shaking when she saw the card and said, "I really need this." I told her about my book and the things that were available on my website along with my contact information if she needs to talk. She hugged me one last time and thanked me for being there. As she left, I felt in my spirit that she might have been contemplating ending her life. I know what it's like to have no hope and the pain of living becomes too much to bear and death might be the only way out. God used me to comfort her using my testimony and telling her that He has a wonderful plan for her life, but she needs to live it a day at a time.

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*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.*

*Ephesians 4:29*

### **Unbelievable Joy**

I've been walking on the Strand since July 4, 2020, praying with thousands of people, meeting tens of thousands and have seen hundreds of answered prayers. I can't explain the joy God gives me each day and God is doing all the work. He has each day planned out, who He wants me to talk to and He simply uses me as a Bluetooth speaker to talk to His children. Each day I'm amazed by the words that come out of my mouth and the love I have for each person that He puts in my path. I've been coming in contact with so many people whether for prayer, asking about my ministry, sharing my testimony on depression, comforting others or simply to worship by giving thanks.

One day a woman came up to me and explained she has seen me before and needed prayer. When I asked what she needed prayer for she started to cry and said, "My life is a mess." I told her, as I've said to so many others, "We live our life just a day at a time and whatever happened in the past is gone and only God knows the future. We are here on this beautiful sunny day walking along this gorgeous beach and I bet your thoughts have been consumed by negative thoughts of things you can't change." She nodded her head while sobbing. I asked her, "Has God ever blessed you in your life?" She seemed surprised at the question and said, "Of course many times." I asked if she could name a few and she started rattling off these wonderful things God has done in her life. I interrupted her to ask, "How do you feel?" By

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now she stopped crying and a smile replaced that look of despair she had when I first met her. I said “How and what we think controls our emotions. If we focus on the pain, we feel hurt, but if we focus on the joy God has put in our life it changes to love and hope. It sounds like God has gotten you through several trials in your life already, what makes you think He won’t do it again?” We went into prayer as I waited on the Holy Spirit to speak to His daughter. She was hugging me as I held her and spoke words of love and comfort like a father holding his daughter. When she looked up it was hard to recognize the woman who first approached me in her despair. The expression of joy and her beautiful smile stayed with me the rest of my walk.

The next day, I saw her again and she was still wearing that beautiful smile as she came up to me. She continued to thank me and I told her, “This has nothing to do with me. God wanted to comfort His daughter. He hates to see His kids in pain and wanted you to know He’s there for you anytime you need Him. God could have picked any old man to do what I’m doing, but for some reason He wanted to show me where to find my true joy.” I told her that I loved her and she said, “I love you too.” She then gave me one last hug before going on her way.

When I first started my walks, I might pray with one or two people or none at all, but now I pray for five, six or like yesterday ten, depending on God’s schedule. On April 6, 1998, I tried to end my life for the sixth time. There is no reason I should be here, but God knew all along how He wanted to use His child and the joy He gives me is immeasurable. He has this joy in store for all of His children

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and a plan to use us to touch others. We don't have to search for joy; Jesus has given it to us and to the full.

*“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*

*John 15:11*

### **I Don't Want a Divorce**

It wasn't long after I parked, that a man driving his car pulled off the road to talk to me. He told me he was hoping I would be there and really needed prayer. He was on the verge of tears when I asked, “What do you need prayer for?” It took a minute to compose himself and he said, “I'm getting a divorce. I'm doing well financially and I feel I have everything I need, but without my wife none of it means anything. I really love her and can't imagine life without her. We've both have said some very hurtful things to each other and it has continued to accelerate to the point that she wants a divorce.” I thought to myself if you really loved her, a true biblical love, with God's help he would have been able to control himself. I've heard this request several times by men now feeling remorse for their actions. Love should not be a fight we are determined to win, but an opportunity to show God's love with patience and understanding. After he was done speaking, we went to our Father in prayer and as always, the Holy Spirit spoke to his heart, explaining what biblical love was. He told him the only thing we can control on this earth is ourself, we have no control over anyone or circumstances, but only how we react. After praying I said, “Sit down and talk to your wife and explain to her how much she means to you, and even start the conversation in prayer.

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The reason we argue with each other is because we want to win, whether we're right or wrong. We don't think of how we are hurting the other person we become only concerned about what we want. I'm sure you've found out by now that neither one of you win when you argue. You'll have to make a true effort to love her as God's word tells us to love. Love is all about giving and not receiving after all God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son. There is a quote in a book I read that states, the opposite of love isn't hate, but selfishness. I suggest to continue praying for wisdom and guidance and listen to what the Lord tells you." With tears rolling down his face he thanked me and drove off.

*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*1 Corinthians 13:4-7*

### **Another Year**

It was New Years Day and this season is always busy with families vacationing in our beautiful little city. It seemed like every couple hundred yards I was stopped by a family asking about my shirt and ministry. The children would occupy themselves playing with Brando as the parents shared their love for Jesus and asking all kinds of questions. I prayed with more people than I can remember from blessing their time here to the loss of a loved one or suffering from an illness.

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As I was walking back, I saw a woman with her grown daughter and her young son. The boy was walking their dog but let go of the leash and the dog ran across the road. The driver of the car that was next to me was heading toward the dog and was looking on his phone. I yelled, "Stop!" He looked up and stopped just in time. They quickly retrieved the dog and the family came to thank me. At that time, the daughter noticed my shirt and said, "We can use prayer." She looked at her mom and said, "My mom is going through a difficult time and needs some peace." Her mom looked up with tears on her face then looked down again. I didn't know what was happening, but the Holy Spirit did. The Holy Spirit spoke to her saying, "This isn't only a new year but more importantly a new day that the Lord has made and we should be glad and rejoice in it. Everything in the past is gone and there was nothing we can do to change it and only our Father knows what the future will bring. Our Father has a great love and purpose for you. When you are in God's will you'll find your joy and peace. Whenever you find yourself dwelling in the things you can't change spend that time with your Heavenly Father praying and listening for His direction in your life." When the prayer was over the mom and her daughter looked at each other and hugged. She then looked at me and said, "That prayer was perfect." I said, "Of course, it was from the Father to His daughter that He loves. God loves you so much that He sent this old man to let you know He loves you, knows where you are and what you need." They laughed and we hugged just before I continued my walk.

I'm still amazed how God uses this old sinner each day and not sure why He would leave the ninety-nine to go

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find this lost sheep, but this time it's the sheep who is doing the rejoicing.

*Then Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup>“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? <sup>5</sup>And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup>and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ <sup>7</sup>I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.*

*Luke:15:3-7*

### **We Decide our Memories**

The place I used to work, moved their location in San Diego so Teri and I decided to go down to see my coworkers that I haven't seen in over a year. I was still wearing my Do You Need Prayer? shirt when we arrived. It was great as they recognized me and asked how I was doing. I had a wonderful memory for each person, and it appeared they also had one of me. The main reason I went was to see Jesse, my old boss. Jesse is a young man still in his twenties, and one of the most knowledgeable people I know when it comes to restaurant equipment. The time I was working for him, was the same time that my right hip was giving out and I was scheduled for a hip replacement. The pain was unbearable at times and my surgery was delayed once because my blood sugar was elevated. Jesse was always watching out for me and at times I would come into work and only be able to work an hour or

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two because of the pain. Even though I would try to persevere Jesse would see the pain I was in and would send me home. There were times I would be sitting in the conference room in so much pain all I could do was cry and he would come in to comfort me. He always paid me for the whole day, and I just wanted to thank him one more time for his love and support. I looked down one of the aisles and he was standing there talking to a couple of his superiors with his back to me. I said, “Hi Jesse.” He turned around and even though he was wearing a mask because of COVID, you could tell he was smiling. He came up to me and we hugged. He introduced me to his boss and said, “Mark is the best person I ever worked with.” I told them, “Jesse is the best and that I could never repay all the kindness he showed me. Not that I came here today to give him any money.” Then he hugged me again and said, “Just knowing you is payment enough.”

On the way home I thought about every person I saw again and the wonderful memory I had for each one. My memory could have been about the pain I suffered those few months, but it wasn't. It was about the connection I made with a young man and how grateful I'll always be. We decide what our memories will be, we can search for the good or focus on the bad. When you focus on the good, you'll be able to see God's hand in your life.

*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

*Philippians 4:8*

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### **Me and the Power of the Holy Spirit**

Each day I feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in a powerful way. The prayers are amazing because He taught me to step aside and trust Him to take over. Yesterday was a day that helped me grow even closer to my Father. It started when I met a young surfer. He said, "I could use prayer. I'm a youth pastor and I've been on a sabbatical for forty-three days. I'm not sure if I want to be a pastor any longer. I feel I'm drawing further away from God instead of closer." I said, "I could understand. Before becoming a pastor, God was your passion and now, He's your job." I put my hand on his shoulder and went to our Father. I stepped aside while the Holy Spirit told him everything that he needed to hear. When I was praying, I was expecting the Spirit to give him a more direct answer on what he should do, but it wasn't like that. He was told that he already knew what to do and to only trust what God had planted in his heart. After we prayed, he thanked me. He said, "It's amazing that you are here at this time of my struggle. I'm scheduled to meet with my pastor tomorrow and the anxiety I was feeling seems to be gone." I said, "When you approached me you told me about your situation and kept saying you weren't sure what you were going to do. Your Father however knew for sure what He wants you to do so leave it in His hands." He smiled and gave me a hug and went on his way.

A little further down I met Amy, she's homeless and she was sitting in her usual spot. I've seen her for over three years now. She just turned fifty and if you saw her, you would never think she's homeless. She's always clean, seems intelligent, always reading or writing in her notebook. Recently when she sees me, she asks for prayer. Typically,

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the prayers are for health and her living situation. Today's prayer was a little more powerful than other days and she was told she needs to step out in faith to change her situation and her Father would watch over her. Normally when I prayed for her, I prayed that God would guide and open doors, but today I told her, "To guide someone on their path they need to be moving. So, get up in faith and move."

I continued my walk when a lady I see often stopped me for prayer. Her father just found out he has cancer and he is suffering from terrible anxiety. We went before our heavenly Dad and the Holy Spirit reminded her that the anxiety he has will cause more physical harm and distress. Even though she can't cure the cancer she can help guide him to peace. I said, "Pray for him and with him, sit with him and tell him the love you have for him and the love of the Father. Help your father grow closer to his Father at this time. That's where he'll find the peace he needs."

I continued walking when I saw this woman. People would tell me how she would sit in her car yelling and swearing at them. Many said they thought she was demon possessed. Today however she was walking and I said, "Good morning." She was pleasant and told me she liked my shirt. She then told me some weird stories like they stopped paying her social security, she was in a mental hospital for six months and escaped, she had only \$.28, she had no gas, her battery was dead and she went on as I patiently listened. Then she said, "I know God has a purpose for me and I need to be patient and wait on Him." I wasn't sure what to do after hearing that and was going to give her the couple of dollars I had in my wallet. She said, "I don't want your money but I would love for you to pray with me." I put my

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arm around her as we prayed and she rested her head on my shoulder. The Holy Spirit held His daughter, and told her how valuable and loved she is by her Father. I could hear her begin to cry. I thought this must be one of the first times that someone talked to her with care and compassion in a very long time. When the Holy Spirit was finished, she put her arms around me and just held me for a couple of minutes. When she let go, she thanked me and walked away. As she walked away, I remembered all the things others said about her and how they judged her. We have no right to judge any of God's children, but we are only called to love.

*But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*

*1 Samuel 16:7*

When I got close to the pier there was a young girl, about eighteen. She appeared to be homeless and had a strange tattoo on her face. It was dots that appeared to make the shape of a cross. The dots started on her forehead and went down to her chin, then other dots that went horizontal on her cheeks. When I approached her, she said, "I like your shirt." I said thank you and she said, "Okay." I thought she met she was finished talking to me, but she said, "Okay pray for me." I asked her what she wanted prayer for and she said, "Whatever God puts on your heart." She held my hands as I stepped aside to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to her. It was a wonderful prayer as He told her how precious she was to the Father and that she has all she needs to live a life of joy and peace, but needed to surrender to His will so He could

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guide her. She needed to have a heart of forgiveness to those that have hurt her in the past so she could continue her life with love and peace. As I spoke, I felt her hands trembling and a soft whimper. When the prayer was over, she wrapped her arms around me and held me tight. She didn't say a word, but continued to hold me. I simply whispered, "He loves you so much." When she finally left go, she looked at me and thanked me. As she walked away, I thought I wonder who that wonderful hug was really for.

I thought what an unbelievable day, but the day wasn't over yet. I passed by these condo rentals where there was about twelve people sitting on the patio. I looked up and said, "Hello." One of the ladies yelled, "We can use prayer." She opened the gate so I could come in. She said, "We're all taking care of our parents who are suffering from Dementia or Alzheimer. We rented this place so we can comfort each other, but it's difficult. We could really use prayer for strength and wisdom." They gathered together while the Holy Spirit spoke to them. He said, "Try to remember the times when they were children and how their parents took care of them, making sure they had all that they needed and how they protected them through the years. As they got older remember the support and help their parents still gave them as they were raising their families. You are doing what God has called you to do, honor your mother and father and it will go well with you. This is how we earn our rewards. It's not the times things are going well but these moments when things are difficult, but we still persevere in faith. Just remember you are not in this alone, but your Heavenly Father is always there to help. This is your opportunity to grow even closer to Him and lean on Him to get you

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through.” After praying, I looked around almost everyone still had their heads down as it appeared they were also praying to their Dad. After several hugs and goodbyes, I went on my way. There is no greater place to be than in your Father’s will.

*“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.*

*Exodus 20:12*

## Stories From the Strand

### Chapter 6-Praying for a Closer Walk with God

#### Draw Us Near

God has put so many wonderful people in my life. When I first arrived a couple of ladies saw me and told me I was late. I apologized telling them I was studying for my final exam and lost track of time. They both laughed and I continued my walk. I said good morning to whoever looked up then a brother and sister approached me for prayer. They appeared to be in their early twenties and he had a shirt and pants that were covered with scriptures. I asked what they would like prayer for, and he said, “We want a closer walk with the Lord and that our family would grow closer to God.” It’s amazing when I pray how the Holy Spirit takes over and that I’m only there for decoration. I know for those who know me you are thinking that’s not much of a decoration. After I prayed the girl asked, “Are you a pastor?” I just said, “No, only a sinner God wanted to use.”

Then a young man in his early twenties came up to me for prayer. He just got out of prison and was hoping his girlfriend was going to wait for him, but he couldn’t find her. His prayer however was not to locate her but he said, “I want to be a better man, to have a closer walk with Jesus and allow Him to guide me.” While praying the Holy Spirit told this young man that his Lord was always with him, even in prison he was by his side waiting for him to reach out as he did that day. He hugged me tight and I told him about another young man that approached me the day before. I said, “The young man was about your age and asked for prayer because he came to live in California with his girlfriend. That day she went to his work with all his stuff and told him not to come

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back. Instead of seeking revenge his prayer was for travel mercies as he was taking a bus to go home and to have a closer walk with Jesus. After I prayed, he let out a loud shout and said he is Native American and that's how they end their prayer." What an honor it is to pray with godly young man that know that their happiness is not wrapped up in the things of this world, but their joy comes from the Lord. While I walked away, I thought how much those prayers honor God that His children want to get together just to be closer to Him. Each day when I start, I pray that today before it's over I would bring a smile to God's face and I believe we just did.

*But "he who glories, let him glory in the LORD." <sup>18</sup> For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends*

*2 Corinthians 10:17-18*

### **Satan's Time is Almost Up**

I have a lot of people asking me to pray for America. The other day someone came up to me to make that request and I asked, "What would you like to pray for?" Thinking for a moment he said, "We need to ask God to bless America." I said, "God can't bless America, because America has become sin and God doesn't bless sin but condemns it." He wasn't sure what to say and he started to talk about election fraud. I stopped him and said, "What if the leaders of this country came out and admitted there is fraud in our elections what would we do?" While he was thinking I said, "Jesus told us the ruler of this world is Satan, Peter tells us the devil is like a roaring lion roaming around to see who he can destroy and that he is the father of lies. This is what is happening to our

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world, it is being destroyed by the devil just like it was prophesied in the bible.

Satan is good at his job and has us fighting among ourselves and worrying about everything, instead of us focusing on what we are called to do.

*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

*Ephesians 6:12-13*

As Satan distracts us with his evil plan for this world, we won't be able to see God's eternal plan. We were created for something much greater than this time we have on this earth, but while we're here we have a purpose God wants us to accomplish. Jesus has called us to go out and spread the good news of Heaven and how to get there. So how do we do that? Each one of us was created to do that in a special way using the gifts, talents, and abilities that He has given us, but to know God's will for your life you are going to have give yourself completely to Him. We need to stop wasting time worrying about things we can't change and spend more time with the One who can change everything."

I could see that I overwhelmed him with everything I was saying. The poor gentleman just wanted to pray for America and I gave him a Bible study. I apologized for taking up so much of his time. He said, "No, I really appreciate your insights and it makes me think of what really is important, doing God's will." I then finally went into prayer, "God help us be good guides and lead those You put in our path, family

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and loved ones to the entrance of the narrow gate so You can direct them in. We need to love You with all our heart mind and soul so we'll and to love others as we love ourselves so we can make a difference in this world. We ask you to put a hedge of protection over America and to bless your children as we try to make our country better. Bless our leadership giving them the wisdom to make this country yours again." After the prayer we hugged and he left. It's amazing how the Holy Spirit works in our life I had no idea I was going to say the things that I said, but He knew that gentleman needed to hear it.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

*Romans 12:1-2*

### **Amazing Day and a Dragonfly**

Today I found myself rehearsing prayers and what I may say to someone. I was starting to lose the reason God wanted me doing this in the first place, which was that the Holy Spirit would speak to the people He puts in my path and that I was only His vessel. So today I prayed that God would move me out of the way and that I would stand by and listen to His words for His children. My prayer was answered. I was walking and a man yelled, "I need a prayer!" I walked to him, and he said, "I want a closer relationship with God. My

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marriage is failing because of the way I treat my wife. I want to be the man that would honor God by being a better husband.” I said, “I’ve been praying for people for a long time now and have been blessed to get praise reports of answered prayers. Each prayer that was answered had one thing in common, the request was God’s will. Your request is what God wants for you and your wife and if this is truly your desire it will be answered. This is the time you draw closer to God by reading the bible each day, start your day and end it in prayer, pray with your wife and allow the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts and actions.” I then put my arm around him and the Holy Spirit spoke to his heart. When the prayer was over, we both had tears rolling down our cheeks. I then recited Ephesians 5:25;

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,*

*Ephesians 5:25*

As I continued my walk a young man called out, “Can I have a prayer?” I felt like a hot dog vendor at a baseball game. He said, “My mother is living alone, and she’s depressed. I need guidance on how I can help her.” Again, I stepped aside and let the Holy Spirit speak to this young man. The prayer was to remind his mother that she is never alone, but that her Father is always right there to listen to her and to comfort her. That there is a plan for her life and she needs to seek God’s wisdom and that’s where she’ll find her. After praying I said, “There is no ministry that God will give us that doesn’t involve other people. If she goes to a church help her find a ministry where she can serve and if she doesn’t have a

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church, find one that she can be part of. I suffered from depression most of my life, have been institutionalized seven times, taken more antidepressant medicine than I can remember, went through electroshock therapy and on April 6, 1998 I tried to end my life for the sixth time. I know what depression is and one thing people who are depressed do is isolate themselves, which is the worst thing you can do. I know your mom has gifts and talents God wants to use. I would suggest for you to encourage your mom to get involved and help her find that place that God has already prepared for her.” He hugged and thanked me and I told him if there is anything I can do to help just call me and gave him my contact information.

Later that day this young woman was walking with her boyfriend, and they stopped so Brando and I could walk past them. After a few steps I felt a touch on my shoulder and this young lady said, “Sir I would like you to have this, it belongs to you.” It was this a rock with a dragonfly painted on it. I thanked her and said have a blessed day. When I got home, I took the rock from my pocket and wondered why she thought it belonged to me and then I turned it over and the words Love, Faith and Hope were written on the back. God has put me on an amazing path that I wouldn’t trade for anything. I thought the journey was to tell others how much God loves them, but it also turned out to be a journey to tell me how much He loves me.

*And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.*

*1 John 4:16*

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### **I Might be Contagious**

As I was walking to the harbor, I met this wonderful sister in Christ walking her dog. She stopped me and we talked for a while and she said, “I want to be more effective for Jesus. I feel God wants to use me more and I would like prayer for that.” The prayer as always was from the Holy Spirit, and we asked our Father that He would open the door for her to be used. After the prayer I said, “My prayer ministry started with a simple prayer. When I got laid off from my job I was in my yard and stopped then prayed, God You’ve given me this time what would You like to do with it? That night in a dream I saw this shirt and was guided to start praying with others at the Strand.” You might want to pray the same prayer.” She gave me a hug and thanked me.

As I was coming back, I saw her again but instead of walking her dog she was holding her. Her face was beaming, and she said, “I’m so happy to see you. After we talked, I met this young girl under the pier who was wearing the same slippers I had. That started our conversation. The young girl was in distress and after talking with her for a while I said, I’ll keep you in my prayers. I took a couple of steps then stopped and turned around and said no let’s pray right now. I would never have done that before but talking to you encouraged me.” I said, “This has nothing to do with me, just answered prayer.” As I walked back, I thought if prayer was as contagious as COVID what an awesome place this would be.

*Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

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### **I Want to Be Better**

Each day is new and I'm excited to see what God has planned for me. As I was just beginning my walk, I met a couple of brothers I knew from a church I used to attend. As I was talking another brother, Luke, was talking to a gentleman who appeared to be under the influence. While he was talking, I heard the gentleman say to him, "Would you pray for me?" Luke yelled over for me to come over. When I turned the corner wearing my Do You Need Prayer shirt the man was in awe and began to cry. He told us he wanted to be better and showed us his tattoos that had John 3:16 and God is Good. Luke began to talk to him about rededicating his life to Jesus, while I told him how much God must love him and is watching over him. We both prayed for him. After praying I spent time sharing my testimony and the purpose God has given me on my journey. I said, "God has a special purpose for you and in that purpose, you'll find the joy you're looking for. You'll have to give up drinking, because God is a still small voice and being drunk will drown it out." He agreed and I asked, "Are you going to throw away that bottle?" He said, "Yes." But I don't think he did.

A couple of days later I saw him and he was intoxicated again. He came over to me with his head down and with some pride left he said, "I did give up weed." The Holy Spirit took over as He told him the plans and love God has for him. As we were talking there was a man smoking a cigarette coming closer to hear what was being said. He asked, "Can I join in?" I said, "Yes please." We all introduced ourselves. He told the young man, "Everything Mark is saying is right. My father was a pastor and I grew up in the church and walked away. I was an alcoholic and

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wasted most of my life.” He shared things that I couldn’t since I really had no experience in alcoholism. We talked for a while assuring us all of God’s plan and to accomplish that plan there are things that we are going to have to change. By now the young man was crying and saying, “I’m sorry.” I said, “God will forgive you, but you need to make a true commitment to repent and ask for God’s help. I suggest before you even think of buying a drink say a short prayer asking God to help you and I know God will give you the strength to stop.” We all hugged and the man who joined us said, “My wife has stage four cancer and the doctors only give her a couple more weeks, but today I had to get away for a little while to pray and ask for peace.” I believe that young man received hope from him, and the man got some peace from helping a brother. For me I received the opportunity to draw even closer to my Father as I watched Him work.

*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

*Galatians 6:2*

### **God Is Always Doing Something New**

Even though I do the same thing every day, each day is new and exciting with God. I met a young man, Daniel, who told me that he rededicated his life and wants to use it to serve God. He had several questions for me on how he should go about accomplishing that goal. We talked for a while and some of my suggestions were pray each day, read his bible first thing in the morning, be part of a Bible believing church, serve and to journal.

I saw that same young man a couple of weeks later and he smiled brightly when he came near. We met at the

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beginning of the Strand and he asked if he could walk with me. He said, "Your suggestions and especially the journaling has helped me in my walk with Christ. I've been volunteering at my church and I signed up to be a prayer partner." As we were talking other people were yelling hello Mark or saying how much they loved my shirt. A couple of people stopped just to talk as we shared our faith in God. As we were walking, we stopped at a small coffee shop by the pier and about five kids came out to ask if they could pet Brando. I said, "Of course." I told them Brando loved carrots. Each asked if they could give Brando a carrot and a lady sitting next to them asked, "Could I have a carrot for Brando and a prayer?" Daniel asked if he could join in on the prayer and the lady consented. All she told me was that the prayer was for family and the Holy Spirit knew what she met. After the prayer the lady was surprised that I knew what she needed to hear then hugged and thanked me. I said, "God arranged our meeting so He could tell you He is watching over you and your family."

As we continued our walk, a lady I prayed with a couple of weeks earlier was driving down the Strand and rolled down her window and shouted, "I'm cured!" The prayer was for cancer treatment she was going through and I remember her being very nervous. I hugged her through the car window as she rejoiced over her answered prayer. I tried to keep my tears back without much success. I turned to Daniel and told him, "God has great plans for you and because of your enthusiasm and youth God is going to accomplish a lot through your faith. However, there is a bullseye on your back and Satan has the fiery darts and he's a good shot so you need to be strong, have faith and stay

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close to God each day.” I got to my car and we parted ways and I thanked God for allowing me to see the start of a wonderful life in serving Him.

*above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

*Ephesians 6:16*

### **Searching for Wisdom**

During my walks on the Strand, I've had all kinds of prayer requests. Requests for healings, loss of a loved one, guidance, marriage restoration, overcoming addiction, financial, family and more. I even had a request for a sword and scepter once, along with a young girl request for a blessing on her dead goldfish. Yesterday I was really blessed when a ten-year-old boy stopped and asked if I would pray for him. I said, “Of course, what would you like prayer for?” He asked for wisdom. My first thought was King Solomon's request when God asked Him what he desired. The Holy Spirit took over in prayer and told this young boy how honorable his request was. After praying he looked up, smiled, thanked me and went on his way. With all the evil that is happening in this world it felt wonderful hearing such an honorable request from someone so young. I think we all need to add wisdom to our list of prayer requests each day.

As I continued my walk, I met a father who was waiting for his two sons to finish their surf lesson. He stopped me and said, “I see you every time I come here. You convict me that I should be doing more for God.” We talked for several minutes as I shared my testimony and said, “God has gifted each one of his children to do something special

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and doing God's will is where we are going to find the joy God has in store for us." He asked for prayer and his request was for wisdom. I told him, "This is a done deal since that is what God wants to give his children and all we need to do is ask and not doubt then He will give it generously."

After greeting several other people, I came up to a young mom pushing her child in a stroller. She said, "I see you all the time and have always wanted to talk to you. How did you get started praying with people at the Strand?" I shared my story on how I was laid off of my job and the dream I had of the shirt I now wear each day. She told me, "I know God has a purpose for my life. My child is a miracle from God. Before she was born the doctors said she wouldn't survive and here she is healthy and happy. My priority is to raise her so she would know Jesus and walk with Him. Would you pray for me that God will give me the wisdom I will need to fulfill the purpose God has for me?" I laughed a little telling her of the last couple of requests I received that day was also for wisdom. The prayer was wonderful and brought tears to both our eyes. After the prayer she asked if she could give me a hug and then went on her way.

As I continued to the harbor, I met up with another young mother pushing her child in a stroller who stopped me and said, "I could really use some prayer. My husband and I are going through some legal problems and we're being sued." I asked her, "How often do you think about this?" She said, "All the time." I asked her, "Has thinking about this helped your situation?" She thought about it and said, "No." Then I said, "So, you have been wasting each day by occupying your mind with something that you can't change? You're here in this beautiful place with your child

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and not enjoying it. Our lives are pretty basic if you think of negative things, you feel bad, but if you think of the blessings, you have and look around at the beauty God has shown you, you feel wonderful.” She looked at me and agreed. “If there is nothing you can do today to change your circumstances enjoy God’s blessings. What would you like prayer for?” She said, “I need prayer for patience and wisdom to do what God is calling me to do.” I smiled and we went to talk to our Father. The Holy Spirit took over to remind her how much God loves her and that she will hear him not in the storm but in the still small voice. Before she left, she hugged me and thanked me. I reminded her before she left that God arranged our meeting and He just wanted to use this old man to tell her that He’s watching over her and that He knows where she is and what she needs.

Heading back to my car a young man stopped me and said, “Can we talk? I see you all the time but since I’m normally running I just wave. Every time I see you, I feel I should be doing more for God than I do.” We talked for a while as I shared my testimony and how God has led me on this journey and how wonderful the journey is. He asked, “Would you pray for me?” I asked, “What do you want prayer for?” He said, “A closer walk with God, guidance and wisdom.” I told him, “These are all the things God wants you to have to live a full life so I’m sure He is going to answer your prayer.” After praying we hugged and I told him that I loved him and he told me he loved me too.

I continued to my car and a young woman stopped and said, “I was going to ask for prayer, but I saw you talking and praying with that other man and I decided to go because I was running late, but the spirit was so strong I had to come

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back and talk to you. I really want to grow closer to God, but I keep getting pulled away.” I asked her, “What do think is pulling you away?” She said, “I’m not sure.” I told her, “It’s the enemy and the reason he was doing it is because he knows God wants to use you in a special way and that way might lead to someone getting saved, which is something Satan hates.” She said, “I’m going to Tennessee, because my father had a heart attack and I need prayer for him. I also want prayer to draw closer to God and wisdom so that I can honor Him.” The prayer as always was custom made for her and she looked up crying and just hugged me. She kept thanking me, but I told her, “I’m only a messenger.” She hugged me one more time and said, “I’m so glad God had me come back to talk with you.”

I know all these prayers will be answered because wisdom is what God desires for us.

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*

*James 1:5-6*

### **I’m a Bluetooth Speaker for Christ**

My journey God has me on is amazing. A day doesn’t go by that I don’t see a miracle whether it’s an answered prayer, seeing God’s timing as He puts me on the path of someone that needed him or when I get to confirm something that God put on another person’s heart. The other day I met a man who saw my shirt and said, “I can really use some prayer. I’ve been struggling with lust and

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addiction.” I put my hand on his shoulder and we went to our Father in prayer. The Holy Spirit had me step aside so He could talk to His child. The prayer was, “God has wonderful plans for you and that He would help you fight these sins if he would repent and stay close to Him. This fight is from the enemy holding you back from the joy and purpose God has in store for you. Whenever you feel these urges say a short prayer asking for help and it will be given to you.” After praying the man was crying and looked into my eyes and said, “That is exactly what God has been putting on my heart the last few days and when you said it out loud it was as if God was talking to me.” I told him, “That was God talking to you, I’m only a vessel He uses.” He gave me a hug and thanked me and I told him again, “This has nothing to do with me, but God loves you and wants you to know you’re not alone on this journey. I think of myself only a Bluetooth speaker for Christ”

Later that day I was walking past the pier and a lady told me how much she loved my shirt. I gave her the history of how God began my ministry. Her husband then came up with their dog and told me how great it was that I walk and pray with people. Then without being prompted I said, “God has called us to live just a day at a time and whatever happened in the past is gone and only God holds the future and today is the day the Lord has made and we should be glad and rejoice in it. I only worry about what I can control and realize the only thing that I can control is me. So, each day I decide to be the best I can be and allow God to direct my path.” They both looked at me and held each other’s hands tightly then looked at each other. She said, “We’ve been going through some hard times and before seeing you we

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were both praying for God to guide us and He placed on our hearts exactly what you just said.” I smiled and told them, “God loves you so much that He decided to send this vessel to let you know that He loves you, knows where you are and what you need.” Then we hugged and as I was leaving, I felt this warmth as if Jesus was hugging me. I smiled and thought You really do use the foolish things of this world.

*But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.*

*2 Timothy 2:20*

### **God's Rain**

I was questioning if I should go for my walk at the Strand since the weather was calling for rain. Just the day before I got caught in the rain when I was at the harbor and by the time I got to my car Brando and I were soaked. I prayed for guidance and felt I was supposed to go. When I arrived, it was cloudy but not raining yet. As I walked, I only saw a few people taking the risk of being out. When I got to the pier two young ladies were jogging and I said good morning as they passed. They came back and told me how much they liked my shirt. The one young lady said, “We’re from Arizona on spring break and we attend a Christian school. We were just talking about evangelizing when we saw your shirt and if you don’t mind, we would like to ask you some questions.” I told them I would love to talk to them and began by telling them the day I asked God what He would like me to do with this time He has given me. I told them about the dream of seeing the shirt I now

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wear and how I was directed to come down to the strand to walk. I explained I've been doing this for over five years and have prayed with thousands of people. I wanted to be mindful of the time I was taking from them, but they seemed very excited to hear more of my story. I then shared my depression testimony and how God uses it every day on my walks. Then they asked several questions about my life suffering from depression and how I ended up receiving Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I enjoyed answering all of their questions because it just reminded me of how faithful Jesus has been in my life. They then asked, "Would you pray for us, that God will guide us on our journey?" I said, "This will be an answered prayer since you're asking for God's will in your life." I stepped out of the way and the Holy Spirit spoke to these young ladies with love, encouragement and purpose. It might have been one of the longest prayers I prayed as the Holy Spirit was directing me to go on. After praying the Holy Spirit continued to speak through me saying, "God will never leave you or forsake you, but you will have your trials and need to stay focused on the Lord." There were so many things that continued to come out of my mouth I didn't know how to stop. Every once in a while, I would say I didn't want to take up too much of their time, but each time they told me how much they were enjoying the time they were spending with me and encouraged me to go on. When I was finally done talking the one girl asked if she could take a picture with me. She stood close to me and put her arm around me and I put my arm around her as we faced her friend who took the picture. I said, "Do you want to have some fun with your parents? Send them the picture and say you found a new

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boyfriend.” They both laughed and thanked me for the time I spent with them. I gave them my card with the website and they said they’ll check it out when they get back to their room.

I thought as I left that’s why God got me to the beach today, but just a little further past the pier a man came up to me and said, “I was praying you would be here today. I don’t know if you remember me, we met last year. My name is Tim and I’m from Canada. I’m part of a group that oversees and helps chaplains. The president of the group is resigning and I’ve been asked to replace him, but I’m not sure that’s what God is calling me to do.” Without thinking I said, “Are you unsure or afraid of taking on this challenge? I can understand you would have reservations. It sounds like a great responsibility and would take a lot of your time. Do you feel God has a greater calling for your life than this?” He looked surprised at my candor and so was I. We then went to our Father in prayer. It was wonderful how the Holy Spirit took over, reminding him of all the gifts God has given him and that he isn’t in this situation by chance. The prayer was closed by telling him how much he is loved and would be doing it with the guidance of the Holy Spirit if he decides to do it. When the prayer was over, he had tears in his eyes and hugged me. He told me he felt the presence of the spirit and thanked me and now knew why God put me on his heart that day.

As I continued walking it began to rain. I headed back to my car which was about a mile away. By the time I got there Brando and I were soaked again. I got Brando in the car and I got in. If you haven’t experienced the aroma of a wet dog, it’s unique and disgusting. I sat there for a

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moment thanking God for the opportunity He had given me. I thought to myself this wasn't rain, but Holy Water.

*How beautiful upon the mountains  
Are the feet of him who brings good news,  
Who proclaims peace,  
Who brings glad tidings of good things,  
Who proclaims salvation,  
Who says to Zion,  
“Your God reigns!”*

*Isaiah 52:7*

## Stories From the Strand

### Chapter 7-Praying for Family

#### **My Son is on the Wrong Path**

On my way to the pier a well-built man covered in tattoos came up to me and said, “My name is Brian, can we please pray for my son who’s in prison accused of killing someone? I was hoping he wouldn’t make the same mistakes I did, but unfortunately, he seems to be following in my footsteps.” The Holy Spirit knew I was going to meet up with this troubled father today and had the words he needed to hear. The prayer was how our trials make us the people God can use and those are the times we come before the throne, because we have nowhere else to go. Like the prodigal son, who finally came back to his father. After the prayer I asked him, “How did you come to the Lord?” He told me, “I gave my life to Christ in a prison cell. I was in prison for several years and one of the other inmates told me how he received Jesus and the hope that He gave him. He gave me a bible which I still have to this day.” I said “I don’t know much about you except that you love your son so much that you came up to a stranger asking God to help him. I pray that one day your son will have that kind of faith and continue to follow in his father’s footsteps. Do what you’ve been doing and keep your son in prayer each day and don’t forget your son is God’s son first and He loves His children.” With a smile and tears in his eyes he hugged me before going on his way.

I would see him every once in a while, we would talk and end our conversations in prayer for his son. Years passed and just the other day I saw him on the beach. He was helping set up an area for a recovery group that he is involved in. When he saw me, he ran over and gave me this great hug. At

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first, I was trying to remember who he was and it dawned on me this is Brian. I remembered his name because that's my son's name. He said, "It's so great to see you. You'll never guess what happened. The day my son was sentenced the wife of the man my son killed got up to speak. She looked right at him and said, "I'm a Christian and God has called me to forgive. What happened is over and there is no way to change it. I want you to know that I forgive you and if you receive Jesus as your Lord and savior, He will forgive you too. I pray the time you have to spend in prison goes by quickly and that you use that time wisely." The next time I visited my son he told me the only thing he could think of was the words of that woman. My son received Jesus the same place I did, in prison. He scheduled to be released in a few years and he is on fire for the Lord." I was trying not to cry as he told me the story. We hugged and he said, "It's amazing what the Lord can do." We said our goodbyes as he went back to his group to finish setting up for his event.

You look around and can only imagine how hard it must be to be young in this generation. We need to continue to pray for them, they need God so desperately. The best way to guide them is to be the light God has called us to be, because without light we'll be stuck in the darkness along with the ones we love. That's how we live a life that honors our Father.

*"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup> Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

*Matthew 5:14-16*

## Stories From the Strand

### **A Planned Vacation**

When I got to the pier there was an older woman carrying beach games, towels, and toys. She stopped me to ask for prayer. She said, “My husband just went home to the Lord and last year he planned this vacation with our children and grandchildren here in Oceanside. I know that He is home with Jesus now and no longer suffering, but enjoying himself more than any vacation here. However, I’m still having a difficult time and need strength so I won’t ruin our family’s vacation. I want this vacation to be as perfect as it would have been if he was still with us.” I held her hand and we went before our Father in prayer. The prayer must have come from her husband as words of comfort and peace came out of my mouth. When I was finished, she continued to pray, but for me. She asked God to continue to bless my ministry and thanked God for using me to comfort her. After she was done, I said, “It sounds like your husband is a wonderful man. I can’t wait to meet him when I get home.” She smiled and said, “I’ll introduce you.”

After she hugged me, I went on my way thinking that Jesus was standing next to her husband allowing him to watch his family enjoy the vacation that he planned. Of course, their vacation will never be as great as his and his will never end.

*The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.*

*Revelation 21:21*

## Stories From the Strand

### Helping a Cousin

Yesterday as I was walking two ladies stopped me. One said, “We were hoping to see you today. We saw you the other day and read your shirt, but we couldn’t get to you in time. We’re here on a family vacation and there has been some turmoil among some of our family members. Our cousin is suffering from depression and we’re concerned she might commit suicide.” I kind of chuckled and said, “God is so good.” They looked surprised when I said that, and I shared my life suffering from depression. I shared the way I acted and thought, when I was suffering from depression. They were amazed how similar it was to what their cousin is going through. I explained, “We may be going through different circumstances but our responses are always similar, because when you suffer from depression it’s because our focus is on ourselves not taking in consideration others. Since we are so focused on the negative things, we don’t see the many blessings God has given us. People suffering from depression who commit suicide don’t want to die they just can’t imagine living another day of misery. I suggest to help give her reasons to live and the value she is to those around her. God taught me by helping others, using the gifts and talents He has given me, would take the focus off of me and place it on helping others. Now instead of being this angry, selfish person I used to be I saw God’s purpose in my life. God also used prayer to heal me of my depression, whenever I felt the devil pushing me toward the pit of despair, I would say a short prayer, like; God take this burden from me, I know you love me Lord, please help and other short prayers. When I said these prayers instead of focusing on a problem I was focusing on God where my

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peace, comfort and hope is. At first, I would say a hundred prayers a day, because the devil didn't want to let go of the hold he had on me. Tell your cousin how we met and that God planned our meeting to let her know He is watching over her, that she is loved and that He has a purpose for her. See if you can get her to watch the video that is on my website and to contact me if there is anything that I can do to help. Hopefully she will want to meet with me and we can talk." They were still in awe of the chance of our meeting and I told them, "God is my day planner and I'm here to tell others that He loves us and is here to help. Our meeting was not a coincidence but planned by God. That's how much He loves us." They both asked if they could hug me and I never say no to a hug. They said they would talk to their cousin to see if she would call me. I continued my walk thinking how God is using the worst part of my life to be a blessing to others. I would go through all those terrible times again if it could help someone else see Jesus.

*Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression,  
But a good word makes it glad.*

*Proverbs 12:25*

### **See You later Grandma**

God continues to bless me by putting some wonderful people in my path. I met a mother and her thirteen-year-old daughter. The mother came up to me and said, "We could use prayer for my mother-in-law, who is dying." The daughter said, "I'm having a hard time trying to accept she won't be here anymore. because she is such a wonderful grandma." She started to tear up. I said to them, "I'm

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assuming she was saved since she helped raise such a godly granddaughter.” They agreed right away and began to tell me how much she loved God, all the wonderful things she has done in her life and what a wonderful person she is. I said, “She’ll be going home soon to a place that is so wonderful we can’t even imagine, she’ll have no more pain, she’ll be held in the arms of her Lord, and she’ll be stronger than ever. The next time you see your grandmother she’ll probably be able to out run you.” They looked at me and laughed. We held hands and came before our Father in prayer and He gave them glimpses of her new home. When I was finished, they both hugged and thanked me.

I met up with them the next day and with smiles on their faces the mother said, “We were hoping to see you again.” The young girl told me, “My grandmother went home last night. God must have brought you to us yesterday to help us say goodbye.” I said, “He does that a lot. God sends this old man to remind you that He loves you, is always with you, knows what you need and knows where you are.” The young girl asked if she could take a picture with me and I said, “Of course.” She put her arm around me and smiled as she took the picture. They thanked me again and I said, “I have nothing to do with this, it’s all God.” The mother said, “But you let Him use you.” I looked at both of them, “That is why we are here to be used by God. I can only imagine what God’s plans are for you but as you discover and do them that’s where you’ll find your joy, love, peace and purpose.”

It’s been over six months since I’ve seen them and as I was walking, I heard someone yell my name, it was that young girl. She was followed by her two sisters, mother and

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dad. When they came up to me the mother said, “We were hoping to see you today.” They were on vacation for the week and the mother with tears in her eyes gave me a hug and thanked me again for being there for them. She introduced me to her husband and he smiled and shook my hand, while thanking me. The mother reminded me of the prayer I said that day. Then she said, “My daughter memorized it and wrote it down. She framed it and it hangs on her wall as a constant reminder that one day she’ll see her grandma again.” This was the first time I met the father and he was so grateful that God put me there at their time of need. What was special was that Teri was with me that day. She said, “We went to church this morning so Mark started later than normal. If we didn’t go to church, we wouldn’t have met you today. Looks like God arranged another meeting.” We took a couple of pictures and with tearful hugs the young girl came to me and hugged me one last time. I looked at her and said, “I can’t wait to meet your grandma she must be a very special lady.” With tears in her eyes she said, “She’s the best.”

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*Hebrews 12:1-2*

## Stories From the Strand

### Coming Back to the Father

There's a gentleman that I've been seeing for years at the Strand. He's always jogging and pushing his adult special needs son on a bicycle. He's a chaplain for the fire department and the first time he came up to me he asked for prayer for two fire fighters who were badly burned in a fire and they weren't sure if they were going to survive.

We would always wave to each other, but for the last month or so when I waved, he didn't respond. Then one day he stopped and apologized for ignoring me on his runs. He told me that his daughter, who was twenty-eight, had died in a bike accident. She got thrown from the bike and hit her head and died. I said, "I can't even imagine what you and your wife must be going through." He told me, "That's what everyone says, and before this happened, I couldn't imagine it either." We walked down the Strand as he told me how wonderful his daughter was and he can't imagine life without her. I listened as he spoke and he finally said, "Why would God do this to me?" When I felt he wanted an answer the Holy Spirit took over. I said, "God isn't responsible for your daughter's death, but He was responsible for creating this beautiful person that you described. This life is temporary and we were created for something so much better that we can't even imagine what it will be like because it's so wonderful." He said, "I don't expect to see my daughter running towards me in a pasture like in the movies." I said, "Why not? The bible tells us we are going to live on a new earth and since it will be a new earth there will be pastures and every wonderful thing that God created here only more beautiful. You know who else will be running to you, your son. He'll probably even be running faster than

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you.” He said, “I’ve said some hateful things to God and I’m not sure if God could forgive me.” I asked, “Have you and your daughter ever got into a fight?” He nodded and said, “A couple of times.” I continued, “Did she ever say hurtful things to you?” He said, “Yes.” “Did you ever doubt that she loved you? He said, “No.” I said, “God knows what you are going through and no matter what you might have said in the heat of anguish, God knows you still love Him. This is the time you need to draw closer to your Father, because you need His comfort more than ever.” He asked me, “Would you pray for me and my wife?” “It would be an honor,” I said. The prayer was perfect since I moved out of the way and let the Holy Spirit embrace him. Part of the prayer was, “Whenever you think about your daughter’s death that you will step back for a moment and think about the joy that she brought you and what your life might have been like without her. Then take those moments and praise God for that precious gift He gave you.” We cried together and hugged and I reminded him of the pastures in Heaven. As I was walking away, I thought of this scripture

*Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

*James 1:12*

A few months went by and I saw him again pushing his son on his bicycle. He appeared excited to see me and came over. He said, “The city is putting up a memorial plague for my daughter. They’re mounting it on that large

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rock next to the entrance of the bike path. It's going to tell anyone who reads it about my loving daughter, how she served and gave her heart to others. It will never replace her, but her memory will go on as others read about her." I said, "That's wonderful. I can't wait to read it when they put it up. When I get home to my Lord, I'll tell her about her plague and the love of her earthly father. Even though I know that was the one thing she took home with her." He just smiled and continued his run with his son.

*You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;  
You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,  
Psalms 30:11*

### **Meeting Matty**

I've prayed with thousands of people. I may do the same thing every day, but each day is different as God continues to introduce me to new brothers and sisters. Yesterday he introduced me to Matty, an eight-year-old boy. He was with his father who was pulling a wagon full of chairs and toys heading to the beach. The young boy stopped me and asked about my shirt and afterwards said, "I could use prayer." I asked, "What do you need prayer for?" He said, "That my family would have a good day at the beach." He said it in a way as if they might not have been having many good days. The three of us held hands, prayed, and asked our Father to bless this day with joy. Afterwards he proudly proclaimed that he and his whole family are Christians. He talked about all kinds of things and then with a somber expression said, "I have anxiety. I'm always thinking and worried about what might happen." I stood there in amazement as he described the symptoms of

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depression. As he was talking his father put his hand on his son's shoulder and when he was finished, I said, "I know exactly how you feel." I shared my testimony and how I felt just like him and told Matty that God helped me. I said, "God put on my heart anytime I feel like I'm going to be anxious to talk to Him right away and that's what I did. As soon as I felt that feeling coming over me, I would pray short prayers like God help me, I can't do this by myself and whatever else the spirit wanted to say. Then instead of thinking of the thing that made me anxious I was thinking of God and the love He has for me." He looked at me and said, "I get anxious a lot and I don't want to bother God that much." I asked, "When Jesus was talking to God what did he call him?" He stopped and thought and said, "Father." I said, "Exactly. If you needed help, would you ask your dad to help you?" He looked up at his dad and said, "Yes." I said, "Of course, that's what fathers are supposed to do. So out of all the names God could use to describe himself why do you think He chose Father and actually the name in the bible is Abba, which means dad." Matty looked first at the ground and then up and shrugged his shoulders. I said, "Your dad who I bet is a great dad, still isn't as great as God because God the Father is perfect. He decided to be called Abba because He loves his children and wants them to come to him anytime, we need him and when you do it shows Him that you love and trust him." We all talked for a while longer and I gave them my card. Matty's dad looked in my eyes with tears rolling down his cheeks and mouthed thank you and gave me a huge hug before I left. As I was walking away, I told my heavenly Father thank you, but I'm not worthy of this joy you give me

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each day. I felt in my heart the spirit saying, “You’re worthy because you are my child, so let’s continue our walk.”

*“I will be a Father to you,  
And you shall be My sons and daughters,  
Says the LORD Almighty.”*

*2 Corinthians 6:18*

### **Believe and Be Baptized**

God has allowed me to do so many wonderful things at the Strand. I’ve been involved in Bible Studies, prayed for just about anything you can imagine, met thousands of people, renewed wedding vows and yesterday baptized a young couple. I prayed for them several months earlier, and the husband called me to see if I would baptize them in the ocean. I told him I would be honored and he set the place, date and time. I arranged my walk so that I would be at the designated spot according to schedule. They arrived right on time with their baby. When we met, they both said how grateful they were and I told them how honored I was. We all walked on the beach, including Brando until we got to the water’s edge. It was February and the water and air were cold so before we went in, I explained, “What you are about to do is an expression of your love and faith in God and baptism is so important that Jesus was baptized to set the example. Jesus said:

*He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”*

*Mark 16:16*

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Do you believe that Jesus came, died and was resurrected so your sins can be forgiven?" Both with smiles on their face said, "Yes." I said, "The water is going to be cold, but I don't want that to distract you from this beautiful moment so as you walk out in the ocean pray, remembering all the blessings you have received and why you love Him so much." We gathered together and I prayed for this awesome family as the Holy Spirit embraced us all. We had to walk out far into the ocean so the water would be deep enough to place them under the water. The husband and I went out first so his wife could watch their child. Brando just laid there in the sand probably thinking well this is new. It was cold but all I could think of was how amazing it was that God allowed me to be part of their special journey. When we finally got out far enough, I looked at him and even though he was cold he had this warm wonderful smile on his face and I asked, "Are you ready?" You could see the joy on his face as he said, "Oh yes." I waited for a wave to pass by and said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." As I dunked him, I saw his face under the water with this expression of joy I can't explain. As soon as he got up, he hugged me as I was hugging him the water didn't seem cold any more. He went back to shore to watch their child so his wife could come out. Even with the cold water she smiled all the way. I said, "Today you are going to bless the Lord by demonstrating your love for Him. I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." When I placed her under the water, I looked at her face and she had this beautiful expression of joy and to see her face just a couple of inches under the water will be a picture in my mind I'll never forget. Afterwards we walked back to shore to meet up

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with the rest of the family. When we got back, they looked at each other with this amazing love and with their child in his arms they hugged. We walked back up to the parking lot. Again, I told them how blessed I was to be able to be part of this special moment. They both took turns hugging and thanking me. I told them to enjoy this day and think of this moment often. My heart was full and as I looked down at Brando, he looked up at me as to say don't even think of doing that to me.

As we were saying our goodbyes there was a man standing behind me waiting to talk to me. As I turned around, he asked, "Are you the man who prays for people?" I said, "Yes, what do you need prayer for?" He said, "It's my brother. I just moved back to California to be close to my twin brother. We're thirty-eight now and most of my life my brother was one of the most positive people I knew, always happy, loving and encouraging, but my brother was in an accident and is now paralyzed from the waist down and has given up hope. I want to be able to help him, but I don't know what to do." I told him, "I believe this is a journey he is going to have to take with God by his side. It's not only his circumstances that are causing the depression, but what he is focusing on most of the time. We focus on what we don't have and forget all that God has already given us. There are many people that overcome unbelievable obstacles and not only do they live a productive life but go out and help and inspire others. There is a motivational speaker who was born without arms or legs, Nick Vujicic and he has helped and encouraged so many others with his testimony. There is a group of surfers called adapted surfing which is made up of disabled people and they are an inspiration to so many

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people including me. There are no magic words you can say to your brother to change his mindset, but you can be there for him, pray and set an example.” I shared my testimony on depression and how I tried to end my life six different times. I said, “I believe people who commit suicide don’t want to die but can’t imagine living life another day. I feel too much time is spent trying to treat the problem of depression and not enough time seeking the solution, which is giving others a purpose to live.” We went into prayer as the Holy Spirit loved this young man telling him how proud He was of him that he would take care of his brother and that he would not be doing it alone.

I suggested, “You should do whatever you can to reintroduce him to Jesus, because you are going to need His help. It would also be a good idea to get him out of his apartment as much as possible so he can focus on the beauty God has surrounded him with. Don’t look at this as a responsibility because he’s your brother, but an opportunity to do God’s will by sharing His love.” My car was parked close by so I went back to get one of my books along with my contact card and handed them to him. I told him, “When I started my prayer ministry God placed on my heart our life is just a day at a time, you can’t change the past and only God knows what the future holds. We should only be concerned about what we can change and the only thing we can change is ourselves.” He had his little girl with him and brought her so they could play in the ocean. He hugged me and I told him, “Enjoy this beautiful day with your daughter and if you need me for anything to call.” I watched him walk away as he held his little girl’s hand. It was a beautiful picture of the love a

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father has for his child. I then thanked my Father for the love He has for His children.

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

*John 3:16*

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### Chapter 8-Gathering Together in Prayer

#### Unity Through Prayer

There are more people at the Strand as many come from out of state for the Thanksgiving holiday. Yesterday as I was walking down the Strand a young man stopped his car and said, "I've seen you walking here for at least a year now and I could really use prayer. My mother was a believer and would always pray for me. I've been struggling with addiction and can't quit. I've recently become a father and I'm going to be married next month." He started to get choked up and with tears running down his face he said, "I want to be a better man, a good father, a good husband and have a closer walk with Jesus." I told him, "What a coincidence that's exactly what God wants for you and He'll help you along the way if you'll let Him." As cars were passing by, I prayed for him. I listened as the Holy Spirit welcomed back His prodigal son. He came out of the car and we hugged. I said, "God's blessings are a two-way street and you have some things that you need to do to draw close to God. God wants to be your top priority. I suggest first thing in the morning you make time to pray to him, read your bible each day and get connected with a good bible believing church to hold you accountable. I noticed when you first stopped me you looked down and hopeless, but since we've been talking, I now see joy. You have a great smile and you need to use it more. You are now a light that needs to shine brightly for others to see." He got back into his car smiled and thanked me before driving away.

As I was heading toward the harbor under the pier there were two ladies and a young girl who stopped me to ask

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for prayer. I asked what they wanted prayer for, and the one lady was having health issues and the other ask for unity in our country. I thought about the request for unity and how wonderful that would be. We live in a place where Satan is the ruler of this world and how hard he works to keep us divided. He has his demons in leadership positions using our differences to divide us. The four of us held hands as the young girl held Brando's leash. As we began to pray the Holy Spirit was unifying us since we were all focused on one thing, our Father. It didn't matter that we weren't the same color, had different backgrounds, but we were unified as our Father's children seeking His love. We all hugged, then I pried Brando's leash from the little girl. They thanked me as I gave God the glory for our meeting. Then they went up to the top of the pier.

As I proceeded on my walk, I thought about all the people I've prayed with and they were of all ages, different races, nationalities, men, and women, but each one had one thing in common that they knew they needed God. You hear about unity in this world, but all we seem to get is more division, but God desires unity among His children, and He can deliver. There is unity in prayer because we are all focused on the same goal to come before our Father for comfort and guidance. We may never be unified on this earth, but our new home we'll be one joyful family, unified by our Father.

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
For brethren to dwell together in unity!*

*Psalm 133:1*

## Stories From the Strand

### **The Prayer Man**

As I was walking down the Strand there was a man yelling peace to the cars as they passed him. As I went by him, I said, "Good morning." He looked up and said, "You're the prayer man! God has put on my heart to pray for America but God can't hear the prayers of the people in America because of the evil that is here. If we don't lift this country in prayer, it would be the end of America as we know it." After talking to him for a while I got goosebumps and asked if he would like to pray. The prayer that was put on my heart from the Holy Spirit was "Lord bless our leaders, that they will lead in biblical principles caring for the needs of others above their own. That this will be one nation under You, glorifying and honoring You. That your people will cry out in repentance that You will hear this cry and heal this land. That our children may be able to pray in school, will know how this world truly began, that your word would be written on our hearts as well as our walls. That this world is only temporary and this was never met to be our home but an opportunity for Your children to touch the lives of others and open their eyes." We both said Amen at the same time and I hugged my new brother then went on my way.

Just before I got to my car, I heard a voice saying, "We do need prayer." I looked around and it came from the car I was standing by. It was this wonderful lady, Gwendolyn who just arrived the night before from Washington. Guess what she told me we need prayer for? Yes, our country. We talked for at least twenty minutes; she was great. She has no problem telling others how much she loves Jesus and how much we need Him. She spoke to my heart confirming God's plan for me. She came out of the car and gave me this wonderful hug

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and prayed that God will continue to use us until it's time to go home.

I challenge you to start your day repeating 2 Chronicles 7:14 then humble yourself, pray and seek God's face and search if there are any wicked ways in you repent and see what He does. By the way both people God used today to speak to me were a few shades darker than me, reminding me that racism is not a cultural thing but a heart problem. He loves us so much, stop to tell Him how much you love Him.

*Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

*John 1:12 -13*

### **Pray for Our Leaders**

I get several requests to pray for our country or people will say God bless America. I tell them that I don't believe God can bless America because America has become sin and God can't bless sin. I often quote

*if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

*Chronicles 7:14*

I tell some of the people I meet that many of God's promises are two steps, the first what we must do and the other is what

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God will do. The good news in this scripture is that God is saying just the people who are called by His name, Christians, need to humble themselves, pray and seek His face, and turn from our wicked ways. Well maybe not good news, because the chance of that happening is still slim.

Just the other day a gentleman was riding his bike and turned around and said, "I hate our leaders and I mean really hate and hope they would all die so what should I do?" I calmly looked at him and said, "Pray for them. Pray that their hearts will turn, they would care for the needs of others, that they would lead in biblical principles, for wisdom and use their position for the good of others and not for their own selfish desires. I believe this is a prayer that's in God's will and would be answered." He looked at me and said, "I never looked at praying for our leaders in that way. I thought when it said to pray for our leaders it was like for good health or safety. I said, "Can you imagine if God changed their hearts and removed that heart of stone and replaced it with a heart of flesh and their minds were renewed as God did to ours how great America can become?" He thought about it for a moment and said, "Yes." I said, "Our prayers need to be aligned with God's will and hate is of the enemy and not God." He thanked me and said, "I'll work on my prayers." Then he went on his way.

I know what it's like to be so wrapped up in hate and anxiety and not to see any hope. The more time I spend with my Father the hate and anxiety go away and the thoughts of the blessings and hope fill my spirit. I wish I could say I have it all under control, but that wouldn't be true, but when I realize my mind is wondering away from God I turn from those thoughts and run back into His arms.

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*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

*Matthew 6:33*

### **What a Blessing**

God continues to bless and encourage me each day. On my walk a family was having a reunion at the small park across from the ocean. A young man ran up to me and asked, "Would you pray for us? We're from Arizona and heading back home today and can use prayer for safe travel." When I went up there was about fifteen to twenty people gathered together for prayer. It was at a playground area with a lot of other people surrounding us and the Holy Spirit turned up the volume. We prayed for travel mercies, God's wisdom and guidance, and to be used by our Father to touch the lives of others. At the end of the prayer, I thanked them and let them know how blessed it was to pray with them. The young man who called me over gave me a hug and thanked me.

As I continued my walk God had a wonderful surprise for me, it was a woman riding a bike with her two young daughters. They stopped and she said, "I'm not sure if you remember me. You prayed for me a few months back. My prayer was for my daughters, to always stay close to God." She turned to her daughters and said to them, "I met Mark a while ago and we prayed that our family will continue to draw close to God." She then asked her older daughter, about eleven years old, if she wanted to pray for me. Her daughter nodded her head yes and the four of us held hands. Her daughter then said one of the most beautiful prayers I ever heard. She prayed for my protection, that God would continue to use me to help those that are sad or lost, and that

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I would know how much God loves me. I thanked her for her wonderful prayer and we all hugged before they rode off.

A little further down the Strand a woman on a bicycle stopped and said, “There you are!” I said, “Thank you I’ve been looking for me all day.” She laughed and said, “I’ve heard of you. You prayed with one of my friends and I’ve talked to others about you, but this is the first time I saw you. I wanted to stop to tell you that your ministry is making a difference and not to stop.” I thanked her for encouraging me and that it meant a lot. As she left, I stood there in awe at the idea that I was making a difference.

As I was walking away, I broke down and cried. I told my heavenly Father I wasn’t worthy of all the blessings that He gives me each day. Then it was put on my heart that these blessings are gifts from my Dad and to give a gift the receiver does not have to be worthy, because the gift was given out of love for his child. I’ll never understand the extents of God’s love, but I know He wants me to share the gifts He gives me with the rest of the family.

*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*

*2 Corinthians 9:7*

### **Costco My Mission Field**

When I got home it was time to go to Costco. Just before we were going into the store someone tugged on my shirt and asked if I would pray for her. Her prayer was genuine as she said, “I Have a drinking problem and I can’t

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stop. I'm a Christian, but a poor one and I need God's help desperately if I'm going to make it." I was so moved, and told her I would love to pray with her. So, in front of the entrance of Costco the two of us prayed to our Lord for His strength to keep her on the path He wanted her on and his grace would be a testimony to others. Jesus wasn't kidding when He said when two or more are gathered there, He is. We both felt His presence and embrace. When we were finished, she asked, "Do you need any prayer?" I said, "Yes, that each day Jesus would continue to use me." She prayed for me with the heart of a saint. I can only imagine what some of the many people thought as they passed by.

On another day Teri and I walked into Costco to shop. When we got to the dairy section a young lady stopped me and said, "Would you pray for me? I'm not very religious." I said, "That's good neither was Jesus." She went on to say, "My life is in shambles and I don't know where to turn. I've recently been divorced, I have some ongoing health problems, suffering from depression and I don't know what to do." She began to sob and I held her hands and let the Holy Spirit speak to her. The words were amazing full of hope, peace, comfort and joy. I told her after praying, "This isn't a coincidence that we are speaking here today in Costco." I shared my testimony on how I suffered from depression most of my life until I received Jesus as my Lord and savior. I said, "God loves you so much that He orchestrated this meeting to let you know that you are not alone on this journey. That He loves you more than you can imagine and He wants you to trust Him to get you through this." I gave her my card and told her to call or write to me anytime. She thanked me again before walking away. Teri

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and I continued shopping when we ran into her parents. The father came over, hugged and thanked me. He said, “I was amazed to see my daughter come up to you for prayer. I told her after you prayed for her that God arranged that meeting.” Later that evening I received the following email from her dad:

*Hi Mark, I know it absolutely wasn't by chance that you met my daughter today in Costco. She has not been a follower of Christ and her life is in turmoil to say the least. I was more than blown away when she yelled out to you and walked over. Literally speechless. I reiterated to her that this is not an accident and that God is reaching out to her as we have been praying for sometime. Hopefully she will reach out to you on her own and we will continue praying. I just wanted you to know how grateful I am as her father*

On another day as we were walking through the store a gentleman who was promoting the Traeger grills stopped me and asked for prayer. He felt he was stuck in a rut and wanted a closer walk with God but didn't know what he should do. We went into prayer as people walked by not knowing if they could interrupt to ask a question about the grill. After praying he hugged and thanked me. As always, I told him it wasn't me but your Father wanting you to know that He is watching over you.

Just recently as I was in the meat department looking at the meat, we couldn't afford, a butcher came up to me. He told me how much he loved my shirt and that we all need prayer. I told him I would pray with him any time. He said, “Can we pray now?” I asked him what he needed prayer for.

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He told me his children have been going astray and he just wanted them to know the love of the Lord. In front of the meat case, we went to our Father. The prayer as always was beautiful and comforting. He gave me this great hug and thanked me and if I needed any help just to ask. When I looked up there were people all around as I looked for Teri.

As we continued shopping, I thought how many people just saw an old man who was in their way as they were shopping, or how many took a glance and thought that was nice or maybe someone took a moment and really looked at what was happening and saw Jesus. You couldn't miss Him He was right there with us unless of course you weren't looking.

### **My Fourth Anniversary**

July 4<sup>th</sup> 2024 was my fourth anniversary praying at the Strand. What an awesome day it was. There were thousands of people on the beach, hundreds of canopies with people celebrating with family and friends, the annual bike parade with hundreds of families on bikes, and everyone was in great spirits. I prayed and talked to more people than I can remember, groups of people would ask me to pray with them so I had to speak louder and wondered what people around me heard. I had a couple of prayers for healing and one person who was searching for peace because of the loss of a loved one.

There were several prayer requests from young men searching for a closer walk with Jesus. Young men that God put on their heart that they have a purpose to fulfill and not to simply enjoy the day-to-day pleasures we try to find in this world. What's wonderful about these prayers is that I

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know God is going to answer them, because they are His will for their lives. I could almost see the smile on God's face as these young men came humbly before the throne asking for that close relationship that God desires for them.

The number one request I received was for our country. I'm not sure how many times I recited

*if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

*Chronicles 7:14*

The scripture reminded the ones God put on my path that day, that we have a responsibility to obey before God can answer our petition. I would finish praying with someone and I would take a couple of steps when someone else would ask me to pray with them. There was such a great feeling of unity and pride for our country that it was contagious. God gave me this wonderful anniversary gift of spending time with His children and I didn't want to leave. One of the first things I do in the morning is read my bible and this was the verse God put on my heart.

*Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

*1 Corinthians 1:10*

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Those who know the Lord will experience that unity and love for all eternity. As God's children we should try to bring a little Heaven to earth so others can see and not miss out.

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### Chapter 9-My Prayer Partner Brando

#### **Brando is a Lover**

Every day when I go out, I go with my prayer partner, Brando, my yellow Labrador retriever. People that won't make eye contact with me always seem to be drawn to Brando. The other day we were at the harbor and a man and woman were pushing his mother in a wheelchair. She looked to be in her nineties and when she saw Brando, her eyes lit up and like a little child she was excited and wanted to pet him. Without asking permission Brando went to this lovely lady and rested his head on her lap so she could pet him. She talked baby talk to him and told him how wonderful he was. The scripture that came to my heart was

*Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

*Matthew 18:3*

I looked at the face of her son and his wife and he said how wonderful it was to see her like this. I said, "God is good and created dogs to show His love." They thanked me and left, but not before Brando gave the lady a kiss goodbye. I walked a little and looked down at Brando and said, "You're a better witness than I am." I'm waiting to see if he'll lay paws on somebody to heal them next.

As I continued my walk a young lady riding a bike stopped and with tears in her eyes asked if she could pet Brando. I told her of course that's what he's there for. She said, "I need prayer because we just put our dog to sleep the day before and I'm having a hard time letting go." She

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grabbed my hand and we prayed. In the prayer I said, “Today is a great day to think of all the blessings she received having her dog over the years and that her dog was a gift from God. He understands the pain you’re going through now, but to also think of all the joy you would have missed if she didn’t have her.” After praying, I looked up and she wiped away her tears and said, “God must have put you here for me today.” I said, “He does that a lot.” She continued to thank me, then petted Brando one more time and rode away.

I believe dogs are one of those invisible attributes of God, how can you explain the love we have for these animals and the bond we create with them. I gave a Heaven study at my church and one of the questions was, will my dog go to heaven? As much I would like to say yes that is not what the Bible teaches. However, God created dogs for us here on earth because he loves giving good gifts to His children and Heaven is going to be the perfect place so I can see our loving Father creating our precious pets again and since it is heaven maybe they won’t poop or shed.

*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,*  
*Romans 1:20*

### **Brando Is Praying Too**

Sometimes having Brando with me isn’t good for my self-esteem since he gets most of the attention. If you ever need to be humbled allow a four-year-old to do it. As I was enjoying my walk, I met a mother who had a six and a four-year-old daughter. They were excited to see Brando and I told

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their mother if it was okay with her that they were welcomed to pet him. The younger one kept telling Brando how cute he was, and I looked at her and said, “What about me I’m cute?” She looked up and made this face and yelled, “NO WAY!!!” The mother tried not to laugh, and I said, “Cute kid.”

As I was walking, I passed a man who was sitting on a step and when I said, “Good morning.” he said, “I need prayer.” Sometimes when I ask what do you need prayer for it’s a couple of words and other times it’s a story. Today it was a story. My prayer partner Brando, was by my side and he’s great he’ll just sit or lay down when I start praying depending on the length of the prayer. After I prayed the man looked down and there was Brando with his paws on his foot and his head down. The man was excited that Brando also prayed with us, and he felt confident his prayer was answered. I couldn’t find a scripture to support that unless it was when two or more and a dog are gathered there I am in the midst.

Then I met a father and son, the son was in his early twenties and was walking with walking sticks. They stopped me so the young man could pet Brando. They were looking for a therapy dog for the young man. First thing he did was introduce himself, “My name is Hunter and I have brain damage.” The father said, “My son was in a terrible accident and was in a coma for three months and in ICU for another two months. The doctors at first told me that my son wasn’t going to make it, but now he’s talking, and walking. I’m so proud of him for the way he has been fighting.” I told his son he looked great, and he said, “I could use a prayer.” Trying not to cry I stepped aside and let the Holy Spirit talk to him. In the prayer the Holy Spirit told him that his heavenly Father

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was also proud of him and that He is always with him and will guide him on his journey. His father stayed off to the side while we prayed seeming a little uncomfortable about his son praying with this old man. We talked for a while and I told them about Canine Companions, where Teri volunteers as a puppy raiser and that would be a great place to apply for a therapy dog. Hunter extended his hand and thanked me for the prayer and allowing him to spend time with Brando. Brando and I said goodbye and continued our walk. As I was walking God put on my heart I should have said something to the father. I was truly moved that this loving father stayed by his son's side and walks with him each day. I can't imagine what it must have been like seeing your son lay there helpless and not be able to do anything. I should have told him how honored I was to meet him and tell his son how blessed he was to have such a wonderful dad. It appears that both of us have the same story about a wonderful Father that walks with us each day. Hopefully I'll see them again tomorrow and be able to tell him then. Thank you, Dad, for walking with me each day I really love your company.

*And the LORD, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed."*

*Deuteronomy 31:8*

### **The Joy We Can Give**

Each day my life is full of joy and excitement, anticipating what God has in store for me. I enjoy meeting new people, especially families. The other day as I was walking at the harbor a dad and his three young children and

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wife were getting out of their car. The wife appeared a little depressed. The dad told me how much he liked my shirt. I started to tell him about the joy it brings me each day wearing it and shared a couple of stories of the people I've met. The kids were more interested in Brando than talking to some old man, go figure. They asked if they could pet Brando and I told them it's up to their parents. Once the father gave them permission the one girl said, "Can I pet him now?" I said, "Yes, but don't bite him, he doesn't like it." All three were hugging him and I said, "Do you know what I give him as a treat? Carrots, would you like to give him one?" So, they took turns giving Brando a carrot as I had him shake hands and sit up. As they were getting ready to leave the youngest boy hugged Brando and said, "Brando likes me best." I said, "Well, you do look delicious." The boy yelled out, "He can't eat me I'm mean." At that the mother started laughing and said, "Did you hear him?" She continued to laugh as they walked on. I don't know what was happening with the family before they came out of the car, but I do know their day was a little better simply by sharing some time and love with two old dogs.

*Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*

*Colossians 4:5-6*

### **Brando The Dog of Comfort**

Brando is a big part of my ministry on the Strand. People will stop to ask if they can pet him which leads to conversation whether about the ministry, where they're

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from or a conversation about how wonderful dogs are. Every day as we walk, people will look at Brando and immediately it brings a smile to their face, what a gift. Brando and I have been doing this for years now and know several of the people that come up to say hi or give him a treat. Brando is far from an excitable dog he's happy just to sit there until it's time to go knowing he will get a carrot when we leave. However, there are certain people he senses that need more from him and he is willing to give. There are four special need men that pick-up trash at the harbor under supervision. When they see Brando, they can't restrain their excitement. I'll let Brando off the leash then he runs up to them rolling around, kissing them, snuggling tight and running around them. I watch in amazement as the four of them, plus the supervisor call out his name. Brando goes to each one of them giving them individual attention. Finally, we must say goodbye so they can finish their work, but as we're leaving you hear each one yell, "Bye Brando."

The other day on our walk a woman was sitting on a bench and asked if she could pet him. I said, "I think that's what God made him for." Again, he rolled on his back for a belly rub, sat up, looked into her eyes and gave her a kiss. She held him and began to cry. She said, "I just had to put my dog to sleep and it was one of the hardest things I've ever done." I looked at her and asked, "Would you like prayer?" She looked at me and said, "Brando just prayed for me." She gave him one last hug and we went on our way.

There is an organization called TERI who helps special needs adults. We usually see them at the harbor as they do different art projects. The one lady gets excited as she sees him walking towards her. She always asks if it is

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okay to pet him as she struggles for the words. We sit there for a little bit and I'll ask her what she's making and as she tells me as she strokes Brando's head. Before we leave Brando will place his front paws on her seat and give her a kiss goodbye, which always makes her laugh.

Shortly afterwards I saw about seven teenagers that were being chaperoned for some type of outing. As soon as they saw Brando they asked if it was okay to pet him. They all surrounded him as he simply sat there being petted and giving those that came close to his face a kiss. They had plenty of questions about Mr. Popularity and as I was answering them one said, "I'm a cat person." I then had Brando do a couple of tricks and said, "He'll do anything for a carrot." They were surprised that he ate carrots, and I went down a list of different things that he liked to eat at the end of the list I said, "He also likes cats, but they're usually a little grizzly." At that the cat lover looked up and the rest of them just laughed. It doesn't matter what the mood of someone is when we first meet, but there is always laughter and smiles before we leave.

On another day we were walking and got to the pier when I heard someone screaming at the top of their voice. They were yelling, "I want her to die, kill her, take her head off!" When we got to the place where she was, we discovered some special need teenagers were on a field trip and the person this young woman was threatening was a teacher. The whole beach turned their attention to her, along with the lifeguards. I felt led to approach her. The young girl was standing there with her chaperone and had a medical alert badge which stated Autism. I asked her, "Are you okay? Brando heard you and was concerned." Once she saw

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Brando, she stopped yelling and bent over to pet him. Even though initially she was screaming it didn't bother him and it was as if he knew she needed his help. He sat there as she petted him, but eventually the anger returned, and I asked if it was okay to pray for her. Surprisingly she said yes, and I put my arm around her as she drew close to me and put her head on my chest. I asked God for peace for this young girl and that He would comfort her. Before we left, she bent down to say goodbye to Brando and he gave her a kiss. The chaperone thanked us and we went on our way. I looked down at Brando and said good job and he looked back up at me as to say, "Where's my carrot?"

### **Prayer Request for Brando and I**

I met a family that was vacationing in their RV at the Harbor. Their oldest, about eighteen, appeared to be autistic. As I was walking past, I heard a voice behind me and it was that young man. He asked if Brando and I would pray for him. I asked him what he would like prayer for and he said, "I get angry a lot and I don't want to because I say things I don't mean and I know it hurts people." I told him, "I know how you feel. I use to do that all the time, but God showed me a way that helped me. Any time I would feel anger coming on I stopped and said a little prayer like God help me, Lord please take this feeling away, Lord, I know you're there or anything else that the Holy Spirit put on my heart and instead of getting angry I was thinking of God and the anger passed." We went into prayer and it was awesome how the Holy Spirit spoke to this young man. Afterwards he hugged me and stooped down to pet Brando and Brando

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looked into his face and gave him a kiss as if he understood what was happening.

Sometimes I become part of the families that vacation here. There are several families that come every year and they stop me to talk and I feel that they came back just to visit me not the beautiful beach and weather. There is this one family that I love a mom, dad and three children. I pass by the condo where they stay each day. They would wave to me and we would talk even though they were on the second floor. Of course, their greeting has changed they yell Hi Brando, oh you too Mark, which I think is sooo funny. The day before they left, they made sure I stayed where I was standing until they all came down. We all hugged and said how much we loved and appreciated each other as the children hugged and played with Brando. They finally left to go back home. As I was walking away, I teared up, they've become like family to me and I wouldn't be seeing them for another year. Last night I received a text letting me know they got home safely and told me they loved me and shared a couple of pictures. It's amazing how God puts His children together, because we are family, family forever.

*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,*

*Ephesians 2:19*

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### Chapter 10-Lessons I've learned

#### A Hug from Jesus

I have a great praise report. Last week I prayed with this lovely lady, and she wanted to strengthen her marriage and have a closer walk with Jesus. I told her the closer you walk with Jesus the stronger your marriage will become. The Holy Spirit spoke to her to say that today in a special moment of silence that she would feel Jesus arms around her and she would know how much He loves her. Today she said, "That night I felt Him like never before and it calmed me so much that I fell asleep in His arms." She thanked me again and I told her, "It has nothing to do with me, it's all about Jesus and His love for us."

On my way back there was a lady waiting for me. She asked, "Would you please pray for me?" I asked, "What do you need prayer for?" She said, "Everything!" Then she started to cry. I told my prayer partner, Brando, to sit a little bit away since she had a small dog with her. The Holy Spirit was waiting for her and gave her comfort and hope in the trials she was going through and reminded her we live our life just a day at a time. When we were finished, she looked down at her dog and said, "This is a miracle. My dog always barks, but this time he just sat there, even with your dog so close by." I wanted to hug her, but she was wearing a mask and I wanted to be respectful, but you could tell that her spirits were lifted, and I think she was even smiling.

When I got to my car, I checked my phone since I don't bring it with me and there was a message from my boss. I've been laid off for a few months and getting low on finances. What great timing, I thought, he's bringing me back just in

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time. When I called him back, he said, “I have bad news. Your job has been eliminated, and we’re taking you off furlough and officially terminating you.” Suddenly, I panicked and thought what am I going to do? It was as if Jesus was standing there laughing at me, shaking His head. I felt Him say, “The last few months you have been telling people how much I love them and that they need to put their trust in me. It took you less than 5 minutes to fall into fear. If you are going to be obedient and do this, you need to learn to walk in faith. Have I ever let you down?” I apologized for my lack of faith and thanked Him for always being there for me.

Yesterday is history, tomorrow a mystery, today a gift that is why they call it the present. One day at a time Lord just one day at a time.

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

*Matthew 6:11*

### **Be Joyful in the Lord**

I feel one of the greatest gifts you can give someone is a reason to laugh. More and more people are beginning to know me and say good morning or the most popular one is, “How are you doing?” I got tired of saying fine so now I say, “I’m old, fat and ugly, but with God’s help I’m dealing with it.” That doesn’t only make the person I’m talking to laugh but anyone in earshot. I would get several people complementing me on how handsome Brando, my dog is. So today when someone said that I said, “He really isn’t that good looking it’s just that when he’s standing next to me, it makes him look better.”

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Two young gentlemen were sitting on a rock. You ever notice the older you are the younger everyone else seems? One of the young men said, "Hello. Does prayer work?" I said, "Without a doubt prayer works. I've seen so many miracles and people's life changed, especially mine that there is no way I can deny the power of God and prayer. God not only answers our prayers; but He enjoys the time we spend with Him." I took some time sharing my testimony on how God saved me from depression and how he told me no, to my first two prayers, because He had another plan for my life. Then I went on to tell them the answered prayers I witnessed walking here on the beach. They thanked me for the time I spent with them. I told them to have a blessed day and continued my walk.

Just before I got to my car a young couple looked my way and the woman said, "We can use prayer." I said, "I would love to pray with you. What do you need prayer for?". They looked at each other and she said, "I guess clarity in what we should be doing." We held hands as the Holy Spirit had His way with us. It was beautiful as always and personal to the couple I was praying with. When I looked up tears were streaming from her face. She gave me the biggest hug and it didn't seem as if she wanted to let go. They both kept saying thank you and I said, "No, thank you. You have no idea what a privilege it is to be able to pray with wonderful people like you and to be able to honor God by doing it." She looked at me and said, "Thank you for wearing that shirt." I told her, "Believe me no one wants to see me without my shirt on, it would be gross." She laughed then hugged me one more time and said, "Thank you for praying for us and making me laugh."

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*For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.*

*Philemon 1:7*

### **Ruler of this World**

A young man came up to me for prayer. When I asked what he wanted prayer for he told me guidance and protection. As I was praying for him, I asked God to put a hedge of protection around him to protect him from Satan, the ruler of this world. After I prayed the young man took offense that I called Satan the ruler of this world. I tried to explain that Jesus himself called him that. I didn't have the scripture memorized to support what I said and apologized for getting him upset. He then left abruptly.

A few days went by and I ran into the young man again. He yelled, "Are you still worshipping Satan?" I tried to defend myself, but again I didn't have my sword, the Word of God. He continued to yell, "Satan isn't the ruler of this world and it doesn't say that in my bible." All I could do is apologize again and walk away as he yelled. First thing I did when I got home was to find scripture that backed up the claim that Satan was the ruler of this world:

*"And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. <sup>30</sup> I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. <sup>31</sup> But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.*

*John 14:29 – 14:31*

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*Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*

*John 12:31*

*We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. <sup>19</sup> We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*

*1 John 5:18-19*

I printed these scriptures out along with a commentary that was done on the subject and put it in my wallet for the next time I see him.

It's important to know that Satan is the ruler of this world for now and that God allowed it. In the commentary it states that God gave Adam this world and Adam turned around and gave it to Satan by sinning. If God wanted to rule this world it would be perfect, it would be Heaven. I was thinking however this country is in the worst condition that I've ever seen. Is it because there is more evil or less righteousness? I believe the only reason that this country isn't totally taken over by evil is that God's children are still praying, and that God is listening to our prayers. This country has become a dark place, but we are called to be light and shine God's glory. Let's brighten things up a bit.

A few months went by and I saw the gentlemen again. However, this time I was ready I had the scriptures in my wallet. When he saw me, he came up to me and said, "I'm sorry for yelling at you." He was with two other gentlemen, and they were having a bible study on a picnic table. They asked me to join them and it was one of the best bible studies

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I ever attended. I prayed at the end, and I could feel the Holy Spirit's presence. Before I left, we gathered together for a group hug and I went on my way. Later that day I was walking back and my bible study group had a new member. When I approached, I heard them talking about COVID, the government and other things going on in the world. I introduced myself to the new member and was asked if I would pray with them before I left. The prayer was God focused as I said, "We should only be concerned over things that honor God. He is all knowing, and this world is only a temporary place before we go home. Lord, please help us stay focused on earning our own rewards in Heaven and not storing up treasures here on this earth. We thank you that you have given us in this life and to live only a day at a time and that you are with us each day. Help us stay focused on the things we can change and realize the only thing we can change is ourselves." I said goodbye to my new brothers and before I left and we all hugged again.

When I got to my car, I thought the only reason Satan is the ruler of this world is because we listen to him. We buy in on the evil that surrounds us and we get engulfed in the hate he's created and take it out on each other. The moments God has given me being with Him and His children praying it's as if Satan doesn't even exist. If we are spending time with our Father and think of the blessings, He continues to give us we won't be distracted by the evil that surrounds us.

*"Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."*

*1 John 4:4*

## Stories From the Strand

### **I Was Told Prayers Don't Work**

As soon as I got out of my car there was a gentleman standing there. I said, "Good morning." He said, "I saw you yesterday." I said, "I come here every day praying with others. Do you need prayer?" He asked, "Do you think prayer works?" I said, "I'm a living testimony that they do." He said, "You're looking at the man of unanswered prayer and broken dreams." I wasn't sure what to say and asked if there was anything I could do. He just shook his head and walked away. I felt so useless as I continued my walk. Then God put on my heart the reason there are so many broken dreams that those dreams don't include Him. We want everything here and now the way we want it without considering God's will. If we would just stop and think, here is the creator of all things that loves us so deeply that we can't comprehend it, that maybe He might know what is best for us. Our desire should be that we fulfill the purpose God has created us for. That is where our peace and joy will be found.

I continued my walk to the harbor and back thinking of the gentleman of unanswered prayers. Sometimes prayers unanswered is a sign to change your prayer.

*Delight yourself also in the LORD,  
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.  
5 Commit your way to the LORD,  
Trust also in Him,  
And He shall bring it to pass.*

*Psalms 37:4-5*

## Stories From the Strand

### Arizona Visitors

Sometimes I wonder if I'm doing what God is calling me to do or if I'm doing it because I enjoy it. I got to the beach this morning feeling a little unsure of myself and what I was doing. I pray all the time while I'm walking asking my Father for guidance, wisdom and direction. I keep my eyes open to see if there is something else that He's calling me to do. As I was heading back down the Strand, I met a homeless man that was very drunk. I said, "Good morning." He said something but I couldn't make it out. He then asked, "Do you have an extra pair of socks? I went into the ocean with all my clothes on." I stood there for a moment listening to him, thinking that maybe he needed someone to talk to since most people were avoiding him. When he ran out of things to say I asked, "Do you want me to pray for You?" He thought about it for a moment and said, "Yes." The Holy Spirit spoke to His son to let him know that he isn't forgotten and that he is loved by the Father. There is a plan for his life but he needs to come before God and ask for direction. When I was done, he started to cry. I gave him a hug to comfort him and he held on tight. I told him to have a blessed day before I left and he thanked me. As I walked away, I thanked God for the opportunity, but still wasn't sure if what I was doing was God's purpose for me.

Further down the road there was a family from Arizona loading up their van to head home. The man stopped me and asked if I would pray with them. It was the man and his wife along with six kids. The best part of praying is to hear the Holy Spirit speak through me. The prayer was for travel mercies, a hedge of protection and that their family would continue to grow close to our Father. When I was finished the man said, "We saw you and just loved your smile." I told him,

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“It comes from God, how else could I look at this ugly mug in the morning and still be able to smile.” He held my hand and looked at me and said, “You’re a good man.” Then gave me a hug before driving off. I continued on my walk but started to cry. I had to stop before I went any further. Have you ever had a time when you desperately needed to hear God’s voice and He spoke to you through someone else? That was my moment when He wrapped His arms around me and held me. I’m home now writing this post, but still feeling the comfort of His touch. It looks like I’ll be back on the Strand in the morning, because that’s where God wants me.

*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.<sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:*

*Hebrews 10:35-36*

### **Is My Love Limited?**

As I was walking down the Strand, I was praying to myself, thanking God for all the wonderful blessings He has given me. I was thanking Him that I could still walk this far, my family is safe and healthy, the smell of the ocean breeze, that He takes care of all my needs, for Brando and especially for my amazing wife. I then came across a young man. He was terribly deformed in his arms, hands, back, legs, feet, and was walking with this young girl. Even with his obvious struggles he had this wonderful spirit about him. He came up to me and asked, “Would you pray for me?” Before I could say yes, he said, “Just a moment.” He stopped this man in an old VW bus that was passing by and asked him if he could take a picture with it. The owner was happy to grant his request.

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The girl was about to take the picture when I said, “Look sexy.” At that he posed against the bus. When he got back to me, I asked what he wanted me to pray for and he said, “Just life in general.” I had no idea what the Holy Spirit had in mind, but when Jesus said when two or more are gathered there, I am in the midst, and He was. The prayer didn’t address any type of healing, but that we are all created different with different gifts, abilities and that we are called to use them each day. Then the Holy Spirit told him how much he loved him, and he will be given courage and wisdom to finish his race well. After praying he went to shake my hand, but couldn’t open it so I shook his closed fist and hugged him. Then he and the girl went on their way. I thought would I be able to love God that much if I had to go through that type of trial? I just got finished telling God how thankful I was for the many blessings He has given me, but is my love limited? I need to love God not for what He does for me but for who He is. There will be a time when we are going to leave this earth and go home to our Heavenly Father. That young man will be whole, healthy, strong and full of joy just like all of His children. Everything here is temporary and will pass by fast enough. If we stay focused on our eternal home and the purpose God has given us here, we can enjoy the journey home no matter what obstacles might be in our path.

*while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

*2 Corinthians 4:18*

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### **Created to Bless God**

I really enjoyed church at the Strand today. As I was first walking down the Strand to the pier, I had three cars stop me for prayer. I stopped and had fellowship with several of my brothers and sisters that I've met on my walks. I prayed for a couple of other people and on my way back I met a young man that stopped me and said, "I really need prayer. I just got out of prison and I've been clean of drugs for four months. My prayer is that I want to be used by God." I smiled and told him that's a prayer that God wants to hear. As the Holy Spirit led, I opened the prayer by saying, "God thank you that we can talk to the creator of all things. Please speak to this young man and give him the wisdom, strength and courage to fulfill the purpose you have created him for. The only reason we are here is to do your will and by doing that we will find our joy, peace, love and purpose. May he use the testimony he has to help others see you and that he will be that light to guide others to You." After the prayer I shared my testimony on depression and said, "Our trials are one of the greatest gifts we can give to someone else to show them how God works in our lives." He gave me a hug and thanked me. I said, "God loves you so much He just wanted to use this old man to tell you that."

After leaving him the prayer really stuck with me as I continued to walk. We are talking to the creator of everything, and we were created for Him. We are created to love God, please and bless Him with our lives. How often do we come to our Father with a shopping list of things we want instead of taking time to just be with Him? He is our Father and has things He wants to teach and show us so we can be more like His son. We can spend time telling God what we

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want, but there are things that He desires from us. Our Father wants our love, even though we will never be able to love Him the way He loves us, He wants our obedience and what good father wouldn't? He enjoys when we get together as His children, talk and fellowship with Him. As a parent wouldn't you be blown away if your child came to you and asked what they could do for you today? He is God the creator of everything and can have anything He wants, but He left the choice to us of what we are willing to give Him. He deserves everything from us, let's start there.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

*Romans 12:1-2*

### **I Should Have Said Merry Christmas**

It was a wonderful Christmas at the Strand. It was great saying Merry Christmas to so many people and in return them saying it to me. At the end of my walk there was a lady sitting on the curb. She had two backpacks, which must have been all her belongings. People would walk around her and look away as she sat there with her head down. I wanted to say Merry Christmas, but I thought to myself how could that be possible in her situation, so I simply said, "Hello." She looked up at me and smiled as I went on my way. She has been on my heart ever since and I should have asked her if she was alright or if I could get her something or simply been available to talk and listen. I thought afterwards if I said Merry Christmas, maybe by saying it might have helped her have one. There was a chance I could have been her Merry in

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Merry Christmas that day, but all I did was say Hi. Now all I can do is pray that God would take care of her instead of helping her reach out to God. I missed the opportunity to give Jesus a birthday present of love.

*But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*

*1 John 3:17*

### **My Plan Didn't Work**

The other day was very special at the Strand. It was like a family reunion. As soon as I got out of my car someone greeted me with a hug. As I got down the stairs to start my walk, I ran into someone else I knew then two others joined us in prayer and that continued to happen on most of my walk. It was fellowship day at church as I hugged, shook hands and had a great time with my brothers and sisters. I was at the Strand more than an hour over the time I would normally be there, because of all the love that was shared that day.

On my way back I thought to myself it's been over twenty years that I planned to take my life for the sixth time. I remember I was excited about the thought of ending my life so I would not have to suffer one more day on this earth. I remember that day on April 6, 1998, telling God just before taking the drugs that should have ended my life that He made a mistake in creating me. Fortunately, that wasn't God's plan for me. When God creates something, He does it for a reason and He was about to show me that He doesn't make mistakes. First, He took the heart of stone that was in me and gave me

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a heart of flesh. He showed me how much He loved me and that I can trust Him no matter what. His plan was to lead me on a journey, turning me into the man He can use.

As I continued my walk, I looked back at all the miraculous moments God guided me through and stopped to thank Him and cried. I guess I won't know until I get home why He left the ninety-nine to find this lost sheep, but I'm so blessed that He did. My journey isn't over and I wonder what still lies ahead. My sister would tell me, "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans." God must look down on me each day with a smile and a chuckle knowing I had no idea what He had planned for me. One thing for sure I'm going to be following His plan for the rest of my life. Dear Lord I hope I bring a smile to your face today.

*There are many plans in a man's heart,  
Nevertheless the LORD's counsel—that will stand.*

*Proverbs 19:21*

### **How Hungry Are You?**

I'm so blessed to be able to walk the Strand each day. I have the opportunity to see God's creation and to meet so many wonderful people. Yesterday I must have prayed with over ten people and fellowshiped with another twenty. One question I get often is, "Where do I attend church?" I always respond, "You're in it." I explain how I start my day in the word, listen to worship music in the car, fellowship, pray and glorify God. Most people like my response, but the other day I met a gentleman who didn't care for my answer and insisted that I needed to attend a traditional church. He asked, "Who's your pastor?" I said, "I don't have one, but I do have

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a Rabbi I follow each day.” He insisted I needed to have a pastor and church and said, “How do you get fed if you don’t go to church?” I said, “I feel I’m mature enough to feed myself and that both me and your pastor get our food from the same pantry, the word of God.” At that he gave up and left.

I prayed and thought about what I said and wondered if some people think going to a church for an hour and a half once a week is being fed and if they did, they must be starving. However, to be fed you must be hungry for God and what we do outside the church building is where we get our main meals. If you’re settling for that once a week feeding you might be getting by with a snack instead of the feast God has prepared for you. A good breakfast is important such as prayer and getting into God’s word. We can snack all day on simple prayers to our Lord. Lunch starts with prayer, asking for God’s guidance and to always be in His will, asking Him who He wants you to touch or help that day. Dinner is a time to appreciate the day God blessed you with surrounded by family including your brothers and sister in Christ. You should enjoy your Sunday Brunch, but you need to be fed throughout the week and God has provided us an all you can eat buffet of good things open twenty-four-seven.

Please don’t get me wrong I love church and without it I wouldn’t have been saved. I’ve had some great pastors that guided me on my journey. I learned about the bible and how to study, it gave me the opportunity to serve and lead, I took classes and taught them, I was part of small groups and even coached them, was part of wonderful ministries and it showed me the joy of worship. Church gave me the opportunity to grow, serve, learn, teach, use my gifts and

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fellowship with some of the most wonderful people. It's great being part of a traditional church, but better yet to be part of the body of Christ. I believe for some people going to church once a week fulfills their obligation of being a Christian. During COVID the church had to conform to the restrictions and lost a lot of its effectiveness because services were limited along with fellowship. For me I felt it was God's way of telling me let's try something new let's get church out of the building and to the people.

Think of the church as military training. The army is going to get the best training and equipment and would be able to defeat any enemy. However, what if that army never leaves the barracks, what good would it be? There is a war out there and we need to be ready to go out and fight.

*For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. <sup>14</sup> But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

*Hebrews 5:13-14*

### **What I've Learned at The Strand**

1. Our life is a day at a time, as God gave manna for a day, our daily bread and rejoice this is the day the Lord as made we are called to live in the moment.
2. Never judge anyone. We are each an individual created by God and we don't know the journey God as anyone else on.
3. Be concerned only about the things that I can change and realize the only thing I can change is me.

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4. Treat others as I want to be treated no matter how I'm being treated.
5. The most beautiful thing we can wear is a smile.
6. Neither circumstances nor people can control my emotions, but only I can decide how I react.
7. Only give your opinion if asked and when you do use discernment in what you say.
8. Realize that common sense is a gift and always use it.
9. Take any opportunity to make someone laugh.
10. God doesn't make mistakes.
11. To be able to love the lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul you need to spend time with Him.
12. Time is a gift to be shared with others.
13. Make sure there is a moment in each day that would bring a smile to God's face.
14. A coincidence is a miracle that God didn't get the credit for so when you meet someone know that God planned that meeting.
15. Before going to bed thank God for that day and if He chooses to give you another day ask Him to use it to glorify Him.
16. Each day is a step on the journey home and it's okay to be homesick.
17. Whatever has happened in the past is gone so let it go, and you won't know what tomorrow brings until you get there.
18. God has only called us to love one another not judge, control, or argue.
19. Most precious time I can spend is with my Father.
20. Spend time looking for my Lord in His creation. It draws me closer to Him and fills my heart with awe.

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21. One of the greatest gifts I can give to someone is to listen.
22. To be thankful throughout the day.
23. Never limit God's love for us and always be aware to see and enjoy it.
24. Don't try to find happiness in this world but receive the joy that only comes from God and it's always there whenever we want it.
25. Look at others through God's eyes and see the beauty He has put in His children.
26. Stay in constant prayer and let the Holy Spirit have His way through you.
27. Look for the beauty and good God surrounds us with each day and you'll find it.

*The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*

*Philippians 4:9*

### **When the Fog Clears**

Today when I left my house the sky was clear and sunny. It stayed that way until just before I parked my car, and the fog became so thick I could only see a few feet in front of me. I made it to the harbor where I met a sister in Christ who I've prayed with before. She asked for prayer for her son who had gone astray from his faith. We held hands as the Holy Spirit comforted her and we asked our Shepard to leave the ninety-nine to search for His lost sheep.

After we prayed, I said, "I can't believe how thick this fog is you can barely see the boats." She looked at me and said, "It won't be long until the fog lifts and the beauty will

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be revealed again.” When I went on my way, I kept hearing what she said and thought most of my life when I was suffering from depression that’s all I saw was the fog. I wasn’t expecting to see anything beautiful, so I didn’t and continued to stare into the fog. The fog is those moments that cripple our faith and limit our view. We can stay in the fog if we want, or we can be assured it will clear up to see the beauty it was covering up.

*“Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance,  
And the young men and the old, together;  
For I will turn their mourning to joy,  
Will comfort them,  
And make them rejoice rather than sorrow.*

*Jeremiah 31:13*

### **Enjoying Our Vacation**

The weather is different than it was last year at this time in Oceanside. Last year it was sunny with the temperatures in the seventies and all the people who came here were on the beach, playing games and swimming. However, this year we’ve had rain almost every day with the temperatures only in the fifties with gusty winds. I’m sure there were a lot of disappointed families who made the trip to Oceanside this year expecting beautiful weather. I still walk in between the periods of rain meeting and talking to several travelers saying good morning. Even with the weather conditions you can still spot children playing in the ocean or families playing games in the sand. They still seem to be having fun and not letting the conditions steal their joy. However, I’m sure there are others that have given up on

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having a good time and barricaded themselves in their very expensive rooms just waiting to get back home. Some will get home and tell their friends of a wonderful time with their families highlighting all the good things and telling their friends they were so glad they came. Others will tell of their disappointments and how their expectations of a great vacation were never met.

Have you ever felt as if your life was like that vacation? You had high hopes but it ended up being a disappointment. That was my life I expected so much and got so little. I wanted to end my vacation early several times because it wasn't what I expected. I didn't want to make it work I just wanted it to work without putting in much effort. All I saw was the weather, I didn't see the wonderful people God had surrounded me with, the beach and the ocean were still there but I didn't look, there were plenty of fun things to do, a lot of joy to be had but I locked myself in my room only focused on the misery I created. It wasn't until my vacation planner, Jesus, came into my life. The weather conditions were still the same, but I realized the only thing I can change was me. With the leading of the Holy Spirit, He showed me that joy was always there I just needed to make a decision to receive it. My Lord didn't need to change my surroundings He only needed to change my hard heart into the heart of flesh. He renewed my mind and gave my life purpose. He taught me how to find joy even in the worse weather and to help others on their journey. I'm not sure how much longer I'll be on vacation here but can't wait to get home and thank my Lord for all the great travel tips He gave me. I hope to bring Him back something special, a life lived for Him.

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*For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.*

*Romans 14:8*

### **Just Walk**

I've been trying to memorize more scriptures repeating them while I walk on the Strand. The one I'm putting to memory is

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

*Ephesians 2:8-10*

Even though I've been repeating it over and over I just realized what it was saying at the end. That the good works we are doing were already prepared by God and we are only called to walk in them. I thought all this time that it was me that planned and executed the good works I did, whether a mission trip, providing a special dinner, teaching a class or what I'm doing now praying at the Strand. I thought God really needed me to get things done, but all He calls me to do is walk with Him. It takes a lot of pressure off me knowing that God has already done the work and whatever the outcome is God's responsibility and not mine. Instead of being the host and planner of the party, I'm a welcomed guest and all I need to do is walk to the party and God throws

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some awesome parties. I can't wait to see what I'll be invited to next.

### **The Wealthiest Man**

When I had to retire early Teri and I had to make some adjustments regarding our finances. To cut costs I stopped drinking coffee, we sold our truck realizing that we won't be traveling on vacation as planned, refrain from going out to eat, be more selective in what we buy and whatever needs to be done around the house we do ourselves.

Yet I feel I'm the wealthiest man in the world. I have an amazing woman I get to call my wife, a wonderful family God has provided me with, a beautiful home I wouldn't trade for anything, because every time I look around all I see is His provision, all my needs are met, I get to do something that I love every day, a day doesn't go by that I don't meet a new friend, I walk and pray for others in a place that is beautiful. Each day is a step closer to home, a home so wonderful and beautiful I can't even imagine it. That wasn't my life before Christ it was all about me, money, possessions, and self-importance. Then Jesus crashed into my darkness

One day everything that I own will be gone, but I pray that before I leave, I helped make someone else's life a little richer.

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

*Matthew 6:19-21*

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### **Knowledge Isn't Always Good**

A surfer stopped me today and said he liked my shirt. He then asked, "Have you prayed with anyone today?" I said, "No, I just started and God hasn't put anyone in my path so far." He said, "Will you pray for me? I'm getting married in a couple of weeks." I told him I would love to. The Holy Spirit told him if they both put God first in their marriage and their lives God will bless him more than he can imagine. After praying he thanked me and asked, "Do you know what religion I am?" I told him no. He said, "I'm Mormon. Do you know anything about the Mormons?" When I started my journey God put on my heart I wasn't here to judge, criticize or argue but only to love so I was trying to be careful with my answer. I told him, "Yes, I know a little about the Mormons." He asked, "Have you ever read the book of Mormons?" I said, "There's no reason for me to read it, I believe God's word is complete and I found the truth. Have you ever looked for something and even after you find it you still keep looking?" He said, "No, but if you read it, you might gain more knowledge. I have a copy in my car if you would like it." I thanked him for the offer but still declined. At that point he gave up, but thanked me for the prayer.

Since the encounter it's been heavy on my heart. When he told me that I might gain more knowledge I should have said knowledge isn't necessarily good. If you watch the news, you'll gain lots of knowledge, but how much of that knowledge would be true? Some will be opinions, distorted information, or just plain lies. What we need is wisdom to discern the knowledge we receive and God will give it to us generously.

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I could of went on to say, “The Mormon religion is based on knowledge of what one man, Joseph Smith, said he saw. He saw two gold tablets coming down from heaven which is the core of the Book of Mormons. Yet no one else saw them and when he was finished, he said they went back up to heaven. I believe wisdom would question such a miraculous story, but it was received as knowledge by others just like today’s news. Also, Joseph Smith was considered a prophet and the bible tells us not to believe false prophets, but the majority of Joseph Smith’s prophecies were false. Again, wisdom would tell you the Mormon church was following the teachings of a false prophet.”

So, to treat this man with love should I have confronted him with this information? I’m sure he had heard all these arguments before and would have been ready to defend himself with the knowledge he had attained from his church. Do you think the encounter would have helped or would we have left combatants? When he first told me he was a Mormon I was praying to myself Father what do You want me to say? At the time I felt I was there to defend my faith with love, which I felt I did. That’s what is so wonderful about our relationship with Jesus, He’s always there guiding and teaching us a day at a time. I’ll always take my relationship with Jesus over religion.

*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*

*1 Peter 3:15*

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### Joyful New Day

Over the last couple of days, I've heard and said Happy New Year hundreds of times. People have stopped to tell me how terrible 2023 was and that they hoped that 2024 would be better. I thought we don't live a year at a time, at best it's a day at a time.

*This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.*

*Psalms 118:24*

So why do we get so wrapped up in a past that we can't change and a future that only God holds in His hands? We start the year with resolutions we plan on making, but it's not long before we give up on them. Instead of making these resolutions for the year wouldn't it be easier to make them daily? If we want to lose weight, stop some bad habit, create a new routine or change some personal trait wouldn't it be easier to tackle that a day at a time? This way if we do fall short that day, we can just start over the next without giving up.

Something else that God has put on my heart is to only be concerned about the things that I can change and realize the only thing I can change is me. Each day when I wake up, I have a new opportunity to be a better person, knowing that the Holy Spirit dwells in me to guide me. So instead of saying Happy New Year I started saying Joyful New Day, because our joy comes from the Lord and is renewed each day.

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*Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed,  
Because His compassions fail not.*

*<sup>23</sup> They are new every morning;  
Great is Your faithfulness.*

*Lamentations 3:22-23*

### **Good But Not Even Close**

What a beautiful day. I was just getting Brando out of the car when a young woman came up to me and told me, "You prayed for me. It was about a year ago and I was going through some health problems." I asked her how she was doing? She said, "Great! I'm going to school in England and just came back this week for Christmas holiday. Thank you for taking the time to pray with me, I know God answered our prayer." She gave me a hug and went on her way. What a great way to start my day.

The sky was clear that day and I love to see the sun reflected on the ocean water. While walking down the Strand people were waving and extending their hands for a high five. A little way down a man from New York came up to me and said, "Would you pray for me? I want to be a kinder and more patient especially to my wife. Sometimes she gets me upset and I lose my temper." I told him, "No one can make you upset, angry, sad or happy that is a decision that you make on your own and nobody has control over you unless you give it to them. The only thing you have control of is you." We then went into prayer and the Holy Spirit confirmed what I was saying. He hugged, thanked me and said, "I hope I to see you tomorrow, because talking to you gave me peace."

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I then met a young couple I see occasionally. They came up said good morning and hugged me. They then caught me up on what was happening in their lives and asked how I was doing. I said, "I'm so blessed. I'm doing God's will in this beautiful place and enjoying the best part of my life. I get to meet and talk to wonderful people like you it's like being surrounded with a loving family." Before parting ways, I told them that I loved them and in return they told me that they loved me too.

I met a man a few weeks ago. He lives in his van and the day I met him he was standing by a bench at the harbor. He told me how lost he felt and didn't see any reason to keep living. I remember just listening to him and when he was finished, I hugged him and shared my testimony how I told God that He made a mistake creating me and that He shows me each day that He doesn't make mistakes. I put my hand on his shoulder and began to pray for him. I stepped aside to let the Holy Spirit love and encourage him. He was told God has a special plan for his life and to draw nearer to Him. I saw him again today and asked how he was doing and he said, "I'm doing great since I'm focusing on God and not my problems. I don't know what I would have done if God didn't put you in my path that day." I said, "Everything that happened that day was orchestrated by God. The words that came out of my mouth was from the Holy Spirit and He just wanted you to know that He is watching over you and that He loves you more than you can imagine." With tears in his eyes, he gave me a hug and said, "Thank you for being His messenger."

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There were so many other wonderful people I met whether I stopped to talk, hugged, prayed or laughed with. On my way back along the beach I looked out into the ocean and there must have been over a thousand birds flying very low over the water. This has been happening for a couple of days now, but today I took some time to enjoy the sight. As I looked over the calm ocean, I also saw pelicans as they dove into the water making these great splashes getting something to eat. As I continued to watch I saw dolphins everywhere jumping out of the water, playing and it appeared as if some of them were surfing as you could see their silhouettes in the waves. I'm not sure how long I stood there and watched this glorious sight, but as miraculous as this day was it wouldn't come close to what I'll experience in heaven. Our Heavenly Father has something in store for us that we can't even imagine.

The love I feel walking on the Strand will never come close to the love I'll feel in Heaven. The beautiful sights I see here will be dull compared to what God will surround me with and as close as I feel to my Lord here won't compare to when I get to walk with Him when I get home. Each day lived here is just a day closer to being home and I will enjoy the journey until I see Him face to face.

*But as it is written:*

*“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the heart of man  
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

*1 Corinthians 2:9*

## Stories From the Strand

### Chapter 11- Sharing Our Father's Love

#### **Making Someone's Day**

As I was going to the harbor there was a young man having difficulty carrying his surfboard and suitcase. As I was coming up to him, he saw me, read my shirt and said, "That's what I need prayer. Would you pray with me?" I said, "I would love to." He started the prayer and he asked God for direction and how he might be used to glorify Him. When he was done the Holy Spirit took over and told him how much He is loved, that He was being watched over and to stay close to God. He looked up and said, "You made my day, thank you." I asked if he needed any help carrying anything. He said, "No, thank you I got it." He gave me a hug and went on his way.

As I was walking away, I thought what a gift to give someone to make their day. I thought it doesn't take much effort just some of our time and love. With all that God has given us we could at least do that for His children.

I prayed and talked to other people on my walk, including a pastor and his wife. On the way back there are condos that face the ocean. As I was walking past there were about seven people sitting on the patio and when they saw me, they waved. I noticed there was a happy Birthday banner on the wall. I stopped and asked whose birthday and the gentleman pointed to a lovely lady that just turned ninety. She was wearing a little crown and they called her the countess. I bowed before her and in a British accent I said, "May her majesty have a very happy birthday." Everyone laughed and thanked me.

Laughter what a wonderful gift from God. When you're laughing any stress, you might be feeling is gone and

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replaced with a moment of joy. Every day I feel Jesus's presence as He walks with me. I don't know why He likes my company; I'm just so blessed that He does. We are called to use the gifts that God has given us and they are meant to be shared with the rest of the family.

*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. <sup>7</sup> But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:*

*1 Corinthians 12:4-7*

### **A Child's Heart**

I enjoy my church at the Strand. I've gone from being nervous in the beginning to anticipation on who God is going to introduce me to and what His plans are for the day. In between praying and talking to others I have plenty of private time with my Lord as I pray and walk with Him. I've grown so much, but still have a difficult time understanding why He cares and loves me so much.

Yesterday I was watching an episode of the Chosen, where Jesus was surrounded by children. Jesus was talking with them, playing, and answering their questions. He was so patient and He was enjoying the time He was spending with them. He asked them if they knew the Shabbat and all the children started reciting "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul." As they continued to recite Jesus's reaction was remarkable, He was almost moved to tears and you could see the love He had for these children and how this moment blessed Him.

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On my walks I've experienced these same moments where I would meet a brother or sister in Christ, and we would just talk about how God has worked in our lives and how grateful we are that we are His children. How would you feel if your child that you have raised and sacrificed so much for came up to you and said, "I love you so much and I'm so grateful that you're my parent." I'm sure that would be a memory you would never forget. Our worship should be a memory like that for our Heavenly Father. Take a moment from all the distractions of the day and look back on how God has blessed you and thank Him. Remarkably we have the power to bless God.

*<sup>1</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul;  
And all that is within me, bless His holy name!*

*<sup>2</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
And forget not all His benefits:*

*Psalm 103:1-2*

### **A Humbling Experience**

It was another wonderful day at the Strand. As Brando and I were walking down a lady yelled out, "Will you really pray with me?" I turned around and a very thin woman along with a man and two dogs were sitting at one of the picnic tables. I went over and had Brando sit about ten feet away and stay. I asked her what she needed prayer for. She began to talk and most of what she said I couldn't understand, but I sat patiently listening to her while the man sat there with his head down. She must have talked for fifteen minutes before I finally got her prayer request. The gentleman was suffering from terrible headaches, they had no place to go or money

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and wanted God to guide them. We came before our Father to ask for guidance, protection, healing and that He will take care of their needs. I prayed that they will feel their Father's love knowing He is watching over them and He will never leave or forsake them. After I prayed, she looked at me and said, "I can't believe you came back to pray with me. Nobody ever notices us and if they see us, they turn their head without looking, but you came when I called. You listened, prayed and treated us like we mattered." She held my hand so tight with tears rolling down her cheeks and I said, "You matter to the most important person in the universe, and He loves you more than anyone here can love you." With tears in our eyes, she hugged me and I went on my way. I left feeling so humbled by the encounter I just cried. As I went off to the harbor, I kept them in prayer asking God what He desired me to do to help.

On my way back they were still sitting there, and she got up and yelled, "Thank you for praying for us." I yelled back, "It was a pleasure meeting you." And it was.

Just before I got to the end of my walk another woman yelled from across the street, "I can use a prayer." I walked over and she explained, "My sister just went to heaven. My heart has been heavy all day, then I saw you. God most have brought you to me." I said, "Yes, He does that a lot. I think of myself as Doordash for God." We both came before our Heavenly Father in prayer as the Holy Spirit told us of our home that is so beautiful and wonderful we can't imagine it, but assured her that her sister was there and that she'll see her again. After praying she looked up at me and said, "I was having a hard time saying goodbye to her, but your prayer was a reminder that I'll see her again. Thank you." She

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hugged me as she cried and I held her reminding her of how much her Father loves her. When she let go, she looked up with this wonderful smile on her face and she went on her way.

I don't know why God chose me for this ministry. I don't think it's my charm, intelligence or good looks that He desired. It might be because the first time I talked to Him, when I was ready to end my life, I told Him that He made a mistake when He created me. Each day is a reminder that He doesn't make mistakes and He created me for a purpose.

*But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*

*1 Peter 5:10*

### **An Amazing Day**

I was flying high today as I said good morning to everyone that passed me. If someone asked me how I was doing I would say, "I'm having an amazing day." While walking I met a gentleman in a parked car and I asked, "How are you doing?" He said, "Alright, I guess. I could really use a prayer." I asked what he needed prayer for, and he told me he just was overwhelmed and needed peace and direction. We prayed and allowed the Holy Spirit speak to his heart. Afterwards, he told me that he felt much better. I said, "Of course it's an amazing day."

I continued my walk down the Strand, where I met a couple with a baby in a stroller. They commented on how great my shirt was and asked how I was doing? Guess what I said? "I'm having an amazing day." They shared how they're

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foster parents and how their friends are judging them because of their age and that they have grown children of their own. They were feeling a little down that day because they hoped to adopt the last child they fostered, but the child was placed with another family. I said, "I met this amazing woman a few years ago that felt her life wasn't worth living and planned on ending it. The day I spoke at this church she was in attendance. After hearing my story God touched her heart and she told me that she was going to trust God. She had a condition where she was always in pain and wouldn't be able to have children of her own. The man who she thought was the love of her life just left her because, as he said, she was too much trouble. One day she contacted me and asked if she could come over and talk. As we were talking, she said, "I want to do what God is calling me to do, but how am I going to know what that is?" I told her that God had given her the talents, gifts and passion she needs to do His will. I asked her what her passion was. She thought for a moment and said, "I really liked junior high, because it was before my health issues and it was the last time I felt normal." I said, "Maybe you should volunteer at a church to help with their junior high ministry since that's your passion. Time went by and my wife and I received an invitation to her wedding. She was marrying the leader of the junior high ministry. This was the man God had for her. They started a foster care home. They adopted four of the children and she's an advocate against child trafficking." We then talked about God and His plans for our lives, and we are not here to please others, but to do the will of our Father. We continued to talk for a while and we encouraged each other to do God's will. We went to our

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Father in prayer and thanked Him that we are all adopted into His family.

I continued my walk telling those who asked about my ministry and telling them about the hope God has given me. I prayed with a gentleman who recently had pancreatic cancer surgery, prayed with four young ladies who asked for prayer for a sick friend, and afterwards I told each one of them I'm having an amazing day. Someone yelled from a boat, "Have a blessed day!" I yelled back, "I'm having a blessed and an amazing day." I can't even remember how many people all together I prayed with that day there seemed to be so many. So, I pray whoever is reading this that you have an amazing day, it's up to you.

*Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*

*John 16:24*

### **Do What's Right in Your Heart**

Yesterday was a little rainy and gloomy at the Strand and harbor. However, there were still several people that I had the opportunity to meet and talk with. As I was walking a young man, in his mid-twenties, stopped and asked me, "Do you really pray with people?" I said, "Of course." He asked if I could pray with him and gave me a rather bizarre story of what he was going through. I wasn't sure of what he told me was true, but that didn't matter because God put this young man in my path and I'll let the Holy Spirit sort it out. We prayed and asked God for wisdom and to guide him on his journey. He then quoted some scripture and then said "I want to do what God has called me to do. I haven't eaten for three

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days, but if God wanted me to fast, I'll do that." I said "Follow me, I'll get you some breakfast at this restaurant nearby." I went to the hostess stand and told her we need a table for one and gave him a twenty-dollar bill. I made sure he was seated and then went on my way. As I was walking, I thought I probably just got scammed. I've been without work but God has been faithful providing for Teri. I only had twenty-two dollars on me, but in my heart, I felt I did what honored God.

As I made my way, I met these two lovely ladies whom I've talked to before. The one asked if I was already at the harbor today and I said, "Yes." They asked, "Did you meet a young man that seemed a little bewildered." I said, "Oh you mean Dan. I talked with him for a while, and we prayed then afterwards I took him to get breakfast." They thought that was great but asked, "What if he was conning you?" I said, "Why would that matter. I did what I felt was right in my heart. I felt I honored God which is my main concern. Besides it's God's money anyway." We talked for a while longer as I told them the wonderful people God has put in my life and the answered prayer I get to see each day. They both hugged me and said, "We love hearing your stories they make our day." I continued my walk and even though it was gloomy I still had a wonderful day talking with whomever God put in my path.

As I was crossing over the bridge from the harbor I saw Dan on the other side of the street. He waived and yelled, "Thank you." I yelled back, "How was breakfast?" He said, "Great!" I thought I may never know this side of heaven what the real story was for Dan, but God knows and that's all that matters.

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*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

*Philippians 2:3-4*

### **The Most Important Commandment**

Each day is such a blessing as I continue to pray and share my testimony. There has never been a day that I haven't met someone new on my journey. A couple of weeks ago God put on my heart

*And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

*Mark 12:30-31*

The more I try to keep this commandment the more I realize it's impossible to do in the flesh. To love someone that much you would have to spend plenty of quality time with them, know their desires, want to please and trust them, be completely honest, just the thought of that person would bring you joy and you would be willing to change if it meant getting closer to them. Each day I try to get a little closer to obeying that commandment and the closer I come the more I realize that God meant this commandment to be a blessing for us. Imagine what your life would be like if you could accomplish loving the Lord that way. You would never be anxious, you would never doubt that He will care for you, you

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would be confident knowing He will always be with you and never leave or forsake you, you would always feel loved, never fear or worry, that your life would be full of joy, that He will work the good in all things and no matter what might happen here you will live forever with Him in a place so wonderful and beautiful you couldn't even imagine it. If we were able to meet the first commandment the second one would come naturally since we are all His children. I doubt if I'll be able to love God the way He deserves, but I won't stop trying. After all I have all eternity to get there.

*We love Him because He first loved us.*

*1 John 4:19*

### **I Appreciate You**

It was a damp and cloudy day at the Strand, but that didn't stop God from showing up. There weren't many people walking so the good mornings were few, but not totally absent. As I was walking there was a man standing on the side rifling through his backpack. His dog just pooped on the sidewalk, so I asked if he needed a plastic bag and he said, "Yes, please. I know I have some but I'm having difficulty finding them." As I said goodbye, he said, "I appreciate you." I thought what a great thing to say to someone. As I walked, I thought I should make a point to say that to those that I do appreciate, so they knew I did.

As I walked to the harbor there was a homeless man sitting outside a restaurant. He was looking at the paper and I recognized him as someone that I prayed with before. I asked, "How are you doing?" He said, "I'm doing good." I wasn't sure if he was on drugs or what type of mental

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problems he might have. I asked, “Is there anything you need?” He stood up, looked me in the eyes and said, “You’re a good man.” He started sobbing then hugged me. As I was holding him, I prayed for him as a father would pray for his son telling him how much he’s loved. Before leaving he assured me that he was okay, and didn’t need anything.

I met another man as I was walking, and he read my shirt and just smiled. He wanted to know my story so I shared how God had called me to pray with others and the shirt was actually God’s idea and not mine. I then shared my testimony how God delivered me from depression. He appeared to be very interested and wanted to hear more of my testimony. I love talking about how God has worked in my life, because it reminds me of how much He loves me and that He never left me. He then shared how God came into his life after a life of alcoholism, and he’s been sober for ten years thanks to God. After talking for a while we came together in prayer just thanking God for His goodness, blessings and love. We hugged before parting ways and I told him that I appreciated him. He then smiled and said, “I appreciate you too.”

Going back to my car a gentleman stopped his car and said, “I would like to pray with you I’m going to park in the lot up ahead.” When I got there, he introduced himself as Cecil and that he has MS. He looked familiar and I asked if he use to sell manufactured homes? He looked surprised and said yes and I told him that he showed us the home that my wife and I live in now. Cecil had a scam where he was able to take the down payment people were giving him and invest that money without them knowing it. When all the deals went bad, several people lost their money and he went to prison. He served four years for his crime, but when he was in, he told

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me he received Jesus as his Lord and Savior. We talked for about forty-five minutes about God's word and how He changed both of our lives. It was a great time and we prayed before saying our goodbyes. As I was walking back to my car, I thought about the conversations of three sinners now saved by the grace of God. I prayed and told my Lord how much I loved Him and how thankful I was and that I really appreciated Him. I think that brought a smile to His face.

*I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart;*

*I will tell of all Your marvelous works.*

*<sup>2</sup> I will be glad and rejoice in You;*

*I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.*

*Psalm 9:1-2*

### **Walking with the Holy Spirit**

I love walking the Strand and harbor with the Holy Spirit. I walked and greeted people with a good morning and a smile, as they smiled back. There is nothing you can wear that's more beautiful than a smile. As I was making my way back from the harbor I met up with a man and his wife. They said they see me all the time and finally wanted to introduce themselves. They asked about my ministry and while I was talking others passed by yelling my name and some stopped to say hi or give me a hug. The couple asked, "Would you mind if we walk with you?" I told them, "I would love the company." As we were talking, I told them about my depression ministry and my last suicide attempt. I looked at her and discovered why the Holy Spirit put us together that day. She said, "We came out here to help take care of our

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granddaughter. Now our daughter in law doesn't want us involved any longer. I'm not sure what happened, but I've been feeling very depressed and I don't know what I should do." The Holy Spirit began to speak to them. I've experienced the Holy Spirit speaking through me while praying, but this time He was walking and comforting her. Her husband hardly said anything but appeared to be entrenched in the conversation.

As we continued our walk, I came up to a man that I prayed with a few days prior, he lost his job, struggling and suffering from anxiety. However today he seemed ecstatic to see me and he was with his wife. He came up and hugged me and thanked me for spending time with him that day and what a blessing it was. I went to introduce myself to his wife, but he said she already knows about you, and she smiled and she shook her head in agreement. He hugged me and said he would like to get together for coffee someday. I told him only if he was buying. He hugged me again and I looked over at his wife and she smiled and said, "Thank you." My eyes were tearing up when I turned back to the couple and said, "This is my life now, a life I wanted to throw away so many years ago, but God had other plans."

We continued walking down the Strand while the Holy Spirit continued to speak love and comfort into their lives. We got to the end of the Strand, and she asked, "Would you pray with us?" I wasn't sure if the Holy Spirit had anything left to say since we've been talking for over an hour, but He kept the best for last. He assured them no matter what anyone else says or thinks of you, your Father thinks you're very special and has a purpose for your lives. He reminded them there is nowhere in the Bible that says we are called to please or trust

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others but only to love them. However, we are called to please and trust our Father and He gives us only a day at a time to accomplish that. Instead of filling your thoughts of things that are now in the past and can't be changed focus on the only thing we can control, ourselves. Each day enjoy now and spend the time together and with your Father.

We all hugged, and I told them I had to go up to my car and they asked if they could continue to walk with me. So, we walked to my car and I told them what a blessing it had been spending time with them. The husband finally spoke up to tell me how grateful he was and how I seemed to say just the right things that they needed to hear. I told them this wasn't a coincidence that we met, and they agreed. I said, "This was just another opportunity for God to show you how much He loves you. Today He decided to use this old man as His messenger. Remember just a day at a time."

*So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.*

*Exodus 16:21*

### **You May Kiss the Bride**

Every day at the Strand is wonderful, but some days are just pure awesome. As soon as I got down to the Strand it seemed there were people waiting to say good morning to me. A lot of vacationers stopped and asked about my shirt and ministry and of course to say how handsome Brando and I were, maybe it was just Brando. During my walk, I had three different people ask if they could pray for me and I never turn down prayer. I had my share of people yelling they love my shirt and thumbs up, but what really made my

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day special was a couple I met at the harbor. They introduced themselves and told me they were celebrating their tenth anniversary. They asked if I would renew their wedding vows right there at the harbor. I told them I wasn't a pastor and they said, "When we saw you, we knew you should be the one to help us celebrate our marriage." I told them I would be honored and thought to myself Holy Spirit you can step in any time. Then I said to the woman, "God hasn't called you to be the wife your husband expects you to be." To the man I said, "You aren't called to be the husband your wife expects you to be. You are both called to be the husband, wife, man, and woman God has called you to be. If you strive for that you will both fall more in love with each other every day as you see each other through God's eyes." Then I said to the man, "Do you take this woman as your wife? Treating her with the love and honor deserving of God's daughter. He looked at his wife smiled and said I do. Then I turned to the woman and said, "Do you take this man as your husband now being joined together as one flesh. To love and respect him knowing that he is a son of God. She looked at her husband and said, "always." Then the Holy Spirit prayed for them with the love, peace, hope and strength as only He can do. I told the man you may now kiss your bride. I can't explain the wonderful feeling that came through me after I said congratulations. The man looked at me and said, "I see why God wanted to use you to help us renew our vows today." We all hugged and Brando and I went on our way.

I continued my walk back to my car talking and praying with others while still amazed God would use me in the ways He does. It's unbelievable that this was God's plan

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for my life all along. He truly is the Father who gives good gifts to His children.

*Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will. –*

*Ephesians 1:4-5*

### **I Love My Teacher**

God has taught me so much on my walks at the Strand. My first lesson was not to judge, criticize or argue but just to love others. He has shown me to treat others the way I wanted to be treated.

*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

*Matthew 7:12*

However, I think it could go further by adding the word think. Our thoughts are powerful and if we think good things towards others, it will be easier to do good things. God has shown me the impact of a smile and saying good morning to someone. He has taught me how precious my time is to someone when I share it. I've learned a touch on the shoulder, a handshake, holding hands while praying or a hug can be the most precious thing someone might receive that day. During my Bible readings God continues to put different scriptures on my heart to memorize, but the most important one is

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*So he answered and said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and your neighbor as yourself.*

*Luke 10:27*

I've been taught unless I can do the second part, loving my neighbor, I'll never be able to accomplish loving Him. Love is an action word and to love someone you need to give of your time and help care for their needs or desires the best we can. First thing is you need to be observant of people God surrounds you with. On the Strand, there are plenty. Some of my services I offer is using Brando as a one dog petty zoo to children and adults, if someone is struggling putting up a canopy I offer a hand, helping a mother with children trying to get all the toys and furniture to the beach, picking up a dog mess that someone left on the sidewalk or helping someone struggling trying to pick up their dog mess while juggling a child, take time to listen, making others feel important, because they are important to God and to be available and sincere. You would think spending all this effort to help others would leave you with no time for yourself. But as always, my good teacher taught me that those, He surrounds me with are carrying blessings with them and before they leave, they'll bless me with a smile, handshake, an encouraging word, a hug or thank you. I don't know how He does it but the more I give the more I get. I know I don't deserve such a wonderful teacher, but He seems to enjoy the time we spend together.

*And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.*

*Matthew 23:10*

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### **Crucified with Christ**

My life is very different now that I've started walking and praying at the beach. The other day three ladies were jogging by, and one stopped and came up to me and said, "You prayed for me over a year ago and I wanted to let you know the prayer was answered but it took a while." I asked her, "During that time did you pray more and draw closer to God?" She said, "Yes." I said to her, "That was more important than the answered prayer and I'm sure God enjoyed the time you spent with him." She smiled and gave me a hug as the other two looked on.

Then a car stopped, and a man told me that we prayed for his sister who had cancer. With tears in his eyes, he said, "She's in remission and doing well. Thank you." I said, "This has nothing to do with me, but God used your faith to touch your sister. Continue to pray for her and expect God to answer those prayers."

There is a homeless gentleman that I've seen for over a year. He would look down when he passed me, and eventually looked up giving me the opportunity to say good morning. Now he comes up to me and gives me a fist bump. The other day he stopped me and said, "You're a good man." I told him, "Nobody is good except God." He looked at me and said, "No, you are a good man, and we all know it." I thanked him for the encouraging words and gave him a fist bump. Later when I was talking with a woman, he came up to me again and said, "Thank you for caring." I told him, "I not only care for you but I love you." After saying that instead of our traditional fist bump, I gave him a hug. As he walked away, I said goodbye to the woman I was talking to and found a quiet place to thank God and cry. I asked God,

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“Why do You care and love me so much? I know the man I was before You entered my life, why would you care for that man? Why wouldn’t You just let go and give me what I deserved?” All I heard in my spirit was, “Ninety-nine.”

I can’t tell you how many people stop to tell me that they appreciate me, love me, or look forward to seeing me each day. It’s very humbling, but I know it’s not me. I know who I was before Jesus came into my life and this is not that man.

It’s amazing the change in me since I started this journey, the prayers come so easy and are so powerful, the love for others comes from the heart, I feel God’s presence in a personal way, just the idea of judging someone is now repulsive and I experience a joy I never knew existed. I’m a new creation I’m blessed to be the man God has made. When I was suffering from depression, I hated who I was henceforth six suicide attempts. I always wanted to be someone else, anyone else. A couple of years after Jesus crashed into my darkness, as I was praying one night, I thanked God for making me, me. I laid face down on the ground crying after I said it, almost not believing what I said. I remember this warmth that came over me as if He was holding me in His arms, and said, “You were worth leaving the ninety-nine.”

*For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.*

*Psalm 139:14*

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### Entertaining Angels

I've never felt closer to God as I pray for others each day. I feel the Holy Spirit as He speaks through me, guiding my steps as I meet and pray with others and his presence gets stronger as time goes on. The other day as I was walking on the Strand, I passed a young mother and child. As they passed, I said, "Good morning." I must have walked about ten feet when I heard her say, "Sir." I turned around and she said, "I just noticed your shirt. I'm curious why you're wearing it and how did you start?" I explained how my journey began and all the wonderful things that have happened to me since. I then told her how I suffered from depression most of my life, but God had a plan for me. She then asked for prayer for her relationship and her new baby. The Holy Spirit took over and comforted her, gave her some wonderful wisdom, telling her to trust in God and that He had a plan especially for her. After the prayer she looked me in the eyes and said, "I was praying when I passed you and felt that God told me to talk to you. That's when I turned and called out to You." She hugged and thanked me, then said, "God is really proud of you." I thanked her for her encouragement and we said our goodbyes. This wasn't the first time someone has told me this, but it felt arrogant to think that it was true.

As I continued my walk there was an old man in a wheelchair with only one leg sitting under the pier. His head was down so I didn't say good morning as I passed. On my way back a couple of hours later he was still sitting there with his head down. I passed him again as so many others had done, but something touched my spirit and I felt lead to see if he needed anything. I went up to him and tapped him on the shoulder and asked, "Do you need any water?" He looked up

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and said, “No, but I could really go for some ice cream.” There was an ice cream vendor right across the street, so I asked what flavor and his request was chocolate. I walked over as four other people were deciding what they wanted and then told me to go ahead. Brando put his front paws on the counter as if he was going to place the order. I said, “I don’t know why he does this, he doesn’t have any money.” Everyone began to laugh and I thanked them for letting me go ahead of them. I got the ice cream and made my way back to the gentleman. He looked up and gave me this great smile with the few teeth he still had and thanked me. I walked only a few steps before this chill came over my body and I broke down and cried trying to conceal my tears from others as I walked. In the years I’ve been at the Strand I never saw this man before and haven’t seen him since, but before that chill all I could think of is

*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.*

Hebrews 13:2

I will continue to do my daily walk taking each day at a time and watch in wonder what God’s plan is for this old man and keep an eye out for the angels He surrounds me with.

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### **A Husband's Suicide**

One day as I was walking a young lady with her friend stopped me and asked if I would pray for her. I said, "I would be honored. What do you need prayer for?" She said, "I lost my husband a few days ago. I see you all the time and was hoping I would run into you today." After giving her my sympathy, I asked if he was saved. She said, "Yes, he loved the Lord." I started to pray with no idea what to say, but the Holy Spirit already knew of our meeting that day and was prepared. It was a loving and comforting prayer as always. He described a place that was so wonderful and beautiful we can't even imagine it and her husband will be waiting for her. After praying I said, "This is God's timing and He planned our meeting today to let you know He is watching over you." I shared my testimony on depression figuring she most likely well be experiencing it with the loss of her husband. She looked surprised and said, "My husband committed suicide." I said, "I know." But in reality, I had no idea that he had, but the words came out as if I did. I said, "When I attempted to end my life it wasn't that I wanted to die, but I got to a point I didn't want to face another day. I had my life so messed up that the idea of going one more day was more than I could bear. I would hide my feelings because I didn't want anyone to stop me and I thought the only way to get rid of the pain of living was to end it. Your husband committing suicide isn't any fault of yours, you couldn't have known what he was going through. The enemy is stronger than we think." She told me how comforting it was to talk with me and asked if it would be okay to seek me out to talk in the future. I gave her my card and told her anytime she wanted to talk and pray I would be

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available to her. She gave me a hug and it felt like she didn't want to let go with tears in her eyes she said, "Goodbye." I then continued my walk and got this chill throughout my body and started to cry. I prayed to God why would you use and bless a sinner like me to help others and I felt in my heart Him saying, "That's who I use."

A few days later I met up with her again. She said, "I was hoping to see you. The funeral is tomorrow and my in-laws are in town and I'm dreading the day." I said, "You told me your husband was saved and we know he's with the Lord enjoying his eternal life and no longer suffering from the demons of depression. No one has the power to make you sad, guilty, mad or anything else you have to give them that power. Look at tomorrow as being that day you can say to your husband see you later. Remember all the good days that God blessed you with and stay close to His side. Life is just a day at a time enjoy each one as they come along." She then hugged and thanked me. I told her again, "This has nothing to do with me but God wanted to speak to you, to tell you that He loves you, knows where you are and will be with you tomorrow. He just decided to use this old man to convey the message."

As time went by, I would see her every so often jogging and every time she would smile, say good morning or stop for a short talk and a hug.

Then one day she stopped to talk, but it wasn't the same person I knew. Her smile was gone and she said I need to catch up with my friends we're meeting at a local bar.

On another day she came up to me and said, "I'm getting worried. I can't find a job and I'm going through my savings. I don't like this life that I'm living, it seems all I do

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is drink and hang out. I don't even like the people that I'm hanging out with." I said, "You're an amazing young woman and have been through a lot. You should surround yourself with people that will love and encourage you through the trials you're going through. God is going to be the answer and you need to draw close to Him so He can guide you through. Look at what He has gotten you through already. The best thing you can do now is to get into God's word, pray and find a good church that you can be part of."

The next time I saw her that beautiful smile returned and she looked wonderful. She came up to me and said, "I took your advice and I've been going to the church you recommended. The people are wonderful and I really like the pastor's messages. I go every Sunday and Wednesday and I belong to a home fellowship. I stopped drinking and going out and spend more time with God. I haven't got a job yet, but I had several interviews and I know God is looking over me." She then asked for a hug and went on her way.

A few weeks went by and I saw her sitting at a picnic table with a laptop computer. When she saw me, she shared that beautiful smile that she has. She said, "I was hoping to see you today. I just wanted you to know how wonderful things are going. I'm getting more involved in my church and I got this great job which I'm going to start in a couple of weeks. Thank you for being there for me all this time." I said, "This isn't me, but God wanted to be a bigger part of your life, because He loves you so much. He has given you a testimony that will help other people that may be in a similar situation that you've been in. I suggest you write down your journey, it will help you see how God has always been with you." With tears in her eyes she asked if it was okay to hug me. I stood

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there holding her as if she was my daughter. When she let go, she thanked me again and I continued my walk.

As I walk each day God introduces me to a new family member and I love each one. I read this quote in a book and it really opened my eyes it said, “The opposite of love isn’t hate, but selfishness.” That is what my life was before Christ entered it. All I thought of was myself there was no room for loving anyone else, but my Lord has changed that. When I attempted to end my life those six times I did it because I thought my life was useless and what do you do with useless things, you throw them away. God has shown me my purpose in life and by focusing on the needs of others I’ve become a man God can use.

*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;*

*Romans 12:10*

### **A Testimony of Prayer Answered**

Today I met an extraordinary woman. I see her often as she jogs past me, but today she stopped and introduced herself. I talked about my prayer and depression ministry. Then she told me here testimony, “I had a brain aneurism and after the surgery a bacteria formed in my brain and I had to have several other surgeries. It didn’t look like I would make it, but my mother, a true prayer warrior, insisted I would. She had prayer meetings, brought others to pray with me in the hospital and set a bible over my pillow telling me that God is watching over me. I still have to wear this device above my ear to relieve the pressure, but because of prayer and my Lord I’m feeling great.” Talking to her I

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would never have guessed she went through anything like what she described. We shared God's faithfulness in our lives as she gave me a hug and said good bye.

I see her often as she stops to talk with me. She is now taking care of her mom and dad in their old age as her mom is dealing with dementia. I told her that must be hard and she said, "It's a struggle, but my mom was always there taking care of me and never ceased praying so I plan on doing the same for her."

A few months went by without seeing her. When I finally saw her again, she told me that both her father and mom went home to the Lord only a few days apart. She is at peace knowing they are both home and will never suffer again.

Now when I see her, I think of God's faithfulness in her life. I pray that when others see me, they think the same. The only reason I'm still here is because of God's mercy. This is now my life to share with others God's love and faithfulness. I get the joy of hearing the miracles He works in others. My Lord kept His word, He gave me life to the fullest here and is guiding me home to be with my Father.

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

*John 14:6*

### **A Mother's Request for Her Daughter**

God has used me in some miraculous ways as I walk the Strand. A husband and wife whom I've seen for years owns a small cottage on the beach and waves to me as I walk by. However yesterday the lady came across the street and

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said, “I was hoping to see you today. My mother passed away a few days ago and I’m really struggling with her loss. I haven’t been the best daughter and my mom deserved better.” I told her, “The best part of the past is that it's over and there is no reason to dwell there any longer, otherwise you might miss what God has in store for you today. She went on to say, “My mother was a very religious woman. She was always praying, going to church and helping others. Unfortunately, I’m not religious and that is why I wanted to talk to you. I was hoping you might help me understand where my mom is. Every time I see you it makes me smile and I felt that I needed to talk to you.” I told her, “That’s the Holy Spirit guiding you. Your mom is in a place so wonderful and beautiful we can’t even imagine it. She is beginning her new life with her Lord and Savior, the person that loves her more than anyone here can love her, even you. When your mother entered heaven, Jesus embraced her, she felt His amazing love and comfort. Who knows she might have made a request of Him. She might have asked if He would send someone to her daughter so she will experience His presence in her life like she did and when it’s time that she will be with her again.” By now this wonderful lady is crying in my arms and asks, “What should I do?” I said, “Our meeting isn’t by chance and all you need to do is receive the gift Jesus has in store for you. You need to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior and believe that He came to save you, died on the cross and rose from the dead and now is seated at the right hand of the Father. You need to repent of any sin and turn to Christ. I don’t believe you can commit your life right here and now but you need to go home and speak to him privately in prayer. Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love

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the Lord God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength. To do that you need to spend time with Him and give Him your heart.” I gave her my card and told her to call or email me any time with questions and let me know how I can help her draw close to God as her mother did. She continued to thank me and I said, “This has nothing to do with me but the love of Jesus wants to welcome you into His family.” She came into my arms hugging me, shaking and crying. When she composed herself, we said our goodbyes.

The next day as I was walking, I saw her again with this awesome smile on her face. She ran across the road and gave me this wonderful hug. She said, “As soon as I got back in my cottage, I spent time with Jesus as you said and it was the most peaceful and wonderful time I ever remembered having. I asked Him to come into my life and the peace and joy I experienced afterwards was wonderful. I know my mom is in this amazing place and that I will see her again.” As she was talking, I kept quiet and listened. She then called me an angel. I told her that I was far from being an angel, and she gave me another hug. She looked me in the eyes and said, “Well your mine.” She walked back to her cottage and I thought about it and found out angel means messenger so maybe I am. I pictured her mom in Jesus’s arms looking up to Him saying, “Thank you.” I look forward to seeing my new sister on my journey and planning on talking to her husband next.

*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.*

*2 Corinthians 5:20*

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### Just Special

One day on my walk a couple standing by the amphitheater asked me for prayer. They were holding an event to support special needs children. The organization was called Shine and they requested prayer for the success of the event. After we prayed, they asked if I could come back at noon and open the event in prayer, even though it wasn't a Christian event. I told them I would be honored. When I came back, I was told to go up on the stage where I was introduced and then handed a microphone.

This was the prayer. "Dear Father we first want to come before you to tell you that we love you, are grateful for all you've done, we trust you and ask for your blessings on today's event. We call your children those with special needs, but you say they are just special, like all of your children. We all have a purpose in this life, and you have given us what we need to fulfill that purpose. The purpose for some of these children might be to make us better people to allow us to show compassion, love, patience, generosity, and gratitude. We pray for the parents of your children that had to sacrifice more than most to care for your children. I pray their reward will be great when it's time to come home. That they will be standing at your side and see someone running towards them faster that they have seen anyone run before and see that someone is their child. Then when their child comes close, they will wrap their arms around them, telling them how much they love and appreciate all they've done for them. Give each one of them the strength to run this race until then. In Jesus name I pray." At first there was this silence and then the people started to applaud. The person in charge of the event came over took the

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microphone and gave me a hug and thanked me as I walked off the stage.

As I continued my walk down the Strand my whole body seemed to tingle and I began to cry. I remembered when I suffered from depression, I would constantly have the thought, “Why me?” feeling I was being persecuted for no good reason. Now I still ask the same question, but for a different reason. Why do You love me so much, why would you bless me each day, why would You use this sinner, why me? The answer is always the same, because you’re my child and you’re special to me.

*Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup> If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*

*Matthew 7:9-11*

### **Loving My New Sisters**

Every day my family grows. Yesterday I met two new wonderful sisters. We talked for a while as they asked about my ministry and Brando. They were there that day because one of them was dealing with anxiety and depression. As always God had planned our meeting. I smiled and told her about my ministry and gave her my Getting Over Depression card. I shared my struggle with depression and how God gave me the prescription of prayer to battle it. I said, “How we feel in the moment is a reflection of what we are focused on. If we are constantly focused on negative things that’s the way we are going to feel. That was my life before Christ.

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I lived each day in the past or worried about what might happen. I never seemed to enjoy the moment I was in or think of the many blessings God had given me. God showed me how to use the power of prayer to bring me joy and peace. There is a moment when we feel the anxiety coming on but before it comes on, I would say a short prayer like: God help me, please take this burden from me, I know you'll never leave me or forsake me or whatever the Holy Spirit places on my heart. So now instead of thinking of the thing that was getting me anxious, I'm thinking of God and His love for me. When I first was saved, I would pray a hundred times a day, because the devil wasn't going to give up that easily. God arranged our meeting today and is looking over you. He just wanted to use me to let you know that He loves you, knows where you are and that He has a plan for your life." By now both of them had tears in their eyes and the one said, "I do believe that God placed you here for me today." We hugged and they asked if I would pray for them. God saved the best for last. The prayer was powerful, loving, comforting and full of hope. God reminded her that He would never leave or forsake her and He is always there when she needs Him. After praying I told her if she ever needed to talk, she could call or email me. With one last hug they said thank you and I went on my way.

Later that evening I received this text. I can't thank my father enough for these moments:

*"Thank you for speaking life to me and my friend Karen today. We were truly blessed to have met you. That word of encouragement spoke life to us and uplifted us! God is so sovereign and I'm grateful to God for people like you who love*

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*others and go out of their way to do the will of God. Your testimony helped build my faith in this season I'm in. I'm encouraged to get closer to God. Thank you for your prayers!*

*Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:11*

### **Enjoying Life Like Children**

A couple of weeks ago I received an email from Nica, someone I met a month earlier. Nica is from Maryland and she was coming to Oceanside for a visit and asked if she could walk with me. I wrote back of course and set a time and a place to meet. When I arrived, I saw a woman waiting for me who had a shirt on just like mine. Maybe a little smaller. I must have looked surprised since I didn't know she was going to be wearing that shirt and didn't remember what she looked like. After greeting each other we started our walk. God had our day planned so perfectly and even provided us with great weather. As we walked, I shared some of my experiences on the Strand, we told each other of some of our life experiences and our love for our Lord. All the way down the strand people were yelling good morning, and we returned their greetings. It wasn't long until we had our first prayer request. We met this gentleman who was an instructor at the Army and Navy Academy. After talking for a while he asked for prayer for direction and wisdom so he would honor God with his job. Nica joined in as the Holy Spirit already knew what He was going to say. As we left, she said, "How did you learn to pray like that?" I said, "It's not

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that I learned but I allow the Holy Spirit to speak through me. It says in *Luke 12:12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.*” A littler further down we met a woman who wanted prayer for her husband that was ill and also for her health. After praying she hugged us and told us how wonderful it was that we were out here praying for others. In between praying we were just enjoying each other’s company laughing and teasing as if we knew each other for years. I began to introduce her as my daughter and Nica played right along. When people would look at us trying to find a family resemblance she would say I get my good looks from my mother’s side of the family. Ouch that stung. When we got to the harbor we met Amy. Amy is homeless and has been at the harbor for more than four years. Looking at her, you would never guess she was homeless because she is always clean, is pleasant and looks nice. Recently she’s been selling jewelry she buys on Amazon. She sets up a little display on the bench where she sleeps and is doing pretty well. I introduced Nica, AKA Daughter, to Amy. She talked with Amy loving and encouraging her. She made a fuss over the jewelry and spent thirty dollars to help her out. That day we prayed for more people than I can remember. We met a couple and had a little bible study, sharing our love for our Lord and going through His word. Another couple I see frequently came up to me and said, “It’s so great seeing you.” They looked at my new friend and said, “We just love Mark.” I said, “It’s because I’m so adorable how can you not love me.” I then felt a jab in my side and my fake daughter said, “Dad, you’re not.” I looked at the other couple and they were laughing shaking their heads as though to say she’s right. There were so many other people who stopped us just

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to talk and tell us how inspired they were that we were out here proclaiming the love of Jesus. One older gentleman I talk to often came up to her and said, "I met Mark a couple of years ago. My wife had dementia and I needed to look after her. I had a caregiver care for her a few hours so I could go on my bike rides. One day I stopped to rest and Mark approached me to say Good Morning. I'm not sure why he stopped to talk to me, but I was glad he did. I would share what I was going through and he would always pray for me and my wife. I would look forward to seeing him, it gave me peace. My wife went home to the Lord a couple of months ago and Mark was there for me. He would always say, don't think of the way your wife went home but the blessings God gave you all the years you were together and that is what I do." I was talking to someone else and didn't hear the whole conversation, but she came up to me and gave me a hug. I wasn't sure what the hug was for, but I said I'm not giving you any more money.

As we came back from the harbor, she wanted to have a picture taken with us with the ocean as the background. I've found a lot of people like having their picture taken with me because it makes them look better. There was a homeless gentleman who calls me pastor that I've prayed with before sitting at a table. She asked if he would take the picture. After taking the picture, he began to cry, "Thank you pastor for praying for me, but I don't want to be here anymore, it's too hard." I went over and hugged him and told him how special he was to God and that he has a purpose. That God loves him more than he can imagine and our life is just a day at a time. After praying and comforting my brother we went on our way. We both couldn't hold back our tears and shared

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how God loves using His children. I said, “I don’t know why he insists on calling me pastor.” She said, “To him you are his pastor and when he sees you it reminds him of God’s love.” As we walked there was a man and woman in wetsuits approaching us. I said, “I love you with a godly love and if that man coming towards us had a gun I would.” At that moment I held her in front of me as if using her as a shield. The man broke out laughing and said, “You should have seen her face.” After getting a well-deserved punch in the arm we both laughed. As we were walking back, I was going to share one of the greatest compliments I’ve ever received that came from a lifeguard. Just as I began to share the story a lifeguard truck stopped to say hello. Before they left, they said to Nica “This beach is so much better since Mark is out here.” Then they drove off. After driving away, she turned to me and said, “I can see why.” Then gave me a hug.

We were in front of the resort she was staying in and I thought we would part company, but she wanted to continue and walk me to my car over a half mile away. She said she was enjoying herself and wanted it to last a little longer. That day we laughed as much as we prayed and more importantly made others laugh with us. Our Father used us to bring joy to His children by acting like children. When we got to my car, she hugged me and thanked me for an awesome day. I said, “Of course it was awesome God planned each moment. I believe He had as much fun as we did, watching His children play.”

*Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

*Matthew 18:3*

## Stories From the Strand

### **Nica's Story of the Day We Walked**

In August 2025 I went on an impromptu trip to California with a girlfriend. I got up early every morning to walk and one morning I looked across the strand, and I saw Mark's shirt that said, "Do You Need Prayer?". I yelled over I will pray for you, if you pray for me. Mark looked over and laughed and said, "Come over and let's pray". My girlfriend and I walked over, and he asked us what we wanted to pray for. I said world peace and Jeanine said, finding husbands. Mark made some kind of funny joke about husbands and then he spoke this beautiful prayer. I thought "wow", I did not expect this. I am going to walk with him someday. I took his card and knew in the back of my mind I wanted to experience walking with him as he prays.

October came and I had an opportunity to take a test in Oceanside. I still had the card Mark handed me, which was very unusual. I emailed him, had my girlfriend make a shirt like his and the rest God put in order.

On October 11th, 2025 I met Mark at the beginning of his walk. He looked at me like I was an alien, I said, "remember me?" I am the one who emailed you, my name is Nica. He continued to look surprised. Later he said the Do You Need Prayer shirt I was wearing surprised him. It was the only uncomfortable moment I had during our walk!

We set off with the cutest dog ever who eats carrots whenever we stopped and talked. People were saying "hello" to us every step of the way it seemed. The first woman we prayed for came chasing after us, it startled me a little as it was all new to me. She asks for prayers for her husband. Mark prayed over her as I stayed silent and just touched her shoulder. His words spread love all over her,

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she looked so happy and seemed so filled with hope afterwards.

We kept walking looking at the sights, while Mark made me laugh with his sarcasm and remarks. I felt like he was my long-lost brother that I had known for years. A gentleman came up to us with his dog and told us he who worked at the Army, Navy academy. He was curious about everything that Mark was doing, then he said, "I could use some prayers for myself and the young boys I work with." And pray Mark did.

We walked further and saw this beautiful woman who was homeless, I couldn't understand why. She was selling jewelry so I bought some to help her. It upset me a little because I really wanted to speak to her to help her get out of her situation. Mark explained that she had been out there for over four years and he prays for her often. He seemed to understand where people were in their life's journey. He said, "They are God's children, and I'm here to give them prayer and comfort on whatever path they were on." It truly is something I have never seen, absolutely no judgement, total love like Jesus. He does not try to fix them, but offers the best gift he can, prayer and love.

We came across a gentleman on a bicycle. He thanked Mark for all the prayers while his wife was sick. He said they really helped and it gave him hope in a very difficult time. He has since lost his wife but he really wanted to show Mark appreciation for his prayers by offering to buy us food or coffee. Mark declined and said he doesn't drink or eat during his walks. The gentleman told us his favorite verse, which was also mine. 1 Thessalonians 5 16-18. Rejoice always, pray

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without ceasing. You could see his love for what Mark had done for him; we talked for quite some time.

Further down, another couple that Mark prayed with were in town. They were visiting their son in college and stopped and asked Mark if he remembered them and of course, he did. This meeting was very enlightening and showed me you do not have to be poor, or in desperation, or ill for prayer. We all need prayer, even if only for a peaceful day. We talked about an amazing song by Third Day called Creed, the belief system of Nicaea and that you can hear Jesus in the quietness. We ended with a beautiful prayer by Mark for the couple's son who turned 21. I secretly added in my son Caleb who turns 21 in December.

I kept getting hungrier and thirsty and thought soon Mark would stop for at least a drink. I no longer could hold back my hunger. I asked Mark if he would mind if I got a water and some food. He said of course and continued smiling and talking with people. I bought a smoothie which was amazing and we continued our walk.

We passed by several restaurants, stopping to look at the beautiful view, waving to people, stopping and praying. We headed to where the seals were. A lady selling plants, said hello, thanked Mark for all he does, and then continued to the seals.

A couple on their bikes stopped us to ask Mark about his shirt and what it is he does. He introduced me as his long lost sister again, I just laughed. They told Mark how much he is needed and how important his prayers are. They took his card and said they wanted to try something similar.

Still hungry, we're putting in the miles. We finally stopped and Brando, who is such a perfect dog, and I got

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some ice cream. Mark just kept on going without a drink or food honoring the fast he does each day.

We began our way back as children stopped to pet Brando, then people would stop us and we (Mark) continued praying. I saw a gentleman on his phone at a table on the beach and I went up and asked him if he would take a picture of us. He looks up and sees Mark, then calls out pastor, pastor. He is so happy to see him. He takes a picture and begins to cry and thanks Mark for all he does. It was a precious moment when Mark hugged him and prayed. He was homeless and Mark reassured him that God loves him more than he could imagine. After giving him a final hug we walked away with tears in our eyes. This was the most emotional meeting of the day filled with prayer and many moments of laughter. I realized at that moment how a small gesture, prayer, kind word or just a listening ear means to people.

We walked, talked and Mark began to bring up a story about a lifeguard who had stopped him and told him he was changing the energy of the strand. Just when he was telling the story two lifeguards came up and said, "Mark, I just want to thank you for making the Strand a better place." To me that was God using his angels to confirm to Mark he is changing the world one prayer at a time. He is bringing light to where darkness was.

I walked 8 miles that day and saw more of Jesus that day than I did in my entire life. I knew when I met Mark I wanted to walk with him. I followed my calling as Mark has done. I have been blessed with an earthly Angel Mark, honored to spend time listening and learning from

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him. Why me? Because I listened to that small voice in the quiet. I was blessed for doing so.

It changed me and gave me a greater love for others, and that we should never judge, but just keep walking and keep praying just like Mark.

We will walk again. Soon.

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### Chapter 12 - People Are Watching

#### Prayer from Up Above

As I continued to walk up the hill going to the harbor, there were contractors working on the condos. I heard a voice yelling, "I need a prayer!" I looked around and on the roof was a construction worker. I yelled back, "What do you need prayer for?" He said his marriage and family. I asked if it was okay if we prayed here and he yelled back, "Yes." So, with me on the ground and him a couple of stories up I prayed. Not sure what the people thought that passed by, but that really didn't matter, because God was being glorified. He thanked me and went back to work.

When I got to the harbor where the fishing boats were a gentleman with his son came up to me and said, "We could use prayer to help us catch some fish." Even though he was saying it jokingly I offered to pray with him and his son. He accepted and another man who was with them joined in. We held hands and asked God for a special day, a day that will bring father and son closer together and that their journey today will bring a catch of fish that would even impress Peter. When we were done, I looked up and there was about thirty people watching us as they were waiting to get on the boat. I smiled saying good morning to everyone and goodbye to my new brothers. I prayed to myself that the three of them would catch more fish than anyone else on the trip and that everyone would remember they were the ones that prayed.

Right after leaving them, I started to tear up and realized how blessed I am. Before Christ when I was suffering from depression I couldn't care less about people and that unfortunately included my family. I was totally self-

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centered, but God has been working on me, He replaced that heart of stone I had with a heart of flesh liked He promised. He has given me a gift to talk to strangers, be a vessel for the Holy Spirit to touch others and to be able to follow His example. It's not just Brando and I, but Jesus walking along side us and I think He is enjoying this time almost as much as we are.

On my way back I met these two lovely ladies. The one was so glad that I came back today because she wanted prayer for her friend. Her friend who was with her had found out that she has colon cancer. As we began to pray two other ladies walked by and when I lifted my head up, they also asked for prayer. I asked them to join us, and I explained that the one lady found out she has cancer. I asked what they would like prayer for and the one told me that her brother just passed away the other day and he was a believer, but she needed comfort. I introduced myself as I always do, and the lady started to cry. Her brother's name was Mark and I said, "God loves you so much that He wanted to reassure you that your brother made it home and you'll get to see him again." We all held hands and prayed and after I was finished praying, one of the ladies took over and prayed for me. So, the five of us were standing on the Strand praying to our loving Father. When they left, I kneeled on a rock next to the road and thanked God for such an awesome opportunity. I wonder what people think when they see others praying. I hope that it might give some comfort to think there is a way, a truth, and a life. This world needs hope so desperately and we'll never find it in this world, but only in Jesus. His children are called to be a light in this dark world and to shine to draw others close. We are called to tell others the source of our

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light and point them to Him. I pray that your light shines so bright that others will have to squint to look at you.

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

*Matthew 5:16*

### **No Accidents**

I've experienced so many miraculous things at the Strand. If you don't believe that God is on the throne or that He isn't interested in your life you're not spending enough time with Him. I was walking to the harbor when I met two sisters in Christ who I've prayed with before. As I was talking with the two ladies a gentleman and two women passed by and he said, "Wow prayer warriors. We can really use prayer. This young lady just lost her husband and brother in a fatal car accident a week ago. They were both believers in Jesus but she really needs peace and comfort to deal with this great loss in her life." I asked the two ladies that I was talking to if they would like to join us in prayer and they agreed immediately. The six of us went before our Father in Heaven and prayed for the young woman and her family. The Holy Spirit spoke a prayer that gave peace to this young lady and assured her she will see her loved ones again. He then gave her a little tour of our forever home, someplace so beautiful and wonderful we can't even imagine it. She hugged me and said, "Thank you I needed to hear that." I said, "It wasn't me but your Father just wanted to comfort His child that He loves." She gave me a hug and they went on their way. My two sisters after wiping away tears from their eyes hugged me and they also left.

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When I got to the harbor there was a lady sitting on a bench. When I approached her, I said “Good morning.” She looked up and said, “I heard you. I was walking past when you were praying for that family. That was a beautiful thing you did.” I said, “I get to walk with God each day and what an honor it is. I’m not sure how much of the prayer you heard as you passed by, but the words weren’t mine but the Holy Spirit speaking through me. God plans my day and has chosen the people He wants to speak with. You and I speaking now is part of His plan.” I was hoping she might have a prayer request, but she only said, “Thank you for talking with me.” “My pleasure,” I said before going on my way.

A lot of people see me as I walk wearing my shirt and my prayer partner Brando at my side. Several have approached me to talk, and others still avoid me. Someone asked me, “Why are you so happy all the time? Every time I see you, you’re smiling.” I said, “It’s not that I’m happy, happiness lasts only for a short time and depends on the circumstances you’re going through. My smile is joy, joy I get only from God and since He never changes neither does my joy. Joy is part of the package when you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

*Galatians 5:22-23*

### **Meeting Ruth**

Yesterday as I was walking back from the harbor there was a young lady in her early twenties standing next to a

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couple of backpacks and a suitcase. As I came up to her, I said, "Good morning." I could tell she was crying. She read my shirt and in a low voice said, "I need prayer." When I asked her what she needed prayer for she said, "I moved from Los Angeles to Oceanside with my boyfriend. My parents warned me about him, but I didn't listen. He decided he didn't want me around any longer and when I was at work he dropped off all my belongings then yelled that he never wanted to see me again." I looked down at her arms and they were black and blue. When she noticed me looking, she said, "I'm not doing drugs he was very abusive." I then noticed she cut herself around the wrists. She looked at me and said, "I didn't know what to do and where to go. I can't go back to my parents because they warned me about him. I don't feel they can forgive me." As I began to pray, she came over and hugged me then put her head on my chest still crying. The Holy Spirit said to her, "You are loved more than you can imagine, you are special in not only God's eyes, but also in your parents, you are created for a purpose, and you need to trust in God. It doesn't matter what other say about you but you have a heavenly Father that loves you more than you know. You are called to live your life a day at a time and whatever has happened in the past is gone and can't be changed so let it go and thank God, He got you through it." It was a long prayer as she continued to cry. After praying I asked her if she had eaten anything. She said, "No I don't get paid for a couple of days and he took the money that I had." I took out my wallet I had sixteen dollars and gave it to her as the Holy Spirit directed me. At first, she didn't want to take it and she asked for my phone number so she could pay me back on Thursday when she gets her check. I told her not to worry about it. Then

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she hugged me for the longest time while she cried. I gave her my contact information and told her if she needed me to call or email. She said, "After praying I feel I should call my parents." I said, "I'm sure that will bless your parents and honor your Heavenly Father." After one last hug I continued my walk.

I took only a few steps when I saw a young man sitting on a bench nearby. I said, "Good morning." His eyes were tearing up and said, "I come here every Monday, and I've seen you several times, but never understood what you were doing. Today I got my answer. It was wonderful to see what you did for that girl. I believe in God but I don't go to church or pray." I explained, "Everything you saw and heard was from God. I'm just blessed to be used by Him as he makes His rounds." We talked for a while as I answered some of the questions he had for me and then I gave him my contact card.

The next day I received an email from him. He wrote saying it looks like my shirts are getting a little worn. My cousin makes T-shirts and he was going to have some new shirts made for me. God will provide.

I won't know what impact I make walking the Strand and harbor, but I do know it blesses God and that is what our lives are supposed to be about. My prayer is that the young girl reconciles with her parents and that the young man wants to know more about his Father. I used to be result driven needing to see a project to the end. God has shown me I'm called to do His will and He'll take care of the rest.

*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

*Philippians 2:13*

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### Praying with Children

Another wonderful day on the Strand. It was as if everyone I passed said good morning and smiled. It wasn't long until a woman in a car stopped and asked me for prayer. She told me she was on her way to work, but was struggling with anxiety and needed some peace. As we came before our Father, He reminded her that as His child she has the Holy Spirit within her and He has filled her with joy.

*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*Romans 15:13*

She smiled and held my hand for a moment and I said, "Remember we live our life only a day at a time. Enjoy this day that God has given you."

As I was coming to the pier there were about 30 children from a Catholic School with two teachers and one of the teachers stopped me and asked for prayer. When I asked her what she needed prayer for, she said, "I'm battling with some things that I know I can't get through without God's help. I really need wisdom, courage and patience in my life." I said, "God is always with you, He tells us He will never leave or forsake us. However, sometimes we focus on the things of this world more than humbling ourselves and coming to our Father for comfort." The two of us came before our Father asking for those things that He has already promised us and all we need to do is trust Him and they would be given. She then gathered all the children in a circle and asked if I would pray for them. It was such an honor and the Holy Spirit had a

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ball. I almost felt like Jesus when He had the children gather around Him. When I was finished, they all thanked me. I pointed up and thanked God for being there for us and went on my way.

Right after that there was a woman standing under the pier with tears in her eyes. She said, "What a wonderful ministry you have." I stopped and talked to her for a while sharing my testimony and how God started this ministry. She told me she was going through some tough times, and having difficulty making it through each day. I said, "Maybe the problem is that you're not living the day, but reliving the thoughts of things in the past or worried about tomorrow. Whatever has happened in the past is gone and you can't change it and only God knows what tomorrow will bring. You're here in this beautiful place on this gorgeous day and not enjoying it. Before you worry look at what God has surrounded you with and all the blessings He has given you. Trust Him, be in the moment and enjoy what your Father gives you." We then went into prayer. The Holy Spirit told her how special she was and that He will never let go, but she needed to keep holding on. After the prayer she hugged me and told me that I was a very special man. I said, "I'm not special but I do serve a very special God and He deserves the best from us."

I talked to several other people that I see on a regular basis and told them how great my day was going. I was going over to the harbor on the bridge and passed two people, one was in a wheelchair. I was a couple hundred feet away when I heard my name and turned around. A couple behind me said, "I think you have some business over there." I went back to the man in the wheelchair and he told me he had Parkinson's.

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He asked for prayer for strength, courage and wisdom. I spent time just talking and loving him. He said, "I feel worthless at times, being stuck in this wheelchair." I said, "I'm enjoying our conversation and I'm encouraged by your strength. I'm sure there are many people that are going through what you are going through and have decided just to stay indoors. Here you are setting an example of hope even coming up to a stranger for prayer. I'm sure there are people you pass during the course of the day that you inspire by the example you set. Don't ever feel worthless, but search for God's hand in the people He puts in your path." He looked up at me and extended his hand and said, "Thank you. I really needed to hear that today." I reached out and held his hand and said, "God knows where you are and He decided to use me to tell you that He loves you and will continue to use you."

By now I could have flown the rest of the way but continued to meet people talking and laughing. There is a woman who roller skates and she always looks like she's enjoying life. Today she stopped and introduced herself. I told her, "Every time I see you, it gives me joy just watching you skate." We must have talked for twenty minutes about our love for Jesus as I walked, and she skated slowly next to me. We stopped and sat on a bench to pray and praise our Lord. The pray was a prayer of thanksgiving and worship to our Father that is so worthy. She gave me a hug and rolled on her way.

Another woman I see does the fishing tours at the harbor. She recently found out she had breast cancer and just had her hair cut short and died pink. I stopped to compliment her new hair style. I don't think she's a believer and I only pray when someone asks for prayer, but that doesn't stop me

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from praying that one day she will ask. So much happened today that I spent over an hour longer than I typically do. I felt so close to my Lord it was as if I could feel his arm on my shoulder. I told Him I hope You had as much fun as I did today.

*No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

*John 15:15*

### **Who's Listening?**

The Strand and harbor were very busy with tourists enjoying the summer at our beautiful beach. There were more people approaching me to say how much they like my shirt and ministry, wanting to learn more about how it started. Today alone I had three people ask if they could pray for me and another three asked if they could take my picture. Every time someone prays for me, or I pray for them there are dozens of people passing by and I wonder what they're thinking. As I was walking up from the Strand towards the harbor someone yelled from the second story balcony of a condo complex. I looked up and there was a gentleman and his family looking down. He told me he was a pastor from Colorado and wanted to know more about my ministry. I had to yell to be heard and vice versa. We shared our testimonies, scripture, and God's blessings we've received. The road I was standing on is one of the main ways to get to the beach so there were plenty of people passing by hearing our conversation. At the end of our conversation he asked if he could pray for me and I said, "Please do." The prayer was

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beautiful loving and encouraging. Afterwards we said our goodbyes and I went on my way.

Shortly after I met a woman who introduced herself as a prayer warrior and asked if she could pray for me. I told her I can always use prayer and we held hands as she prayed. It was an awesome prayer, and with our heads bowed down in prayer you could feel people passing by. After she was finished praying for me, I had the opportunity to share my depression testimony. She told me that her 21-year-old son is suffering from depression and she continues to pray for him. I told her what I thought he was going through and how God guided me out of depression. I gave her my card with my website then told her she should give this to her son and if he ever wanted, he could call me. Then it was my turn to pray for her and her son. Before leaving she gave me this wonderful hug and we thanked each other for the comfort we received.

I made my way to the harbor where there are several small shops and restaurants. I passed a table with about six men at it and one yelled, "Look at that guy's shirt. We need prayer." As I approached the table two other men joined in and they told me they were from a church in Las Vegas. Most of the members were drug addicts, ex-prisoners, or had some other undesirable background. We spent time praising our Lord as I shared my testimony and they shared theirs. I must have been there for at least fifteen minutes while people passed by this strange group of believers. We gathered together in a circle holding hands as I prayed. It was a wonderful prayer of thanksgiving, and how blessed we were that He left the ninety-nine to find His lost sheep. After our worship service we hugged and told each other that we loved them and I went on my way.

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On my way I saw a man that I met over a year ago. I first met him when he was juggling tennis balls at the Strand. One day he missed one and it rolled across the street and I retrieved it for him. He was very grateful and told me he was living in his car, and most people just ignore him. He had a great spirit and there was something special about him that touched my heart. I would see him a few times a week and each time we would greet each other with a hug. A couple of months went by without seeing him and I was getting a little concerned. Finally, one day I saw him at his regular spot on the Strand and we hugged. I asked how he was doing. He said, "I'm going to move to Florida and I was looking for you to let you know. I didn't want you to worry about me." During our conversation we shared how we appreciated each other and hugged as people passed by. Out of all the times we talked he never asked me to pray for him until that day. With my arms around him the Holy Spirit talked to my friend for comfort, save travels and that he would find that special relationship with Christ. When I was finished, he looked up and gave me one of his tennis balls and said, "This is something to remember me by." I said, "I don't think I'll ever forget you and you'll always be in my prayers." Before leaving we shared one last hug and I went on my way.

I then saw a family I met before and now they are introducing me to other family members. We talked as the children made a fuss over Brando. I'm sure many one-time visitors to my church here on the Strand are wondering who this weird old guy is, but that's okay maybe they'll be interested enough to say hi. When I get home to heaven It will be great to hear the stories of some that made it there because they were listening to what God had to say to others.

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*Come and hear, all you who fear God,  
And I will declare what He has done for my soul.*

*Psalm 66:16*

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### Chapter 13–God’s My Day Planner

#### God Directs Our Steps

Yesterday Teri joined me on my walk and a little way down the Strand a man in his late twenties said, “I can sure use some prayer.” I stopped and asked what he needed prayer for and he said, “Peace.” I wasn’t sure what he met but the Holy Spirit did. The Holy Spirit guided me saying, “Peace only comes from God and if we have received Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He gives us the Holy Spirit to live in us. One of the fruits of the spirit is peace. We need to take our focus off the things in this world and spend more time with our Father who loves us. Then we’ll be able to experience that peace and joy He has in store for us.” After praying for him he pulled a necklace out from under his shirt, and it was a beautiful gold cross. He said, “I had it made from my mom’s wedding ring.” I said, “It’s beautiful. It must be a constant reminder that Jesus and your mom are always with you.” He shook my hand then hugged and thanked me. As we were walking Teri said, “That’s amazing. That man was working at the condos we passed, was probably only there for that day and at that moment we were walking by he was getting something out of his truck. God orchestrated that moment so that we could meet, pray, and give him the peace he was praying for.” I told her, “He does that every day and every day I’m amazed.”

We met several other people and prayed with a few more. God knows where we are in our journey and if we look, we can see him in others as He directs our steps.

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*A man's heart plans his way,  
But the LORD directs his steps.*

*Proverbs 16:9*

### **My Divine Appointment**

Oceanside had their annual parade today so I couldn't get to my typical parking space at the end of the Strand but had to park at the harbor. For some reason I feel if I change my routine, I'll miss opportunities to pray with someone, as if that throws off God's schedule. I had a wonderful time on my walk as I talked and prayed with others, but something very special happened to me. As I was walking down the Strand at the parking lot next to the pier there was a young man beginning to take off his wetsuit. He was extremely well built, and I said, "I use to have shirt like yours, but it was bigger and wrinkled." He laughed and told me he loved my shirt and asked about my ministry. Then three of his friends came over and joined us. He told me how awesome Jesus is and how he was saved from a life of drugs and now walks with the Lord. I told him how God started my ministry then shared my depression testimony and my last suicide attempt. He said, "I live about 45 minutes south of Oceanside and I typically surf there. Today I felt lead to go to Oceanside and to pray with a man that walks along the beach. What do you need prayer for?" I said, "That God would continue using me here and for guidance and wisdom." The prayer was wonderful, and it felt like an angel praying over me. Then one of the other young men asked me a strange question, he asked, "Are you the rock of your family?" My first thought was when my children were young how terrible of a father and husband I was, so I said,

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“No.” He then said, “Do you have a son?” I said, “Yes, but I haven’t seen or spoken to him in over twenty years. He wants nothing to do with me.” He asked, “Is he saved?” I said, “I don’t think so.” “Can I pray for your son?” I said, “Please.” The prayer was amazing and hopeful that the Holy Spirit will lead him to the Lord. For the first time I felt at peace and hopeful about my son. Tears were rolling down my face as I looked up and hugged and thanked them all. As I said my goodbyes and walked away, I felt this wonderful feeling go through my body. I thanked my Father for arranging this wonderful meeting and blessing as I continued my walk.

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you watch over you.*

*Psalm 32:8*

### **God’s Doing All of the Work**

The other day on my walk someone asked me how I do what I do every day? I said, “It has very little to do with me. It started fourth of July 2020 when God put on my heart to have these shirts made and to walk along the Strand and harbor. Each day I wake up pray and read the bible. I get my dog, that God has blessed me with, get in the car and head down here to the beach. God has already taken care of my itinerary, who I’ll see, talk to, pray with and all I need to do is show up. All I do is walk down the Strand saying good morning to whoever makes eye contact with me. In between talking to people, I speak to God, so I get to spend my days with the person I love most and since He is always with me there is nothing to fear. Besides that, I get to do that here in

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one of the most beautiful places I know, and it never gets old looking out into the ocean listening to the worship music of the roar of the waves. When someone stops me for prayer, I just stand back and let the Holy Spirit speak to them. God already knows who I'll meet and what they need. God takes care of all the details; I'm just along for the ride and what a wonderful ride it is. Thank you for asking because it reminds me of how unbelievably blessed, I am to be allowed to walk with Him each day." I got in my car with Brando and stopped to thank Him before heading home for another great day. I thought about it for a moment and thought the biggest part I play is that I show up.

*"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*

*Matthew 7:21*

### **Prodigal Son**

I get to speak, pray and talk with people from all over the country and world. Some days I know God is putting someone in my path that really needs Him. Today I had a doctor's appointment and started late. It used to be that those things would aggravate me if I didn't do things according to my schedule, but God is teaching me I'm on His. I walked the Strand and harbor talking and praying for others. When I came to the end of my walk a young man passed me and then doubled back. He asked if I would pray with him, and he appeared very anxious. He was in his mid-twenties and shared, "I was raised in a Christian home but I've lost my way. I know God must be the answer, but I'm too ashamed to

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reach out to Him. Would you pray for me for guidance and for my wife and three-year-old son?” I put my arm around him and began to pray. The Holy Spirit spoke to him saying, “Remember the prodigal son and how he left his father in search of what he hoped to be happiness. The father didn’t stop him from leaving and was patient waiting for his son’s return. When the father saw his son in the distance, he ran to him and when he got there, he embraced him. When his son tried to explain he wasn’t worthy, the father would have nothing to do with it but celebrated his return. Today is that day for you. There is nothing you could do to lose the love of your Father; He’s been with you all along. Don’t focus on the things of this world, but open your eyes to the love of your Father and He will guide you on your journey.” After praying I said, “Today is my twenty fourth anniversary of when I tried to end my life for the sixth time. I was a terrible person and didn’t know my Father and yet He loved me so much He watched over me.” The young man looked at me and said, “That was what I was planning on doing. I felt I couldn’t bear to be here another day and it would be better for my family if I wasn’t.” I said, “I know, the devil would tell me that every day and I believed the father of lies. I believe the devil spends more time tempting those that God wants to use, otherwise why would he try so hard to destroy us. I spent so much time to find happiness in this world but I couldn’t find it and got discouraged. God showed me what I wanted in life was joy, and that I would always find it in His arms.” With tears in his eyes he said, “I want to be a better person, husband and dad, but I look back on all the terrible things that I’ve done and can’t believe that God could use me.” I said, “You know what the best thing is about the past? It’s gone, we can’t change

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anything, but we can be grateful that God has gotten us through it and as far as the future it's in God's hands. Before you do anything else find a quiet place and spend some time with Dad. I know He has some wonderful plans for His kid. He wanted to tell you by using this old sinner to convey His message to you." He hugged and thanked me before he left.

What are the chances that I would be there at that exact time and place to be able to pray with him? The chances are one in One. Like a good Father He always knows where His children are and what they need. I pictured our Father smiling with open arms greeting His son as he returned to Him today.

*for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.*

*Luke 15:24*

### **Suicide Is Not the Answer**

One day I wasn't feeling well at all and wasn't sure if I was going to be able to do my walk, but I remembered times in the past when I wasn't feeling well it was just the enemy distracting me. As I made my journey towards the pier there was a gentleman sitting on a bench and in a low voice said, "I need prayer." He looked depressed and on the verge of tears as he told me how messed up his life was. I felt led to share my depression testimony and my last suicide on April 6, 1998. He broke down and turned away from me for a moment and turned back and said, "That's all I think about is killing myself. I just left the end of the pier where I wanted to jump off and drown." I said, "God loves us so much that it's beyond our comprehension. Most of my life I was just focused on me

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and the things I saw in this world and I thought the only way out was to end my life because I couldn't take it anymore. God didn't want me to throw away the life that He gave me, because He had plans for it and continued to protect me from me. God loves you so much that He sent me to let you know that He is watching over you and has a plan for your life, but to find out what that plan is you are going to need to spend time in prayer and in God's word, be focused on Him and not your problems. I come out every day to pray and God has my day planned out on who He wants me to meet and what He wants me to say. Us meeting here wasn't an accident. Let's come before our Father now and listen to what He has to say." After the prayer he called me an angel and I told him, "I'm far from being an angel, but we do have the same Boss." He hugged me and I gave him my card with my contact information and said, "If you need me just call. You're not in this alone."

After that meeting I was feeling so much better as if Satan gave up for the day. When I got to the harbor there were two ladies sitting watching the sealions. One of the ladies turned around and saw my shirt. She said, "I really like your shirt. Does anyone take you up on your offer?" I said, "Everyday God puts people in my path that He wants to talk to." I don't normally ask people if they want to pray, I wait until they ask me, but this time was an exception and I asked if she wanted prayer. She said, "Yes, we really need prayer." The one younger lady had a cast on her arm and told me that she has cancer, and it was in her breast and moved to her shoulder and arm. God had me pray one of the most loving and compassionate prayers that I ever heard. The lady cried and said, "God must have sent you here for me today." I said,

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“I know He did and wanted you to know that He loves you and is watching over you. Sometime today sit with Him alone and just fall into His loving arms and rest for a moment. There is no greater place to be.”

As I was leaving, I could see why Satan didn't want me to come today. I'm so glad I didn't call in sick.

*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

*James 4:7*

### **Another Divine Appointment**

As I headed down the Strand, I passed a condo complex that has a large, elevated deck in the front overseeing the ocean. As I looked up, there was a woman looking down. I said, “Good morning.” She said, “I love your shirt. We could use prayer.” Then she invited Brando and I up on the deck. She was with a man, who was sitting by a fire pit. They began to ask about my prayer ministry and I shared how God guided me to wear this shirt and walk here praying with people who ask for prayer. I said, “This has been the best time of my life. I meet new people, pray, talk and laugh.” The woman said, “We were married for twenty-one years, then got divorced and are now getting back together again. We need prayer for guidance. Are you married?” I said, “I was married for thirty-two years and that my wife wanted a divorce. I suffered from depression most of my life, I was institutionalized seven times, went through electro shock therapy, diagnosed with manic depression, chemical imbalance, bi-polar disorder and attempted suicide six different times. I put my ex-wife and children through hell.” They both looked at me as if in shock. She said, “I left my

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family because I was going through depression and was hospitalized. My husband was always supporting me, trying to get me help, and he always stayed in contact, but now we're both worried about telling our children that we are getting back together since I abandoned them." She kept going back to the mistakes she made and if she didn't make them this would never have happened. I said, "The best thing about the past is that it's over and doesn't deserve another moment of your time you have in the present. When my wife divorced me, I didn't know what I was supposed to do. I spent a lot of time thinking of things that maybe I should have done and a lot of time worrying about the future. I was starting to fall back in the pit of depression. Then one day when I was at church, God introduced me to the love of my life. Her name is Teri and we've been married twenty years and I can't love anyone more than I love her. God has called me to live a day at a time and only worry about the things that I can change and realize the only thing I can change is me. We spend so much time trying to be that person others want us to be, but we never ask the one who created us what He wants." We talked for about forty-five minutes and ended praying with the Holy Spirit speaking to them, filling their hearts and giving them peace. We hugged and they needed to leave to catch their flight home. I gave them my card and they said they would stay in contact.

Just to let you know I was running a little late for my walk, I looked up the same time the woman looked down as she was leaning on the railing, this was their last day with only an hour left before they had to leave. If you think this might be a coincidence just know the definition for

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coincidence is a miracle God didn't get the credit for. I'm giving Him glory as He continues to direct my journey.

*O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself;  
It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*

*Jeremiah 10:23*

### **I Got Prayer!**

Yesterday I started a little earlier in hopes to beat the rain that was supposed to be coming. Even though I was early God knew I would be right on time. As soon as I went down the stairs to the Strand a young lady was coming my way. She stopped and said, "I saw you yesterday and was hoping you would be here today. I need prayer because I'm suffering with depression and was diagnosed Bipolar." When she talked, you could see she still had faith and hope that God could heal her. After she was finished speaking, I shared my past life dealing with depression being hospitalized, electro shock therapy and my six suicide attempts. She said, "I can't believe that you suffered from depression you always seem so happy." I said, "It's not happiness but joy that I get to experience every day. Happiness comes from what you experience in this world and it's always short lived. If good things happen to you, your happy, but when bad things happen you get depressed and we all experience both of these situations daily. God showed me it didn't matter what my circumstances were because He is always with me. When I would begin feeling anxious, I would say I short prayer to my Father for help and then instead of focusing on my situation I was focused on God. That always brought me joy and He led me through depression a day at a time." We then went to our

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Father in prayer. He told her how much she is loved and He would never leave or forsake her. The Holy Spirit reminded her not to be anxious for nothing but in all things come to Him in prayer. After praying we must have talked for at least thirty minutes, and she looked at the time and told me she had to go, or she'd be late for work. I thought if I came the time I normally do, I would have missed meeting this wonderful young lady. I'm so glad I'm on God's schedule and not mine.

The Holy Spirit booked several other appointments for me and my second appointment was waiting for me just a little further down the Strand. Two young ladies waved to me from across the street and walked over. They both looked familiar and told me that they see me all the time and wanted to finally introduce themselves. They asked about my ministry and the people that I've met. We talked for a while and I told them about my depression ministry and the time a gentleman that was jogging past me came back and asked for prayer. He told me he had stage four cancer and his only thought was to die. At that the one girl began to cry and her friend said, "Her father has stage four cancer, and she is taking care of him." The other girl then said, "It's a privilege to be able to take care of my dad, because he has been so good to me." I thought what a wonderful heart she has and said, "Trials come into our lives and we can decide how we are going to deal with them. We can decide to blame God or trust Him. What you are about to go through will be a testimony to help someone else, someone who doesn't have the kind of faith and love that you have. Just know that you are not going through this alone and He will be with you every step of the way." Then they both asked for prayer and

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we held hands. The Holy Spirit spoke to her assuring her no matter what happens on this earth that she'll always have her dad. After the prayer the three of us hugged and they went on their way.

I just made it to the harbor when a woman stopped me and said, "It's so wonderful to see someone praying for others." We talked for a while and her friend came up and gave me a hug. She said, "I could use prayer. I'm seventy-two and my husband is seventy-six and we are about to open a new business, but everyone keeps telling us we're too old." I asked, "Do you feel God calling you to do it?" Without hesitation she said, "Yes." I told her, "Wouldn't it be better to listen to God than anyone else?" She smiled and said, "That's what I needed to hear." During the prayer the Holy Spirit confirmed what she already knew, that this venture was from Him and that He was going to use it to draw them closer to Him. After praying I said, "Enjoy your journey, I know God will bless you."

I continued on my way when I met a gentleman walking his dog and he said, "I sure could use prayer. My wife passed away a month ago and I'm having a hard time dealing with it." As he talked, he couldn't compose himself any longer and began to cry. He said, "We were married for twenty years and I miss her very much. It's so hard for me to go on." I put my arm around him and said, "I can't imagine the pain of losing someone you love, but how would your life have been if you didn't have her at all?" He looked up at me and said, "It would have been empty and I would have missed all the happiness we had together." I told him, "The time you had with your wonderful wife is something to thank God for. Each day is a step on the journey home, a

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place so beautiful and wonderful we can't even imagine it. Your wife just made it home first. Each day spend time with your Father and ask for strength and wisdom to take another step closer to home." I put my arm back on his shoulder and prayed. The Holy Spirit spoke peace and joy to his heart. After the pray he told me how much she loved the Lord. I said, "That's where your wife is right now, no more pain or sorrow just love. The next time you see her you'll be home too. Just live this life a day at a time knowing one day you'll be with the love of your life and your wife.

*Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

*2 Peter 3:13*

### **Thank God I Forgot My Shirt**

I got down to the Strand today and got out of my car to realize I forgot to put on my Do You Need Prayer shirt. It was going to be at least a half hour delay in my walk, but I needed my shirt. When I got back and went down the stairs to the Strand a gentleman got out of his car. He said, "I was hoping to see you today. I really need prayer. I was a marine and have PTSD, and a terrible drinking problem that is destroying my life. The only chance I have is to give it to God but I'm not sure if God will forgive me." I waited until he was finished and told him, "There was a man, I prayed with a few months ago that said almost the exact same thing. A couple of months later I was asked by a pastor to announce to an acholic recovery group, a class I was teaching entitled Getting Over Depression. When I got up to speak there was a man in the second row that looked very familiar. He stood

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up in front of everyone and said, “This man prayed for me a couple of months ago because I couldn’t stop drinking.” With a smile on his face he said, “I haven’t had a drink since.” I then shared my depression testimony with that Marine and said, “Can you imagine how much you mean to God that He would send this old fart to tell you that He loves you and to no longer live in the past because He has a great future for you?” He then came close and gave me this wonderful hug and said, “Please pray for me.” We went before our Father as the Holy Spirit loved, encouraged and comforted him. He was told whenever you feel tempted to take a drink say a short prayer to your Father asking for the strength to resist that temptation and it would be given to him. I gave him my card and he asked if he could call me, and I told him of course and if he wanted to meet to call me and I would love to talk to him.

I left glorifying and praising God. I got to the harbor where there are benches that face the boats and a small grass area in front of them. I would typically walk on the sidewalk behind the benches, but people and dogs were coming so I walked in front of a bench where a man and woman were sitting. He looked up and read my shirt and said, “We could really use prayer. I’m struggling with PTSD, I have a drinking problem, suffering from depression and I’m destroying our marriage.” I almost laughed with the thought of how God was working out this day. He said, “We were just praying asking God for guidance.” I said, “I bet you didn’t think that God would send this old man to tell you that He was listening to your request.” I told him of the man I just prayed with that had the exact prayer request he had. I also shared the same story about the man whose prayer was

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answered and how I saw him again at a recovery meeting. I then shared about my life without God and how I suffered from depression every day, until the day Jesus crashed into my darkness. He was in awe of how God put us together that day and had so many questions. I was able to tell him what he was going through, by using my past experiences. I stayed there for almost thirty minutes as I shared the lessons that God had taught me on my journey. I gave him my card and he also asked if he could call me and if we could meet the following week. I said, “I would love to meet just give me a call with a time and date.” The three of us prayed together as the Holy Spirit moved me out of the way loving and comforting this couple. As we finished praying, she looked up with tears in her eyes and said, “Thank you.” I said, “This has nothing to do with me. God uses me as His empty vessel to talk to His children. It’s His way of showing you how much you mean to Him.” The three of us gathered together to hug and glorify God before I went on my way.

I would never have thought forgetting my shirt that day was going to be part of His divine plan.

*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,*

*Ephesians 3:20*

### **A Prayer to Help Others**

God continues to be my day planner as he introduces me to others at just the right time and place. I was walking back to the Strand from the harbor and passed a young couple and said, “Good morning.” As I was walking away, I heard, “We can use prayer. This is amazing we were just

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praying when we saw your shirt and had to stop you. Would you please pray for us.” I said, “Of course. What would you like prayer for?” The gentleman said, “We have a big decision to make and we need God’s guidance and wisdom to make sure that this is His will.” I love praying for others because I get the privilege of hearing what the Holy Spirit is going to say to them. During the prayer they were told if anyone lacks wisdom just ask and it will be given to them, but they need to believe and not doubt. After praying they said, “We can’t believe you are here at the moment we were asking God for direction.” I said, “Each day God has my day planned and I meet people according to His schedule.” I then shared my testimony and struggle with depression and how God guided me to do my depression ministry. After sharing with the young couple, they looked at each other in awe. He told me, “The reason we were praying was that I’m a marine on base and was asking for guidance on how to start some type of ministry to help soldiers deal with depression. I know more soldiers who have died from suicide then war and I want to help.” We continued to talk and we thanked God for his love and faithfulness. I gave them my card and told them I was available to help in any way. They both thanked me and gave me a hug before continuing their walk.

I can’t explain how much joy God has given me by doing this ministry and it all started from a simple prayer asking God what He wanted me to do with the time He has given me. His answer was a simple T-shirt. God loves us all the same it doesn’t matter what we do or don’t do as long as we have received His son as Lord and savior of our life. He wants us all to have this fabulous joy that only comes from Him, but we need to come to Him and ask what He wants us

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to do with this life He has blessed us with. He has planned our lives from the beginning and we need to allow Him to guide us.

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;  
Before you were born I sanctified you;  
I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”*

*Jeremiah 1:5*

### **What Are the Chances?**

As I was walking at the Strand I looked up and coming towards me was a young woman and her husband. She was crying and her face was in anguish as she came up to me saying, “We hoped you would be here.” Then she gave me a hug. My heart went out to her and asked, “What do you need prayer for?” She said, “We’ve seen you before when we run at the beach and was hoping we would meet you today. I need prayer for my best friend who is suffering from cancer and as the doctors were treating her found a brain tumor. After coming out of surgery, she can’t talk or walk. She really is a special person and she loves the Lord so much. I can’t understand why this is happening to her.” I said, “It’s great that she loves the Lord, but I know He loves her so much more. We aren’t called to understand God’s reason, but by faith trust Him.” She told me her friend’s name was Elisabeth and the three of us held each other as we prayed. The prayer was special saying we are called to trust God. If it is His will Elisabeth will be miraculously healed and this will be a testimony to glorify God or if our Father feels she may have suffered enough that she would be with her Father forever no more pain or sorrow. I could feel the Holy Spirit

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there in a special way, knowing God was working in both Elisabeth's life and in the lives of this wonderful couple. After praying she looked at peace and they both thanked me as I told them, "This has nothing to do with me, God just wanted to reassure you that He knows what is happening and will take care of His children." We then hugged for a moment before they continued their jogging.

As I walked back to the harbor that day, I thought of how God had to work out my schedule to meet that couple when I did. I continued to pray for Elisabeth, and asked Him to comfort His daughter. Then I met a friend I've made on my walks that lives on the Strand. He looked very excited to see me even though we just met an hour or so earlier. He said, "I was going to email you later but was hoping to see you again today. A strange thing happened as I was walking; I overheard a couple while they were running past me saying we hope we see the man that prays. I stopped them and told them that I saw you on the Strand. They thanked me and headed that way. What are the chances that I would be passing by at the same time they said it and that I could even hear what they were saying." I said, "I did meet up with them and they needed prayer for a close friend who is suffering in the hospital. Things like this happen to me almost every day. It's God's way of showing us He is always there loving His children." Still in unbelief he hugged me and went on his way. As I headed to my car, I started to cry knowing how God had orchestrated my day and knew if He went through those lengths to make this happen, He was planning on answering prayers. I look forward to seeing that couple again and hearing a wonderful praise report on how God hears the prayers of His children.

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*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." <sup>6</sup> So we may boldly say:*

*"The LORD is my helper;  
I will not fear.  
What can man do to me?"*

*Hebrews 13:5-6*

### **It's Not Time to Go Yet**

What a beautiful day at the Strand. Something very special happened to me today. As I was putting Brando in the car, I heard someone yell, "Prayer Guy!" It was a lady and she looked familiar. She said, "You're the man who prayed for me over a year ago. Do you remember? I was in the worst place in my life. I have five children and just lost my job, was about to be kicked out of my apartment and didn't know where to turn. What I didn't tell you that day was I was planning on ending my life, but it seemed God had other plans. You shared your testimony about the struggles with depression and your suicide attempts. When you prayed over me it was comforting and gave me hope. Before I left that day, we hugged, which I so desperately needed. I thanked God that He brought us together that day and knew He was watching over me. Since then, I moved to Washington and I'm currently working at Boeing in manufacturing and it's a great job. We have a wonderful home and my kids are doing great. God made sure I was going to be around to experience His blessings." As she spoke, she couldn't stop smiling. By now tears were rolling down my face and I just reached out and hugged her. We spent a few moments praising God for His love, protection

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and mercy. She then said, “I’m just visiting some friends this week and I’m going to be leaving tomorrow. Will you pray with me for a closer walk with Jesus.” I said, “This will definitely be an answered prayer since this is what He wants from all His children.” After praying we said our goodbyes and I went back to my car almost not believing what just happened. So, God worked it out that we would be parked in the same parking lot, at the same time, she would remember me, it was almost at the same spot that we prayed over a year earlier and that she would be visiting that day. As I sat there thanking my Father, I could feel Him smiling, knowing this was His gift for me today. Dad loves it when His kids get together to thank Him.

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*

*1 John 4:7*

### **Saying Goodbye to an Old Friend**

I received a call from a brother I see at the Strand and he asked if I could come to his house the next day because they have to put their dog to sleep and wanted me to say a prayer to comfort his family. I was honored at the request and said, “Yes.” They were having the vet come to their house to give the injection and asked if I could be there by 11:00. I knew I had to make my walk shorter to get there on time. It was an unusual day because so many people stopped and wanted to talk. Brando and I only made it to the end of the Strand until I decided we needed to turn around or we’ll be late. I typically walk a little over seven miles and this walk would be less than three, but God had another errand for me.

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On the way back I passed a condo complex where there were two teenage girls on a second-floor balcony yelling to get my attention. I was across the street so I crossed over and stood under the balcony so I could hear. They asked all kinds of questions about my ministry and I was more than happy to answer them. The mother was standing in the doorway next to them listening. One of the girls said, "We saw you pass by but it was too late to call out and we were praying we would see you on the way back." Typically, that would not have happened, but today the Holy Spirit put this stop on my schedule. The one girl said, "I need prayer." I asked what she needed prayer for and she said, "I'm suffering from anxiety and depression." I laughed to myself knowing God arranged our meeting. I started to share my depression ministry and how I suffered from depression most of my life. As I was talking the one girl looked up my website to see the miracle God was working in their lives. I said, "I felt my life was worthless and if you have something worthless you throw it away. The last time I tried to throw away my life I told God that He made a mistake in making me. When I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior, He has shown me that He doesn't make mistakes." They asked if they should come down to pray. I told them if they would like I could pray for them where they were standing. The prayer was a little louder than normal so they could hear. The Holy Spirit spoke to them saying, "You are loved beyond anything that you can imagine. God has a purpose for your life and He has given you the gifts, abilities and passion to fulfill that purpose. When you wake up each morning and look in the mirror, see the beautiful child that God sees. Take a moment to speak to Him and feel His love for you before you start your day." By

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now the two young girls were crying and the mother with tears in her eyes mouthed the words, "Thank you." I told them it was a privilege meeting them and went on my way.

I hurried back to my car so I would make it on time to help my friend's family say goodbye to their beloved pet. When I made it to the house the family was out in their yard waiting for me. They brought their old friend out and we all sat on a blanket in the grass. Before praying I said, "God knows that this is painful time but we need to stop and think of the blessings this gift of God has been through the years. Take a moment and think of a specific time that happened with your friend that brought you joy. It's time for your friend to go, but God loves you so much you get to keep those precious memories forever." I got up to leave which was a job since I was lying on the floor. I hugged everyone goodbye while the veterinarian waited for me to leave.

Sometimes I wonder why God searched so hard for this lost sheep, but days like this I can understand why. He knows me better than I know myself.

*O LORD, You have searched me and known me.*

*<sup>2</sup> You know my sitting down and my rising up;  
You understand my thought afar off.*

*<sup>3</sup> You comprehend my path and my lying down,  
And are acquainted with all my ways.*

*Psalm 139:1-3*

### **God's Rain**

I was questioning if I should go for my walk at the Strand since the weather service was calling for rain. Just the day before I got caught in the rain when I was at the

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harbor and by the time I got to my car Brando and I were soaked. I prayed for guidance and felt I was supposed to go. When I arrived, it was cloudy but not raining yet. As I walked, I only saw a few people taking the risk of being out. I got to the pier where two young ladies were jogging and I said good morning as they passed. They came back and told me how much they liked my shirt. The one young lady said, “We’re from Arizona on spring break and we attend a Christian school. We were just talking about evangelizing when we saw your shirt and if you don’t mind, we have some questions for you.” They asked how my ministry started. I said, “I got laid off of my job because of COVID and was working around the house one day and stopped to pray. I asked God what He would like me to do with this time He has given me. That night in a dream I saw this shirt. It appeared to be so real that I could have put it on. The next morning, I shared my dream with my wife and she told me the vision must be from God. I thought for a moment how weird that would be to wear a shirt like that in public. What if someone actually asked me for prayer? During the week that shirt was all I could think of and finally I told God okay I’m going to get these shirts made but where am I supposed to walk, since almost everywhere was closed because of COVID. I was directed to come down to the Strand. My first day was July 4th 2020 and I’ve prayed for thousands of people since then.” I wanted to be mindful of the time I was taking from them, but they seemed very excited to hear more of my story. I then shared my depression testimony and how God uses it every day on my walks to comfort others. After talking for about twenty minutes they asked, “Would you pray for us that

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God will guide us on our journey?” I said, “This will be answered prayer since you’re asking for God’s will in your life.” I stepped out of the way and the Holy Spirit spoke to these young ladies with encouragement, love and guidance. It might have been one of the longest prayers I prayed as the Holy Spirit was directing me what to say. After praying the Holy Spirit continued to speak through me telling them that God will never leave them or forsake them, but they will have their trials and to stay focused on the Lord. There were so many things that continued to come out of my mouth I didn’t know how to stop. I would stop occasionally to tell them I didn’t want to take up too much of their time, but each time they told me how much they were enjoying spending time with me and encouraged me to go on. When I was finally done talking the one girl asked if she could take a picture with me. She stood close to me and put her arm around me and I put my arm around her as we faced her friend who took the picture. I said, “Do you want to have some fun with your parents? Send them the picture and say you found a new boyfriend in California.” They both laughed and thanked me for the time I spent with them. I gave them my card with the website and they said they’ll check it out when they get back to their room.

I thought as I left that’s why God got me to the beach today, but just a little further past the pier a man came up to me and said, “I was praying you would be here today. I don’t know if you remember me, we met last year. My name is Tim and I’m from Canada. I’m part of a group that oversees and helps chaplains. The president of the group is resigning and I’ve been asked to replace him, but I’m not sure that is what God is calling me to do.” Immediately I

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said, “Are you unsure or afraid of taking on this challenge? I could understand you would be it sounds like a great responsibility and would take a lot of your time, but do you feel God has a greater calling for your life than this?” He looked surprised at my candor and so was I. We then went to our Father in prayer. It was wonderful how the Holy Spirit took over, reminding him of all the gifts God has given him and that he isn’t in this situation by chance. The prayer was closed by telling him how much he is loved and would be doing it with the guidance of the Holy Spirit if he decides to do it. When the prayer was over, he had tears in his eyes and hugged me. He told me he felt the presence of the spirit and thanked me and now knew why God put me on his heart.

As I continued walking it began to rain. I headed back to my car which was about a mile away. By the time I got there Brando and I were soaked again. I got Brando in the car and if you haven’t experienced the aroma of a wet dog, it’s unique and disgusting. I sat there for a moment thanking God for the opportunity He had given me. I thought to myself this isn’t rain, but Holy Water.

*Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”*

*Acts 14:17*

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### God Guides Us to Help Others

The other day I had a meeting with a group of pastors at a local restaurant. The meeting was at noon which meant I had to shorten my walk to get there in time. I came around the corner of a building at the harbor and there stood a tall young man. He looked at me in disbelief and said, "I've seen you before but wasn't planning on running into you. I need prayer. I'm from Sacramento and was on staff at two different churches. I'm married and I have a daughter and a baby boy. I left working at the churches and now I'm doing sales which pays pretty good. I guess I need prayer for guidance I've been feeling lost lately." As I looked up at him it seemed as if there was more, he wanted to say but didn't. He was so tall I had to reach up to touch his shoulder as we prayed. The Holy Spirit arranged our meeting and began to speak to His son. He told him that he was created for a purpose and that he has all the gifts and abilities he needs to accomplish that purpose. He was given a passion for doing God's will which should not be ignored. We prayed for wisdom which God tells us He will give us abundantly but we must believe to receive it. He was reminded that the Holy Spirit lives in him and that he already has the fruit of the spirit which includes peace, joy and patience. After praying he asked how my ministry began. I shared that one day I asked God to show me how He wanted to use the time He gave me and then the vision of the shirt. I then shared my testimony on my life with depression and my six suicide attempts. After I said that he began to shake and said, "That's why I came out here today. I don't want to live anymore. Life has become so hard." I said, "Do you think this is a coincidence we met right now? I normally would not

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be at this point in my walk and we would never have met. God loves you so much He wanted to talk to you today. The thoughts of ending your life are from the enemy, because he knows that God going to use you in a way to bring others to Him. You've been walking around only thinking of the negative things that the devil has put on your mind, not living in the present. God has called us to live this precious life He has given us just a day at a time. Whatever has happened in the past is gone and just another reason to praise God that He got us through those trials. God holds the future and we should not think of the things that might happen but trust in our Lord that His will be done. If you get distracted away from God's grace lift up a short prayer so your focus will be back on him then think of the blessings God has given you in your life. You can't be depressed and grateful at the same time." I then shared other times in my life how God was always there even though I didn't see Him at the time. The young man began crying and stooped over to hug me. As I held him, I whispered in his ear, "He loves you so much and knows what you are going through. Don't push Him away, but draw closer to Him. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Allow Him to strengthen you." When he stood back up, I gave him my card and told him to go through my website and to call me whenever he wants. He said, "I've been hiding my feelings and never told anyone how I felt. I can't believe that I shared all this with you." I said, "You didn't only share it with me because when two or more are gathered there He is. He's always with you and you can talk to Him whenever you want." With a wonderful smile on his face, he thanked me and I went on my way.

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The Holy Spirit is our helper and guide and if we allow Him to do that, He will guide us through the difficult times and bless us with some wonderful moments.

We'll never have a ministry that doesn't involve others so look at who God surrounds you with and ask Him, "How can I help?"

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

*John 14:26*

## Stories From the Strand

### Chapter 14-Making a Difference for Christ

#### I'm Not Worthy

This morning another young man, who I've been talking and praying with from the beginning of my ministry, stopped me. There is something very special about this young man and I always enjoy talking to him. He would stop for prayer when he was struggling with different issues regarding his faith and life. I haven't seen him for a while and he came up to me today and said, "I was hoping you would be here this morning. I just graduated and I'll be moving to Las Vegas for a job and I wanted you to know how much you've meant to him. There were times I wasn't sure if I would make it, but then there you were to talk and pray with. I just want to thank you for being there for me." He gave me a huge hug and then turned to Teri and gave her a hug. He told me he still has my card and would keep in contact then hugged me one more time and left. As I walked away, I tried to compose myself with little success.

As Teri and I were going over the bridge to the harbor a man stopped and looked in awe when he saw me. He didn't look familiar, but I just thought I must have forgotten. He introduced himself and said, "This is a miracle, I'm from Arizona and just met some people I knew, and they prayed for me, then I passed someone reading a Bible and now I run into a man wearing a shirt that says Do You Need Prayer." As he looked at me in disbelief, he went on to say, "I'm a pastor, and my church is in Arizona. I've been struggling whether I should continue in ministry. I've been suffering from bouts of depression and I don't feel like I'm making a difference." I told him you're not going to believe this then shared my

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testimony on depression. He asked me to pray whatever God puts on my heart. Knowing this encounter was from God I just stood back and allowed the Holy Spirit to talk and build up his child. The Holy Spirit said, “God is watching over our lives and knows everything that is happening and what will happen. Today was planned to let you know that you’re loved and not to let the enemy distract you and to stay on the path God has put you on.” After praying we cried and hugged. He told me he was here for only two more days and hoped to see me again before he goes. I gave him my card with my contact information. As Teri and I walked on I told her I’m not worthy of doing this, why would God use someone like me to help others? Teri in her compassionate and encouraging way says the bible says that God uses the foolish things of this world. I know that as long as I have my beautiful wife beside me, I will never suffer the arrogance or pride.

*Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

*1 Peter 5:6*

### **My Brother’s Prayer Ministry**

I love this journey I’m on as I walk the Strand and harbor each day. God continues to put wonderful people in my life and the beautiful view of the ocean never gets old. One day as I was starting my walk I met a brother in Christ. He asked about my ministry and I shared how God called me to have the shirts made and to walk here at the Strand. I also told him of my depression ministry and how God saved me. He said, “I need prayer. I have bone cancer in my jaw and the doctor needs to replace some of the bone with bone from my

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leg. I'm really nervous and stressed out." I said, "Yeh, I think I would be a little freaked out too." We went before our Father as the Holy Spirit comforted and loved him. After praying I said, "God has more work for you to do and this is just part of your journey. Keep your eyes open to the people God puts in your path and the opportunities He gives you to make a difference in their lives."

I would see him often and he would be in the same place staring out into the ocean and explained that he was a surfer and was going to miss it while he was healing. Each time I saw him, we would pray for success of the surgery, a quick healing and reminded him that he wasn't alone on his journey.

A few weeks went by and when he saw me, he flagged me down. He said, "My wife and I went out to dinner with another couple last night. The wife was raised both Catholic and Jewish and her husband wasn't religious at all. I've been speaking to them about Christianity, but they aren't interested. During our conversation the woman asked if I knew the guy who prays for people at the beach. I smiled and said, "Yes, his name is Mark. They told me that they've talked to you before and even asked for prayer. She said, There was something special as he shared his love for God with us. He didn't seem religious at all. It made us both draw a little closer to understanding God's love. We had a wonderful night as my wife and I also shared our love for our Lord." After he was finished with his story I tried to refrain from crying, but with little luck. He hugged me and said, "I just wanted you to know that you're making a difference."

As the surgery date was getting close, he asked, "Can I take a selfie with you? Your ministry has encouraged me and

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I set up a Facebook page for people who need prayer and this picture was going to be my profile picture. I have it set up that people can message me with their request. I just wanted you to know your ministry inspired me to do this.” After taking the picture, I prayed again for the success of his surgery and continued my walk.

A couple of months went by before I saw my brother again. His face was still swollen from the operation, but he was in good spirits. He said, “Our prayers were answered and everything went well, but it would be a few months before I would be able to surf again. Oh, an update on my prayer page. I can’t believe all of the people I’ve had the honor to pray with and the joy it brings me.” I told him, “I know what you mean. There’s nothing better than being in God’s will.”

I continue to see my brother and he is completely healed and if you saw him, you wouldn’t have known what he went through. He’s back surfing and giving all the glory to God using the trial he went through and his new ministry praying for others. So, the tables have turned and I can say that my brother inspires me and I will continue to fulfill the journey God has set for me.

*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,*

*Hebrews 10:24*

### **My Greatest Compliment**

What a beautiful day at the Strand and harbor. Unfortunately for the surfers the ocean was calm and with the sunlight glistened off the water from a distance it looked like snow. Almost everyone I saw said, “Good morning or hi

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Mark.” As I approached the pier, people were looking out towards the ocean to watch dolphins playing and jumping out of the water and I took a moment to enjoy the spectacle. As I continued walking, Brando and I stopped at this coffee shop where they have a bowl of water for dogs. I said hello to a couple who was sitting there and then behind me came a gentleman I also knew, and he gave me a hug, then another couple came up and we talked, then another and another. It was almost like being in a reception line at a wedding as the people went by. When I ran out of people to greet, I headed to the harbor. I met a family from Seattle who was vacationing here. They told me they loved my shirt, while the kids made a fuss over Brando. They asked about my ministry and commented how wonderful it would be to live here. The woman said, “How could you be unhappy with this unbelievable view and great weather?” I said, “I’ve learned that it isn’t what you see, but what you focus on. When you focus on this world and the troubles in it you can fall into a trap of despair even though you’re walking along this beautiful beach.” The man nodded and said, “That’s for sure.” I shared my history of suffering from depression and how my life was just focused on me which caused misery for those that cared for me. I then said, “God has taught me it’s a day at a time and instead of seeing the troubles that surround me, I focus on all the blessings I’ve been given and the situations He has gotten me through. I’ve also learned to only be concerned about the things I can change then I realize the only thing I can change is me. So now I spend each day trying to be a better man for my Lord.” They thanked me for sharing and asked for prayer for their family and to help them live a better life for God.

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I talked to several other people and I was having a wonderful time. A man that I've seen before but never talked to, stopped me to thank me for doing what I'm doing. I said, "This journey God has me on has been the best part of my life." He wanted to know more about my testimony. I took the time to tell him how God started me on this journey and then shared my depression testimony, that on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1998 I tried to end my life for the sixth time. I shared in detail what happened that day and that I shouldn't be here at all, but instead God has given me this blessed life. As I thought about it, I got choked up and looked at him and said, "I really love Him." He looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, "I believe the people you talk to love Him more just by listening to you." As I continued my walk all I could think about was what that wonderful brother said and that it was the greatest compliment I had ever received. Most of my life I couldn't love anyone, including my family. I hated myself and all I wanted to do was escape the terrible life that I created for me. Jesus loved me too much and knew there was this wonderful plan for my life and stayed by my side. He continued to work in me showing me the path that I was destined to be on, a path of love and joy that it overflows to others.

*And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you,*

*1 Thessalonians 3:12*

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### God's Representatives

There's a gentleman who I see often. I always greet him and when I say have a blessed day his response is "I'm going to have a great day." This man has only one leg and I've wondered if he was homeless. One day he stopped me and told me he wanted to pray. I noticed his leg and arms had open sores and Brando tried to lick them. He said, "I would like prayer for my friends and family that are still here. I've lost so many people over the years, some I don't think were saved. I don't think I have much longer before I go home to the Lord and I'm asking God to watch over those that are still here, that they will know Jesus. He stood up on his one leg and I put my arm around him to support and love my brother. As always, the Holy Spirit stepped in to talk to him with love and peace. He told him that his job is not over and that he has been called to be that light that would lead those friends and family members to God's saving grace. Then the Holy Spirit gave him a sneak peek of our forever home. After praying I helped him sit back down in his wheelchair. He said, "I have a wonderful home that God has blessed me with and He has taken carer of my needs, but there is something so special about this place and I try to spend as much time as I can here." I said, "I know what you mean. I love it here also." I bent over and gave him a hug and told him to keep shining that light. He looked up and said, "That goes for you too."

As I was walking down the Strand greeting people a gentleman driving in his car yelled out his window, "I can really use prayer." I asked him to pull off to the side of the road, so not to block traffic. In the car was a young man, maybe twenty and he introduced him as his son's best friend. While still in his car he said, "They brought my son back to

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life twice now and I don't know if he was going to make it this time." He asked if he could come out of the car, and I told him that I would prefer that. As soon as he got out of the car, he hugged me and began to cry. I held him in my arms and began to pray. The Holy Spirit took over and comforted him as I was holding him. I'm not sure how long I held him and prayed, but when we were finished, he took a step back and looked at my shirt again and just said, "Why! Why would you be here at this time wearing that shirt?" I said, "God does this almost every day. God puts me where He wants me to be so that He can speak to his children. Today He just wanted to show you that He loves you and knows exactly where you're at and that He will never leave or forsake you." He hugged me again and thanked me and got into his car. I looked over to his son's friend and with tears in his eyes he also thanked me. When he pulled away, I found a place to sit and began to cry with Brando sitting close by. I find it hard to believe that God chose me to be His representative. My favorite author is Max Lucado and in one of his books he states, "Sometimes we need Jesus with flesh on." When we go out to help, share the precious time God gave us, comfort, pray and love someone we are God's representatives, Jesus with flesh on. I thought about that and laughed to myself thinking God could have found a better suit to wear.

*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

*Ephesians 5:1-2*

### **Where Are You Going?**

Walking back to the pier an elderly gentleman stopped me. I've seen him walking before and I always greet him, but today he had a question for me. He asked, "Does anyone take you up on your offer to pray?" I said, "Since God had me start coming out here to pray, I've prayed for thousands of people." He said, "I never drank or smoked, but I'm not a religious man." I told him, "Jesus wasn't a very religious man, and neither am I." I shared with him my history of depression and my suicide attempts. I then said, "I should be dead and burning in hell instead of enjoying the best years of my life." When I said hell, he said to me again that he wasn't a religious man. I said, "What I have with Jesus isn't a religion but a relationship." He seemed to get nervous and told me he had to go. I told him it was nice talking to him and to have a blessed day. Since then, I wondered if I should have said more about what we need to do to be saved. I pray I'll see him again and continue our conversation and help bring him home.

A few days went by and I met up with him again. I saw him across the street and he waved and crossed over. He wanted me to know about his wife of sixty-four years who passed away three years ago. Her name was Rita, and she was the love of his life. He told me about all the wonderful qualities she had and how much he loved her. I asked, "Did she believe in Jesus?" He said, "She was a Catholic girl, went to Catholic school when she was young and always went to church. One of my regrets is that I feel I took her away from her faith since I didn't want to go to church." I said, "Like I said before Jesus isn't a religion and if she accepted Him as her Lord and Savior, which I believe she did, nothing could

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take her from Him. I believe that she's in heaven with her first love, Jesus. Do you believe you are going to heaven?" He shrugged his shoulders and said, "There's no way that I'm going to heaven." I finally introduced myself and he told me his name was Douglas. I explained, "All you need to do is receive Jesus into your heart, repent from your sins, believe that He died and was raised again to life for you and that He wants you with Him. Wouldn't you want to see Rita again?" He shook his head and told me he had to go, and I told him that I look forward to seeing him again. I never did see him again and I think about him on my walks wondering if he made that decision to follow Christ.

I live in a senior community and a month doesn't go by that I don't hear of someone who passed away. My neighbor next door died a couple of weeks ago and I was blessed to pray with him before he went. There was another neighbor, Bob who lived just down the road, he passed away a week ago. Bob would go to an area we called the dog park and even though he didn't have a dog he liked talking to the people who did. Every time I saw him, we would talk about almost anything. Bob was diagnosed with cancer and it couldn't be treated. A neighbor, Diane invited him to stay with her so she could take care of him. One day I went to her house and asked how Bob was doing and if he was up to some company. I went into his room and sat next to him. As he was lying in his bed we were talking about God and how He changed our lives. He asked if I would pray with him and I told him I would be honored. The Holy Spirit took over to tell Bob how much he is loved by God, comforted him and gave him peace. I made it a point to go and visit Bob a couple times a week to talk and pray with him. One day Diane walked me to the door after praying with Bob

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she told me how much my prayers meant to him. Bob went home to the Lord a few days later and I never went back to Diane's house again.

This morning, I found out Diane had died. I never had the privilege to pray for her. I don't believe she knew Jesus, but I can only hope she might have been listening in and made the most important decision a person can make.

I go to the harbor each day and there are memorial benches and I've been noticing the dates when that person was born and so many of them were born after me. I've seen obituaries of people that I've gone to school with and celebrities that have died that are younger than me. Each day is a step closer to being home and I'm closer than most. I don't fear death and look forward to the day that my Lord calls me home. God has put on my heart that most people aren't going to make that journey home and in some cases the reason will be that no one told them what lies ahead of them. We are all headed for either damnation or celebration. Let's invite as many as we can to the party.

*“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. <sup>14</sup> Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

*Matthew 7:13-14*

### **How To Evangelize**

Even though I do the same thing every day, each day brings a new experience. For example, I have never gone a day without meeting someone I never met before. The other day I met a beautiful sixteen-year-old girl with her mother

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and three friends. She was very interested in my ministry and asked several questions including how my ministry started. I said, “My prayer ministry was started when I got laid off from my job because of COVID. I was sixty-eight and was planning on retiring when I was seventy, but God had other plans for me. One day when I was working in my yard I stopped and prayed, God show me how You want me to use this time that you’ve blessed me with. That night in a dream I saw this shirt that I wear each day. The next morning, I told my wife about my dream and she told me it must be from God. I thought about it for a moment and thought how weird would that be to wear a shirt like that out in public, what if someone actually asked me for prayer what would I do then? God continued to show me that shirt until after a week I told God alright I’ll get the shirts made, but where am I supposed to go every place is closed because of COVID. It was then put on my heart to walk the Strand, someplace I never walked before. So, July 4<sup>th</sup> 2020 was my first day walking and praying on the Strand.” Finally, after the girl asked a dozen more questions her mother said, “Ask him what you really want to ask.” She said, “How do you think I should evangelize?” I said, “You will do it in a unique way, as you are unique, using the special gifts and talents God has given you. The person you need to be talking to is God and maybe ask the same question I did, Lord, what would you like me to do with this time you have blessed me with? To know God’s will there are things that all of God’s children need to be doing. We need to be in His word every day, have a special time set aside for prayer, fellowship with your brothers and sisters and be true to what God reveals to you. When I started my journey God placed on my heart I wasn’t there to judge, criticize or argue, but to only love

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others and that is also true for all of His children. We are all called to be a light in this dark place and we shine by the way we treat others God puts in our path. Doing ministry with other believers will keep you grounded and will give you a joy that will strengthen you and others around you. You are not called to be what others think you should be, but what God has already ordained you to be. No matter what you do God can't love you anymore then He loves you now, but serving Him is a way of showing your love for Him. One thing I know He is not going to give you a ministry that doesn't involve reaching out to others." Then her mom and three friends gathered together to pray. The Holy Spirit took over and affirmed that each one of us is called to fulfill a purpose and that purpose will be fulfilled just a day at a time and to live in that moment. After the prayer we all hugged and that young lady thanked me. I said, "Each day God puts someone in my path that He wants to talk to. Today He wanted to talk to you." I then continued on my walk and thought how that young girl must have blessed God. Like a proud dad He must have been looking down saying, "That's my girl."

Thinking about what just happened helped me see how God has orchestrated my life to be where I am now. If I didn't go through the many years of suffering from depression, I wouldn't be as useful to those that are suffering from it now. Everything had to happen exactly the way it did in my life or I wouldn't be in California, now retired allowing me to spend each day at the Strand and God even arranged to make Brando my prayer partner, which allows me to meet more people. He knew all this before He formed me in my mother's womb. It doesn't matter how you evangelize but it does honor our Father so ask Him what He wants you to do today.

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*Oh, give thanks to the LORD!  
Call upon His name;  
Make known His deeds among the peoples!*

*Psalm 105:1*

## Stories From the Strand

### Chapter 15-Homeless for Now

#### Homeless on the Strand

There hasn't been a day that I haven't seen someone that lives on the Strand with no place to go. When asked for prayer many ask for direction, protection, or hope but most don't even look up as I pass by.

There have been some strange encounters. A few days ago, someone wearing one shoe with a towel on his head stopped me for prayer. He told me his father was murdered the day before. I asked him his name and he told me King David and he kneeled before me and asked that I put my hand on his head when I prayed. So, I prayed for him with my hand on his royal head. Afterwards I wondered what people must have thought as they passed by. On another day someone else stopped me and asked for prayer. I asked, "What do you need prayer for?" He told me for a sword and a scepter. I prayed, "God if it's Your will would You grant my brother a sword and a scepter, but most of all may he know the King of Heaven." I hugged him and went on my way.

As I arrived one day I went down the stairs to go onto the Strand and there were four men that appeared to be homeless. I said, "Good morning." Then one of the men said, "I like your shirt would you pray with me?" I told him I would love to, and he came up to me and just hugged me. I held him in my arms while I prayed, and the prayer was so beautiful it was from a loving Father to His son that He loves. As I was praying, he was crying on my shoulder holding me even tighter. I finished praying and he didn't want to let go. When we finally separated, and he thanked me while the other three men just looked on.

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I've talked and prayed with several of the homeless at the strand. Some have become friends and look forward to seeing me on my walks. I think I've become that opportunity to talk to someone safe. Yesterday I met a man that I've prayed with before and he ran over to me and said, "I really need prayer. I hate my life and if I wasn't such a coward, I would kill myself." I touched him on the shoulder and said, "If God didn't have a purpose for your life we wouldn't be talking right now. There is a reason and purpose for your life. Our Father wants you to know what that is, but you need to take any distractions away like alcohol or drugs and spend time with Him." As I started to pray, he leaned into me and rested his head on my chest. The Holy Spirit spoke to him to tell him that he is loved just as much as any of his children and that he was created for a purpose. That he strayed from the path God had chosen for him and he needs get back on that path and if he allows his Father, He will direct his journey. After praying he was still holding on to me and I said, "There are people that want to help and there are resources available for you. There are shelters close by but you need to rid yourself of any addictions. You should surround yourself with people that can help you and there is no better place than a good church." When I was finished speaking, he let go and looked me in the eyes and continued to thank me. He said, "I don't know what I would have done if you weren't here." I said, "This has nothing to do with me this is about a Father who loves you and won't let go, so hang on tight." I told him that I loved him and he gave me one more hug and said I love you too. As he walked away, he kept yelling thank you.

## Stories From the Strand

The biggest danger to the homeless is the other homeless. They know no one cares so they can steal what little they have or beat them up because they want to. This gentleman was smaller than most and I'm sure he lives in constant fear not being able to sleep except for the numbing effects of alcohol. I pray he seeks the refuge of his loving Father's arms and gets back on the path He chose for him.

I then came up to a homeless man that I prayed with before and he stopped me. He had this great smile and said, "God has really blessed me. Someone gave me a new blanket and pillow the other day. I wasn't sure where I was going to sleep, but when I found a place, I had one of the best night sleeps I've had in while." He praised God and thanked me for my prayers. I thought here he is rejoicing over a blanket and a pillow, and I'm concerned about the worldly things that I have no control over. This is a man that I will see in heaven, because God tells us unless we become like little children, we can't see the Kingdom of God. That is what he was doing appreciating the little blessings that God gives like a child receiving a gift. He did more for me that day than I could do for him. He changed the way I see God, it's not about the toys you receive, but the love of the giver.

*in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:18*

### **No Where Else to Go**

I love my daily walks on the Strand and harbor, but the saddest thing is seeing the many homeless here. I always say good morning to anyone who makes eye contact, but most

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refuse to look up, because they don't want to be bothered, judged, or rejected. There are so many different types of people that end up in this situation, each with their own story. Sometimes I say good morning and they will say good morning back, but I meet some who are screaming as if demon possessed. I'm sure there are some who decided to serve our country and experienced something so devastating that they can't deal with it and their reward for serving is to live as an outcast and in constant turmoil.

Occasionally people that I pray with or meet want to give me money for my ministry. I always say no, but when they are insistent, I tell them I will give it to someone who is in need. Once I met a young man who appeared to just end up at the Strand with no place else to go. His bags appeared to be almost new, and he stopped me for prayer. He told me, "I was at my father's funeral and someone took my wallet. I'm not sure what to do and was just sitting here thinking." I prayed with him and the Holy Spirit as always comforted him and gave him hope. I offered him five dollars to get something to eat but he refused it and he told me the prayer was what he needed. I said, "Please take the money to buy lunch. I wish I had more to offer." He asked if he could hug me and I never pass on a hug.

Later that day a couple asked about my ministry. After talking to them they felt led to give me sixty dollars. I wasn't going to take it but told them of this young man I just met and that if they still wanted me to receive this money that I will give it to him. When I got back, he was still there, and I told him how God arranged my meeting with this couple and I gave him the money. He hugged and thanked me and I

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reminded him that it was a gift from God and He was the one to thank.

Another time someone gave me five dollars. There is a homeless man I see often but he would never look up. That day I stopped him and explained how someone gave me this money and I asked if he could use it. He looked up and thanked me. The next day I saw him, and he stopped me and told me he bought some ice cream and how good it was then thanked me. I still see him but now he says good morning with a smile, a smile that's priceless.

I stop and talk to this one homeless gentleman almost every day. He makes some extra money working for the concessioners that are there, but his bed is the sand each night. Being homeless is dangerous because of the other homeless that live there. One day I saw him, his hands were bandaged because he was in a fight and thrown in a fire. A few days later his face was swollen. He said, "Somebody beat me up and took my phone. I want to go back to Indiana for my mother's eighty-fifth birthday. I'm hoping my family might help me with a bus ticket." I told him if there was anything, I could do to help to let me know. He said, "I appreciate all the times you stop and talk to me. It makes me feel like a normal person." I haven't seen him for a couple of weeks now and have talked to others to see if they might know something, but without any luck. I know he didn't make it back to Indiana and he's not in jail, maybe a hospital, I don't know. I just know he isn't there. Some think that God might have abandoned these dear souls, but I think they are God's invitation to us to fulfill the purpose God has for us.

## Stories From the Strand

*Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ <sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?’ <sup>39</sup> Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’*

*Matthew 25:34-40*

### **The Heart of the Homeless**

Over the years I’ve met and prayed with several of the homeless at the beach. Each story and prayer request has been unique. There is a gentleman, Dale, a Vietnam vet that lives in his van with his two Yorkshire terriers. Since he has the dogs, he can’t find any housing and refuses to give them up. He typically parks in the handicapped space just south of the pier but yesterday he wasn’t there. As I went to the harbor, I saw him making breakfast on a Coleman stove. He was making breakfast for two other people that were homeless and offered me breakfast. We talked a little bit and he asked if I would do him a favor. I said of course and he said, “See that man there? That’s Billy and he has colon cancer. Would you pray for him? Billy can’t take care of himself any longer and that is why I’m staying over here to help. I park next to him at night and I can hear him crying

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out in pain and it breaks my heart.” I looked over at Billy and he was on the phone trying to get some type of Hospice care. That was Dale’s prayer that he would be able to get help and know Jesus before he goes. Dale and I prayed for God’s grace and mercy for Billy. We prayed that He would know Jesus as his Lord and savior, take his pain away and open a door for the proper care that he needed.

The following day I saw Dale sitting next to Billy. I said, “Good morning.” You could tell Billy was in pain. Dale asked Billy if it was okay if I prayed with him and Billy nodded, yes. The Holy Spirit had something He wanted to say to Billy. The prayer was how glorious Heaven is and how Billy would have a home built by Jesus if he would only receive His gift of eternal life. After the prayer I looked up and Billy was shaking then said he had to make a call and left. Dale looked at me and thanked me for the prayer. I told him to keep talking to Billy and that I’d be around tomorrow. The next Day I saw Dale at his usual place on the Strand. I went up to his car to see how he was doing. He said, “It didn’t look like Billy was going to make it. He was taken by ambulance to the hospital last night. Can we pray for him?” I reached inside his car and put my hand on his shoulder and prayed that the spirit stirred his heart and that Billy received Jesus as his Lord and savior and would be home soon.

A year later I saw Dale and his hand was bandaged. I asked what happened and he said, “I have to have surgery on it, but I need someone to take care of my dogs. JoJo is going to help me, but she said it will be a couple of days before she could do it.” JoJo is a woman I met a couple of years ago and she too was homeless living in her car. I would talk to her almost every day about Jesus. One day she showed me her

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bible that she was reading and asked for suggestions on what section she should read. We would have little bible studies and she always asked for prayer. Eventually JoJo started staying with a friend then her sister so I didn't see her very often.

The next day I saw Dale standing next to his car with the bandage off, I saw that his hand, wrist and lower arm were swollen. He said, "I can't take my shirt off or use my hand. I'm so tired and I'm afraid to even walk on the grass to let my dogs go. I had tacos last night and my shirt is a mess. Could you help me change my shirt?" I told him of course and helped him get a clean shirt on. He then asked if I could take his dogs on the grass so they could do their business. I tried but the dogs would not leave his side. He told me that's okay and asked if I would pray with him. The prayer was just a reminder that his Father is looking out for him and loves him. I told him he should go to the hospital and I was sure they could do something for his dogs. He said, "I'm sure JoJo will be here tomorrow then I'll go."

The next day I saw JoJo and she greeted me with a hug. She said, "Dale had a stroke and he's paralyzed on his left side and he's in the ICU. I'm trying to contact his brother and Adrian is watching his van and dogs." Adrian is a young man that was also homeless. Dale took him in and allowed him to stay in the van with him. JoJo and Dale were able to get him into a group home where he lives now. I told JoJo that it was great what she was doing for Dale. She said, "When I became homeless Dale was there watching over me telling me what I needed to do to survive. I'm only paying him back for the kindness and love he gave me." At that moment her phone rang and it was Dale's brother so I

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excused myself and went over to Adrian. I told him how wonderful it was that he was helping out Dale. He said, "If it wasn't for Dale I wouldn't have a home. This is the least I could do."

After a couple of weeks Dale was transferred to an extended care facility. Some of his friends keep me updated on his progress and tell me that Dale asks how I'm doing. They tell me how happy he is to be there and he likes the people and even the food. Most people I know that end up in a facility like that hate it and give up hope. I guess it's just perspective some people have to leave their home to go there but Dale found his home by being there.

I have no idea how many people Dale has touched and helped. He's the angel on the Strand. Dale reminds of another man that was homeless but made a difference in people's lives.

*And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*

*Matthew 8:20*

I don't know what the solution is for those that are homeless, but I do know we are all individuals. God went to the trouble of making sure our fingerprints, retina, and DNA were all custom made. Our world wants to group people together instead of looking at the person God knitted together. I'm not sure what the solution is for the homeless, but ignoring them is not an option.

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### Happy Resurrection Day

I made it to my church at the Strand for Easter service. As I began my walk a young man who is homeless came up to me. I've talked and prayed with him before, but this time he had some type of devotional with him. He opened the book and started to read a section that was discussing sin. After reading it he looked up at me and said, "What is sin?" Without skipping a beat, the Holy Spirit jumped in and said, "Sin is anything we do that is not of God. In His Word are commandments of what we should be doing and what we shouldn't." He began to ask other questions and I answered each one without hesitation. When he ran out of questions, he thanked me, and asked for prayer. After praying he hugged me and said, "Happy Easter."

I passed the amphitheater where they had an Easter service going on. I saw an older gentleman who was homeless pushing all that he had in a two-wheel shopping cart. His head was down, and I stopped and said, "Happy Easter." I wasn't sure if I would get a response, but he looked up at me and read my shirt and said, "Prayer we all need prayer, but I already said mine today." As he said it, he smiled this great toothless smile which would have warmed the heart of anyone. Then he said, "Thanks for doing what you're doing. Prayer is important and I don't know how I could make it through a day without it." He smiled once again and said, "Happy Resurrection Day." Most people would have looked at this man and said that poor guy, he has nothing. In reality he had everything he needs and will be going home where all his desires and more will be met. His wealth will be measured by his faith and not his earthly

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possessions. When I get home, I plan on looking him up and get a guided tour of the mansion Jesus built for him.

It wasn't long after speaking with him that I heard someone yelling behind me. I turned around and there was a woman running towards me. She stopped me and said, "I see you all the time and I need prayer. My brother-in-law has stage four cancer, and he's in the hospital with only moments to live. He's really suffering, and the family is going to be seeing him today." My first question was is he a believer? Instantly she said, "Yes." I said, "Will this is going to be his best day ever." She then held my hands and we went before our Father in prayer. The Holy Spirit decided to give her a little guided tour of his new home and one day his family will be together again. We then prayed to have the pain taken away and that today all he would feel was the love of his family and the presence of Jesus. After praying I said, "How fitting it is that God is bringing her brother-in-law home today as we celebrate the reason Jesus came to earth. When you see him today think of what Jesus did for us and the love He must have, a love that we'll never totally comprehend what God has in store for us until we get there." With tears in her eyes, she hugged and thanked me. I said, "Happy Resurrection Day."

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

*Colossians 3:1-4*

## Stories From the Strand

### **My Job Description**

I've prayed for many that are homeless, suffering from addictions or had currently been released from prison. Each hoping God will guide them out of the trouble they're in and put them on a new path. It breaks my heart after praying for some, I'll see them later still in the same situation. There is this one man I've seen for a couple of years and I have prayed with him on numerous occasions. He knows God's word and at times you would never guess he was homeless, but other times when he is taking drugs, he's another person. I see him often smoking pot and I'm sure he is doing other drugs using up the money he receives. One day I saw him with no shoes and he looked as if he got beat up. As I approached him, he hung his head and I asked about his shoes and he told me they broke. Just then someone came up to me for prayer and he took that moment and walked away. Then another day as I was walking down the Strand, I saw him ahead of me and when he saw me, he went the other way so he wouldn't have to face me.

As I went down to the harbor, I saw someone I prayed for over a year ago. He came up to me, excited to see me. He told me he was about to start a job, but something happened and he ended up in jail. He told me he cut way down on his drinking even though he was intoxicated as we spoke. He told me the reasons for his problems was his girlfriend who is a drug dealer and then gave me other reasons for his situation that wasn't his fault. He then stopped, with tears in his eyes said, "Please pray for me." He ran into my arms and hugged me. As I held him the Holy Spirit took over with love and comfort, but also with a stern warning that he needed to repent from his ways and take responsibility for his actions.

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After praying I said, “God helped me get over depression by going to him in prayer any time, I felt temptation coming on. Not long prayers just short cries of help to my Heavenly Dad such as, please take this from me I can’t handle it, change me, help me be what You want me to be and anything else that the Holy Spirit would put on my heart.” Afterwards he seemed better, but before he left, he told me he couldn’t believe all the things that happen to him as if none of it was his fault. He then left and went back home to his drug dealing girlfriend. I realized he didn’t take anything I said to heart.

As I walked sadly away, I asked God, “What am I doing wrong, why am I not getting through to them, I’m not helping at all, maybe you picked the wrong person to do this.” Then I felt the Holy Spirit speak to me saying your job is to be there when people want to pray, to comfort and even make others laugh, so do your job and I’ll do mine. Then I thought about when I was at my lowest moment of my life, that was the time I was willing to hear about God. God sent a young man who gave me a book called Prison to Praise then invited me to church. That is where I heard the pastor’s message and received Jesus as my Lord and savior. It wasn’t the young man who invited me to church or the pastor’s message that changed me. It was the Holy Spirit that did, because that’s His job.

*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*

*John 16:13*

## Stories From the Strand

### Witnessing a Changed Life

As I was walking down by the pier there were about seven people that appeared to be homeless and high on something. One young lady broke away from the group and came up to me and asked, "Would you really pray for me?" I told her I would love to and asked what she needed prayer for and she said, "I don't know." She then began to cry and came to me as I held her in my arms. The Holy Spirit then spoke to His daughter. The prayer was loving and comforting and she held me tight while sobbing. When the prayer was over, she thanked me and seemed to be in unbelief that someone would stop and pray for her. I said, "The prayer was from your Heavenly Father and that He orchestrated this meeting today because He wanted to talk to you. You need to know you are very special to Him and that He has a wonderful plan for your life." She thanked me and went back over to the group of people she was with.

I would see her often and whenever she saw me, she would come up and ask for prayer no matter who was with her. Then one morning when she came up to me for prayer I asked, "What do you want prayer for today?" She said, "I don't want to live my life this way anymore, but I don't know what to do." Her Father spoke to her saying He had a much better plan for her and all she had to do was ask Him and He would guide her. However, she needed to avoid all the distractions of this world so she could hear Him. After praying I said, "You should be part of a church and be surrounded by people that love you and can help you draw closer to God. Separate yourself from the people you now surround yourself with, continue to pray to your Father and ask for guidance each day and He will direct you." After that

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when I saw her, she would be sitting or walking by herself. When she asked for prayer she would give me an update on how she was doing. Eventually she stopped doing drugs, wasn't drinking, no longer a part of the crowd she used to be with, was trying to stop smoking, found a job and was attending a wonderful church. Every time I saw her, she seemed even more joyful and even though her teeth were rotting from her previous drug habits she always would greet me with a wonderful smile, and hug.

Months went by without seeing her, then one day I saw her with a young man. She introduced him as her boyfriend. He smiled and gave me a hug and said, "I feel as if I already know you. Angie has told me so much about you. Would you pray for us? We both want a relationship that will honor God." He was a nice young man and God was using him to help her grow closer to Him. The three of us went to seek the Father's will for their lives as the Holy Spirit spoke to their hearts. After the prayer we all hugged and I looked at her like a father would look at his daughter and told her how proud I was of her. She just rushed into my arms and gave me this loving hug and told me she loved me.

The next time I saw her she was yelling my name. I looked and she was driving a new car. She pulled off to the side of the road and got out of the car so we could talk. I asked how she was doing and she said, "I have this great job as a music teacher, I'm serving in this wonderful church, I read my bible every day like you said and I just want to serve God. I'm so glad I found you today because I wanted to tell you that I'm going to get baptized. I'm a little nervous but I know this is what I should be doing." I was excited for her and said, "What great news. I'm so proud of you and now

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that you received Jesus as your Lord and savior, you'll never be alone and the Holy Spirit will always be with you." She told me the date and time of her baptism and was hoping I would be there. With tears in her eyes, she thanked me and I said, "It wasn't me but your Father just wanted you to know the life that He had planned for you. God just asked me if I would convey the message." With tears in our eyes, she gave me a hug and I told her I loved her then she went to work.

Since then, she got married to that young man and they both honor God with their lives. I see them together now as they drive down the Strand before going to work. They always wave at me and occasionally they'll stop. I'll ask how things are going and you can see that they both have the joy of the Lord. They would always ask for prayer for God's wisdom and guidance. One day when they stopped, they wanted just to praise God for all He has done for them, but she said, "Most of all I want to thank Him for putting you in my life. I don't know where I would have been without you." I told her, "You would still have been where God wanted you to be. He just gave me the honor of speaking to His daughter that He loves." She came into my arms and told me she loved me and I told her not as much as I loved her. As they drove away, I thanked God that He allowed me to be part of her journey.

*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

*Galatians 6:9-10*

## Stories From the Strand

### Chapter 16 - Answered Prayer

#### No Longer a Prisoner

One day a young lady with a baby in a stroller asked for prayer. She said, "My husband is in prison and he's serving twenty years. I'm left alone to raise our child but I know my husband is innocent and I want to pray that God would open doors to release him." As always, the Holy Spirit took over and told me, "I got this." It was a prayer of hope and comfort that brought us both to tears. She hugged me and said, "I wasn't sure how I was going to make it through this day, but God knew I needed some help." I gave her my card with my contact information and said, "We serve a just God, you and your family is loved beyond anything you can imagine. Now leave it in His hands."

Several months later I ran into her on the beach with her daughter and her husband. She came up to me and said, "I was hoping to see you today so I could tell you about our answered prayer for my husband. The case was reopened and they discovered my husband didn't commit the crime and was released." Her husband came over to shake my hand and then hugged me. He said, "When you first prayed with my wife, she told me all about it and told me to have faith and allow God to work. A few people in prison talked to me about the love of Jesus and your prayer opened my heart to receive Him as my Lord and Savior. Would you mind praying for us as a family that we would grow close to God?" Trying to compose myself I said, "I can't imagine anything else I would rather do." The Holy Spirit took over giving guidance, love, and protection to this wonderful family. He told them they needed to take time as a family to pray and to get into God's

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word each day. After praying she told me after our first meeting how she told everyone about this handsome man with a shirt that simply read Do You Need Prayer. Maybe she said old instead of handsome it was hard to understand since we were all teared up. We all hugged again before I continued my walk. As I was walking, I prayed, “Dear Lord, I love You and I’m so grateful that you can use both the handsome and the old to do your work.”

On another day I was walking the Strand and I heard someone yelling for me. It was a gentleman I prayed with over a year ago. I remember he was riding an e-bike at the time and told me he recently got out of prison. He told me he loved animals and applied for a job at the Humaine Society and wanted prayer for the job, but most importantly to do God’s will. A few months ago, I saw him driving in a nice car and as he passed me, he yelled, “Do you remember me? You prayed for me.”

Today he was looking for me to give me an update on what was happening in his life. There was a lady sitting next to him and she was happy to meet me. They were planning on being married in a couple of months. He showed me some pictures of him being a vet’s assistant. He said, “I recently started my own business. It’s called, Rent a Husband. It’s a handy man service and I’ve been so busy that this is my first day off in a while. I give special prices to widows and women that are divorced. I’ll never forget the day that you prayed for me. It changed my life.” I reminded him that it has nothing to do with me, but that our Father had a plan for him. They asked for prayer for their marriage and the continued success of his business. After praying they both gave me a hug and

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said goodbye. After leaving them I had goosebumps all over my body and that's a lot of area to cover.

*“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me,  
Because the LORD has anointed Me  
To preach good tidings to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives,  
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*

*Isaiah 61:1*

### **God Heals a Boy in a Coma**

I saw a young girl pushing a stroller one day. I said, “Good morning” She smiled and returned my greeting. I kept seeing her and she would always smile. Finally, she was on the other side of the street and yelled, “I love your shirt!” She then walked across the street and said, “When I see you it gives me hope. I’m in an abusive relationship and I don’t know what to do. Would you pray for me and my child please?” We stood on the sidewalk and the Holy Spirit gave her a special word. Halfway through the prayer I could feel her shaking and crying. When the prayer was finished, we were both in tears and she thanked me for the encouragement and love. I said, “This has nothing to do with me. God wanted you to know He is watching over you and that He loves you so much.” She gave me a hug and went on her way.

Later that day I was walking toward the harbor and a white pickup truck passed me and turned into the driveway ahead of me. It was a young man with several tattoos on his face. He asked, “Would you pray with me? My brother is in the hospital. He’s in a coma and the doctor told me it didn’t

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look good. I know only God could save my brother.” I leaned into his truck and we both prayed for a miracle. I said, “All of the miracles Jesus did on this earth was because the person had faith knowing that Jesus could do them. When the friends of the paralytic lowered him down in front of Jesus it was because of their faith that he healed him. Lord by faith we lower your child in front of you knowing there is nothing that You can’t do.” I then told the young man, “You need to have the faith knowing that He will heal him.” He held my hand while thanking me then drove off.

A couple days later I was going up the same road when I saw that same young man. He was excited to see me and came up to me and gave me a hug. He told me his brother was out of the coma and doing so much better, that the doctors couldn’t believe it. He hugged me then thanked me again. I said, “It was your faith that God saw that day we prayed that healed your brother. Take some time to thank Him for answering your prayer.”

*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

*Hebrews 11:6*

### **The Desire of Addiction is Gone**

I just began my walk down the Strand and was watching the waves hit the rocks and come over onto the road. However, because of the noise I didn’t hear this young lady shouting out to me. When she finally made it to me, she touched my shoulder. She had tears rolling down her face as

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she said, "I'm trying to stop my addiction to drugs. It's only been four days since I've stopped, and I've been praying to God for strength. I saw you walking wearing that shirt and felt this was God's sign to me and that He was listening." She looked so broken but kept telling me that she knew God would help her. I felt the Holy Spirit say step aside I have something I want to tell her. I did as I was told and put my hand on her shoulder while He spoke to this young lady. As words of love, hope and joy came out through this vessel I was in awe. He told her if you get tempted say a short prayer to your Father asking for His help. He is always there listening and will give you the strength to fight off any temptation. I'm not sure how long the prayer was, but the words were perfect and touched her heart. She said, "I knew God was listening to me. Thank you." After she left, I found a little place in between the buildings to stand. I was shaking and crying and felt so close to God in that moment.

A couple of weeks later I saw her again. When I first met her, she was in tears, her face was cast down and she looked as though she was in a fight, and she wasn't winning. Today when I saw her, she looked different, I wasn't sure if it was the same person. Her smile was almost as bright as the sunlight off the waves. She was excited to see me and had a friend with her. She introduced me and her friend said, "You're the guy with the shirt she has been praying with." It was nice to have an official name, guy with the shirt. The young lady then came up and gave me this wonderful hug and said, "God has given me the strength to say no to my addiction and yes to Him. I feel so different and God put my friend back into my life to help me. Would you pray for us?" I told her there is nothing else I would rather do. I stepped

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aside and the Holy Spirit jumped in speaking love, hope, encouragement and a reminder that God will never leave us or forsake us, He's always there when we need Him. After the prayer I just looked at her and said, "You're going to be great." She smiled and said, "I know."

*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

*1 Corinthians 10:13*

### **God Shows Me His Love for Others**

Though I do the same thing every day, each day is different and has its own unique blessing. There is a young man that I see on occasion. He tries to take his lunch about the time I would be passing by. I've prayed with him several times and now when he sees me, he gives me a big hug and smile which could make anyone's day. He usually has request for health for family members, travel mercies, guidance on what he should do about work and the Lord uses these prayers to talk to him. Yesterday was a little different he said, "Everything is going great, and my prayers are being answered. I even got a raise from my employer and he told me I was doing a great job. Today can we just go to Him and thank him?" We took a few moments to tell God how much we love Him and how grateful we were for all that He does for us, but more importantly that we are called His children. We hugged again with tears of gratitude in our eyes and a warm feeling in our hearts I said goodbye. As I was leaving, he said, "Hope to see you tomorrow."

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A met this young lady several months ago while she was riding her bike. She stopped and said, "I see you all the time when I'm riding my bike and wanted to stop and talk to you. I could really use some prayer. I lost my sister from a drug overdose and I'm really struggling because it's the fourth anniversary of her death. I was on the same path as my sister, taking drugs and partying, but I have two children and I wanted to take care of them." I'm not sure how much time we spent talking, crying and praying but it was miraculous the way the Holy Spirit spoke to her. Just before she was about to leave, she asked if she could hug me. I never turn down a hug and she hugged me tight and didn't seem like she wanted to let go.

The next time I saw her, I witnessed a different person someone with this awesome smile and bright appearance. She stopped and asked if she could pray for me. "Of course, I never turn down prayer," I said. The prayer was beautiful, and asked that God would continue to use me to reach others. I thanked her and she shared that beautiful smile one more time before continuing her ride. I continue to see her as she rides her bicycle she'll wave or stop and tell me what is happening in her life. Her faith continues to grow and she told me she is doing what I do, sharing her testimony with others. She knows her sister's death was not in vain and she shares those memories with others in hopes to help them. Each time she tells of her past life style and her sister it draws her closer to God where before it pushed her away. It wasn't long ago that she told me that she would be moving out of state and was going to miss our encounters on the Strand. I told her, "God must have more people for you to encourage and love." I then prayed that everything would go well with

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her moving and that she continues on the path God has chosen for her. We hugged and it felt as I was saying goodbye to my daughter. As she rode away, I stopped to thank God for the opportunity to meet this wonderful young woman and asked to put a hedge of protection around her and her family.

I get so much joy from walking the Strand that I question myself whether I'm doing it for God or myself. As I walk, I pray to myself, Lord am I still doing this for You? I felt God say, "You still don't know how much I love You? Your smile and joy glorify me." So, I'll keep on walking and smiling receiving the blessings He has in store for me with a grateful heart. There is nothing better than pleasing my Dad.

*that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

*Colossians 1:10*

### **On the Right Road**

Have you ever drove somewhere and realize you might have passed your exit? You've been driving for a while and haven't seen any signs on what road you're on and think you might need to turn around, but then there is a sign ahead and you realize you've been on the right road all along. At times I feel the same way as I continue to walk the Strand. A couple of different opportunities have come along and I'm not sure if I missed my exit, but then God gives me a sign that I'm on the road He chose for me. A couple of days ago I came across four ladies talking, and they stopped me. The one stopped and asked if I remembered her. She said, "You prayed with me for my friend who was about to give birth. The doctor told

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her that the baby was deformed and wasn't sure if it would live. My friend gave birth a couple of weeks ago and the baby was perfect, and the doctors have no explanation of why." She hugged me with tears in her eyes and said, "But we know why."

Just yesterday an ambulance was driving down the Strand and the passenger was waving frantically at me as it passed by. People wave at me all the time, so I didn't think a lot of it, but then as I was walking it came by again. He rolled down the window and, yelled, "Do you remember me? You prayed with me a few weeks ago because I was nervous about taking a test that afternoon. Your prayer gave me peace and I passed the test with flying colors. The test was for becoming a paramedic and I got the job." He introduced me to the driver, his new partner. Then they drove away.

A few months ago, I prayed with a gentleman he was about eighty years old. His prayer request was to meet a godly woman that he could share the rest of his life with. A couple of days ago I met him walking with this wonderful woman. He stopped me asked, "Do you remember me? You prayed for me to meet a godly woman. It was a powerful prayer and God sent this beautiful angel to me. We have plans to be wed in a couple of months. Please never stop praying and keep wearing that shirt." I said, "Believe me no one wants to see me with my shirt off." We all hugged and prayed together before they went on their way.

It appears I'm still on the right road as God continues to show me the signs I'm going in the right direction after all I shouldn't get lost, I'm a GPS (God's Prayer Servant)

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*You will show me the path of life;  
In Your presence is fullness of joy;  
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

*Psalm 16:11*

### **The Prayer of a Dying Father Answered**

One day I heard someone yell for me. I looked and a man came running towards me. He said, "I saw you yesterday and couldn't believe someone was going around praying for people. I promised myself if I saw you today, I would ask for prayer. My father passed away a few days ago and I'm flying to Houston for his memorial service. He was truly a man of God, but when I was sixteen, I repelled against him and got these tattoos to spite him. I even became a Jehovah Witness for several years to upset him. One day when my dad was sick, he sat down with me and told me that he prayed that I would receive Jesus as my Lord and Savior because he couldn't imagine heaven without me there." As he was telling the story, he began to cry and continued, "I'll never forget that moment, as my dad was holding my hand, I received Jesus as my Lord and savior. I'll never be the man of God my father was but I'm going to try to be more like him each day. I was asked to give the eulogy at my father's memorial service but I'm not sure what to say." I told him, "Just say what you just said to me." He continued to talk about how wonderful his father was and how he wants a closer walk with Jesus. He asked for prayer and as you might guess it sounded a lot like the prayer of the prodigal son. He thanked me and wanted to hug me but he was sweating, and I told him we can't part without a hug. While hugging him I could almost feel the

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presence of his father saying, “I’ll see you when you get home, son.”

*It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’ ”*

*Luke 15:32*

### **Need to Obey God with a Willing Spirit**

I’ve been praying and talking with more people at the Strand, but my blessing yesterday came to me at a recovery meeting. I’m doing a four-week teaching on depression at a Church in Oceanside. The pastor asked if I could come to Sunday service and the recovery meeting on Monday to introduce the teaching. I was a little hesitant about going Monday since it was in the evening but I was told there would be people that normally don’t go to church there. I went but was making excuses, because I didn’t really want to go. I was to be there at 7:00 PM, almost my bedtime and I wanted to relax and watch a television show that I must have seen a couple times before. I thought this was just a meeting and they most likely have me come up right away and I would speak for a couple of minutes and be on my way. I got there and was told there was going to be worship music first, then they go through the steps and afterwards give out chips. I thought that was weird until they told me that the chips represented how long they have been sober. I called Teri and with a disgusting tone I said, “I don’t know when I will be home this thing might go on for a while.”. I sat there trying not to enjoy the service, until I was finally called up to speak. I got to the front and there was a gentleman who looked very familiar sitting in the second row. He got up and said, “I’m

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sorry for interrupting but you prayed for me at the beach. Do you remember?” It was a few months ago and I asked you for prayer, because drinking was destroying my life and I couldn’t stop. You prayed over me and told me anytime I feel like taking a drink to stop and say a short prayer to my Father and instead of wanting that drink I would be focused on God. I haven’t had a drink since that day.” He came over the seat and hugged me and then sat back down. I composed myself and tried to remember why I was there in the first place. I gave my introduction for the depression class I would be teaching and went back for a final hug and thanked him. Afterwards I walked outside to go to my car but stopped and asked God to forgive my terrible attitude for not wanting to come there that night. Then a young man came out and asked, “Can I talk to you. My stepfather is suffering from depression, and I don’t know what to do.” I talked to him for a while and told him what I thought his stepfather was going through and the best thing he could do was pray for him and be there when he needs him. We prayed and the Holy Spirit spoke comfort, hope and peace to this young man. I said, “Invite your stepfather to my class. I’m available to help in any way I can.” My heavenly Father must have looked down at His whining child and smiled. He could have had me get my way and not go, but He loves me so much He had a special gift He wanted to make sure I received. Next time when He invites me to a party I will go with the right attitude, an attitude of gratitude.

About a year later I was heading to the harbor when a van passed me and I heard someone yelling my name. I turned around and this gentleman was standing next to his van waving me to him. He said, “Do you remember me? It

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was over a year ago that I approached You for prayer because I was an alcoholic and couldn't stop drinking. Then a couple of months later I saw you at the recovery meeting at the church you were speaking at. I wanted to give you an update on what God is doing in my life. I've become an evangelist and I just want to share the joy of the Lord with others. This is, Kathy, my beautiful wife." She smiled and held my hand and looked in my eyes and said, "Thank you." They were about to leave when she said, "We need prayer." He looked down at the ground and then up to say, "Yes, I have pancreatic cancer, but I know God knows where I am and holds my life in His hands." The three of us came together in prayer. It was an awesome prayer as God told him He was going to use his situation to touch the lives of others. I said, "I know if God heals you that you would glorify God as you have been doing with your testimony. He might also decide He wants you home, a place that is so wonderful and beautiful we can't imagine, where there is no more pain or sorrow. Either way God is with you on your journey and the journey is just a day at a time." We all hugged one last time before they drove off.

I still remember how determined I was to end my life, because I felt so worthless and the pain of being me was too much to handle. However, God saw someone He could use and each day is a reminder that He doesn't make mistakes.

*He is the Rock, His work is perfect;  
For all His ways are justice,  
A God of truth and without injustice;  
Righteous and upright is He.*

*Deuteronomy 32:4*

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### On the Job Training

God always had this wonderful plan for my life. When I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior that's when my sanctification started or as I like to think of it as "On the Job Training." My training program included:

- The importance of serving others
- To use my gifts and talents to glorify Him and help others
- To be a part of the body of Christ
- To see others through His eyes, and not my judgmental ways
- To study His word and take it to heart
- To spend time with my Father in prayer
- To share with others what He has done in my life
- To be confident that no matter what trial I'm going through he is always with me
- To trust Him with all of my heart and to lean on Him and not my own understanding
- To live this life a day at a time, forgetting the past and to trust him with my future
- To only be concerned with what I can control and realize the only thing I have control of is me.
- That I'm not here to judge, criticize or argue, but her to love both God and His children

All my training throughout the years was to guide me to that most important lesson God wanted me to learn and that was to love. To love Him with all of my heart, mind soul and strength and to love others. That is the main lesson He wants all His children to learn and I learned it on the Strand. Out of all the lessons God taught me throughout my life, learning to

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love was the final exam and without it I would never pass the test of sanctification. My life isn't about me, but about how I honor God and His children. To love someone, you must give them the most precious thing you have, your time. God made sure I had plenty to give while working out my early retirement. The Holy Spirit is with me every day guiding and speaking through me. When I drive to the Strand each morning I say a short prayer, "Lord, I know You have someone You want me to meet. Please use this empty vessel to speak, comfort and love to them." Not one day has passed that my prayer is not answered.

God has a wonderful plan for each one of His kids. He gave each one of us passion, talent and gifts that we'll use to fulfill that plan and fulfilling that plan will give you more joy than you can imagine. God created us to be used for others. If a master craftsman built this extraordinary and beautiful table, but no one was able to use or even see it, what good is it? Our Master craftsman has created an extraordinary person in you and He wants to show it off. Love is going to be the key on how well you will be able to be used. Are you ready to lay down your selfish desires and choose to love God and others? Love is that one thing that the more you give the more you receive. I use to think Luke 6:38 was talking about material possessions, but it was really talking about love.

*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*

*Luke 6:38*