



MESSED UP PLANS by Barry Rodriguez

THE RELIEF BUS REPORT

Steve Pastor (40) has been working with The Relief Bus since 2003. As part of the ministry's outreach team, Steve helps to train volunteer teams, counsels visitors on the streets and helps connect desperate people with jobs, shelters and clothing.



Through his seven years of service with the Relief Bus, Steve has touched the lives of hundreds. And through his humility and dedication, his life has inspired many volunteers to live their own lives with a greater sense of purpose.

A few days before leaving NYC, I sat down with Steve for a quick interview. I wanted you all to meet the man that so profoundly showed me what it means to live out the kingdom of God...

World Next Door: Please give me a quick overview of your story. You used to work as a carpenter?

Steve Pastor: I had a lot of jobs in my life. After high school I became a carpenter and I was in a carpenter's union in New Jersey... Worked as a used car salesman for a couple of years, and even bounced at nightclubs at night for extra money.

WND: But something happened that changed the course of your life. What was that?

SP: It was Jesus (laughs). He came right in the middle and messed up all my plans.

WND: You were working and you were making lots of money and working all sorts of overtime. But now you're helping other people and you're not making a lot of money... How did that happen?

SP: It's a heart issue. What once was important to me no longer was important to me. It used to be very important for my comfort and my security to make a lot of money so I could do whatever I wanted to do and have fun and take care of myself. But today I trust in God to basically meet my needs. Being here for seven years and this new lifestyle, this new way of living, He hasn't let me down once.

WND: In your words, how would you define what New York City Relief or The Relief Bus is all about? What would you say the real overarching purpose is for this organization?

SP: Just to be God's hands and feet to the poor, addicted of New York City. To bring them hope. Not to solve their problems, but just to lead them to the solution, which is Jesus. And give them some practical tools, some practical help along with knowing Jesus. You know, meeting some of their needs, helping them along while they need it.



CHANGED LIVES ONLY THROUGH THE POWER OF GOD

RELIEF BUS STORIES

WND: Absolutely.

Can you tell me some of the stories, some of the cool things that have happened out here or maybe even some of the challenging things?

SP: Let's see ... One that comes to mind, that jumps right out at me, is a gentleman named Tony. Tony was a Port Authority policeman. He had a breakdown after 9/11 that led him to be homeless, and addicted, and living on the streets.

Tony's a great guy, but always drunk and not living to his potential... For about a year, two years, I loved on Tony and told him about the love of Jesus. I gave him that hope, but it wasn't until I actually challenged him. [After an incident in which Tony stole things from another homeless man] I said, "Tony it wasn't too long ago you were helping guys like this... and now you're stealing from them? Something's not right here."



And then Tony disappeared and I didn't see him for a few months. I got worried and I said, "Oh my God, maybe I shouldn't have said that!" But when I did see Tony, he thanked me and [said] that by challenging him and reminding him of what he used to do, it led him to go to a detox. And now Tony has a place [to stay]. He's not drinking anymore... and he's about to get a job again.

WND: It must be difficult knowing that sometimes you're going to have to stick to it for so long. There's no real quick answers.

SP: No. There's not. Just love. Consistency.

WND: Have you seen anything miraculous happen out here?

SP: Oh sure. Deliverances. People just stop doing drugs right there on the spot. We have one church that's been coming from Cincinnati regularly and the pastor's son had prayed for a guy who was struggling with drug addiction. I never saw this guy again and the son went back to Cincinnati.



The following year the team goes back out again, sees the same guy, and the guy runs up to the son. This kid's a teenager and the guy says, "Hey your prayers worked. After you prayed for me a year ago I never touched a drug again." You don't expect these things and [yet] you get this feedback.

It's incredible, you know? Changed lives only through the power of God.

Adapted with permission from an interview by Barry Rodriguez, the Director of World Next Door, who came to document and work with The Relief Bus for a month. To learn more, go to www.worldnextdoor.org.

Check out the new video of Q's experience with the bus in Harlem!
www.youtube.com/thereliefbus

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