

RYAN: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

protests over George Floyd's death. It didn't seem like a place I wanted to go, but I was trusting that God was guiding my journey.

Just after midnight, the Portland-bound bus pulled into Salt Lake City. Again, the bus station was closed for the night, and they told us the bus from Salt Lake to Portland wouldn't leave until 9 a.m. They said we should stick around the station until morning. I was hungry so I walked towards downtown. There were some homeless people around and I asked them if there was a place still open where I could get a snack or a drink. They directed me to a convenience store, which happened to be right across the street from the Rescue Mission.

I bought a few items. Then, I felt God was leading me to ask the person at the counter if there was a Christian place in this city where someone could get help with addiction. He looked at me and said, "yeah, it's right across the street." I told him I didn't have insurance or really any money and he said not to worry about it, it was all free. He told me to go over to the Mission and talk to the Program Manager, named Don.

STAYING IN SALT LAKE

I walked outside and decided to stay in Salt Lake, instead of going back to the bus bound for Portland. I went to Pioneer Park with my blanket and laid down and slept for the night. When I woke up, I saw the green grass of the park and the big, beautiful trees and then looked past them and saw the mountains. It reminded me of the image God had placed in my mind when I had prayed to him for help in that Amarillo hotel room. I realized God had led me where He wanted me to be. That morning I spoke with Don and joined the New Life Program.

After going to the nightly chapel services and working with Cassie, the Program Director, I gave my life to Jesus. As I grew in my knowledge of the Bible and learned about Jesus and God, I knew I had to come clean about my legal issues in Texas. I broke down and shared with the Rescue Mission staff that I had left Texas illegally while out on bond and that I was facing a prison sentence. I was afraid they would turn me in, but instead they told me they would help me work through my legal issues.

EXPERIENCING A CHANGED LIFE

We identified a 401K that I had from working in the oil fields and I used the cash from that to hire an attorney in Texas. My attorney was able to get my case reduced to three years of probation and, if I successfully completed the probation, the felony charge would be removed from my record. Moreover, he arranged for the probation to be transferred to Utah, so I could stay in the Rescue

Mission's program.

While on the New Life Program I have been able to stay sober and am connected to two local Christian churches, the Adventure in Draper, and Calvary Chapel of Salt Lake. During the employment phase of the New Life Program, I was able to get a good job running heavy machinery for a local construction company. I paid off all my probation fines and when it was time for me to graduate from the program, I moved into an apartment with a friend of mine who also had done well on the program.

Our rent has now skyrocketed to \$2,300 a month for a two-bedroom apartment so we recently secured a lease on a four-bedroom townhouse in West Valley where we will move with two other graduates of the new life program in August. This will help our housing costs be more affordable as we all work and pay our bills and continue to enjoy sobriety and living for Jesus.

I am now on low-risk probation and only need to complete 20 more hours of community service by October, in order to be released from probation and have my record cleared. One of the coolest things that has happened is that I have been able to rebuild relationships with my family back in Texas both with my mom and her side of my family and my dad and his side of my family.

Recently a friend and I went to visit my grandfather in North Texas. He once told me he would never allow me on his property again, until I was sober and had a job and could take care of myself. I called him and told him about my changed life and he was excited to see me when I showed up to visit.

It's been great to have this new life. I owe everything to God and He should get all the glory for changing me. I hope by reading my story you can see how God guided me in so many ways when I was lost, confused, and hopeless. He led me to the place He wanted me to go to change my life. It's a place that exists because of your support so I thank you for giving to the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake. Without this place, I would still be lost.



RESCUER

AUGUST 2023

The Monthly Newsletter of the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake



RescueSaltLake.org



Ryan Barker-Brewer is sober, has a great job, recently moved into a new townhouse, has good connections with his family in Texas, and is set to be off probation in October.

A big part of how God changed my life is the remarkable way He led me to the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake from Amarillo, Texas. So, I want to start my story with my journey to Salt Lake: how I went from facing eight years in prison, to becoming sober and finding faith in Jesus Christ.

Without getting too deep into my life history, by 2019 I was in jail facing an eight-year prison sentence related to my lifestyle of using and selling drugs. I had lived in North Texas for most of my life, sometimes working in the oil fields, other times selling drugs to make money. But when I was arrested in 2019, I decided to stay in jail.

THE PANDEMIC IN JAIL

My life was a wreck and I figured jail was the best place for me. At least there I couldn't get in any more trouble. But I was wrong. I engaged in several fist fights and was constantly getting into trouble. But still I stayed in, awaiting my legal case

to play out. Then the COVID pandemic hit.

It was weird being in jail during the initial stages of the pandemic. The only information we received was what we saw on TV. To us, it seemed like thousands of people on the inside were dying each day. In our minds we thought there must just be bodies lining the streets of America.

A few days later all the guards showed up wearing masks but said they didn't have any to give us inmates. Then a few weeks later they closed the commissary. They told us they couldn't get anyone to deliver supplies to the jail. Then people with COVID started coming into the jail and they tried to quarantine them, but those of us who had been there a long time were scared. That's when many of us, myself included, decided to bond out of jail.

I had some money in a checking account and purchased a few nights stay at a local hotel. My old friends found out I got out

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GOING “BACK TO SCHOOL” AT THE MISSION

Many of us will spend August preparing to go “back to school.” I know I will be. Whether it’s helping a child, grandchild, a friend, or even preparing ourselves for fall classes, going back to school consumes a lot of our lives this time of year.



At the Rescue Mission, we have year-round school with continuous enrollment. In other words, school is always in session and any person who comes through our door has the potential to be one of our back-to-schoolers or a first-time student.

That’s because a lot of what we do, in fact some may argue the most important part of what we do at the Rescue Mission, is centered on education.

We teach the men and women who come through our doors about God, his Son Jesus, and the reality of Biblical joy. We teach them spiritual techniques they can use to stay sober, like seeking forgiveness, granting forgiveness, having accountability with other believers, reading God’s Word, meditating on it, and

praying. In our “classroom” people learn to serve others by making meals for the hungry in our kitchen. They sort and distribute clothing and food donations, clean our facilities, and make fresh beds for our guests each night. These are lessons in service that many have never learned before. They are the lessons that Ryan Barker-Brewer, who shares his life story in this month’s newsletter learned.

The things we teach here at the Mission are life changing and no special enrollment time is needed. It’s always back to school time here. Thanks to your support our doors are continuously open, and we welcome all willing students who are interested in the truth and curious about finding joy in a relationship with God and His people.

Thank you for your support that allows us to restore broken lives. We would not be here without you!

God bless you,
Chris D. CroswHITE
Executive Director

RYAN: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and came to me. They said some rivals drug dealers had shot someone we knew and that we needed to take revenge. The idea was that we (probably me) would shoot and kill someone in retaliation.

SEEKING GOD’S HELP

That night I got down on my knees and prayed. I knew that if I killed someone, or was involved in a fatal shooting, I would spend the rest of my life in jail. I asked God if that was what He wanted for my life. He responded. It wasn’t in a loud booming voice, but it reminded me of when I used to read books as a youth. Whenever I would read a book, I would develop a picture in my mind (what the characters looked like, what the scenery looked like) that went along with the story.

When God spoke to me, He clearly said that he didn’t want me to spend my life in jail. In my mind he showed me a picture of green grass, green tress, mountains, and mountain streams. The image was unique to me, since there is nothing like that in North Texas.

I had previously noticed there was a Bible in the drawer of the nightstand in my hotel. I asked God to show me what to do, because within the next day or two, I was expected to participate in this revenge shooting. I opened the Bible and the passage I read was Jesus talking to one of His disciples about giving away all his worldly possessions and following Him.

GIVING IT ALL AWAY

The next day, I decided to do just that. I had a suitcase full of my things and I had a new phone I had just purchased. I took the suitcase the threw it in the dumpster behind the hotel and then crushed my phone and threw that away as well. The only thing I kept was my checking account debit card, since I knew I would need some money for food or lodging.

While I still had a few days left on my hotel reservation, I walked to the front of the building and as I reached the front, a city bus pulled up. I got on. I was sitting in the back praying. I was asking God to give me a clear sign of what I should do. As the bus made a turn towards downtown, I looked out the window and saw a billboard that said, “This is the sign you’ve been looking for ~ God.” To this day I don’t know who or what church put up that billboard, but I took it to mean that God was leading me on a path He wanted me to stay on.

I got off and on the bus a couple times, stopping to pick up a few more things I had stored away and gave them to local charities, until eventually the bus line came to an end at the Greyhound bus station. I got off and asked the lady for a ticket. I told her I didn’t know where I wanted to go, I just needed to get out of Texas. In my heart I was hoping to go East, but I felt like God would guide the lady to where I was supposed to go. She handed me a ticket to Denver, Colorado.

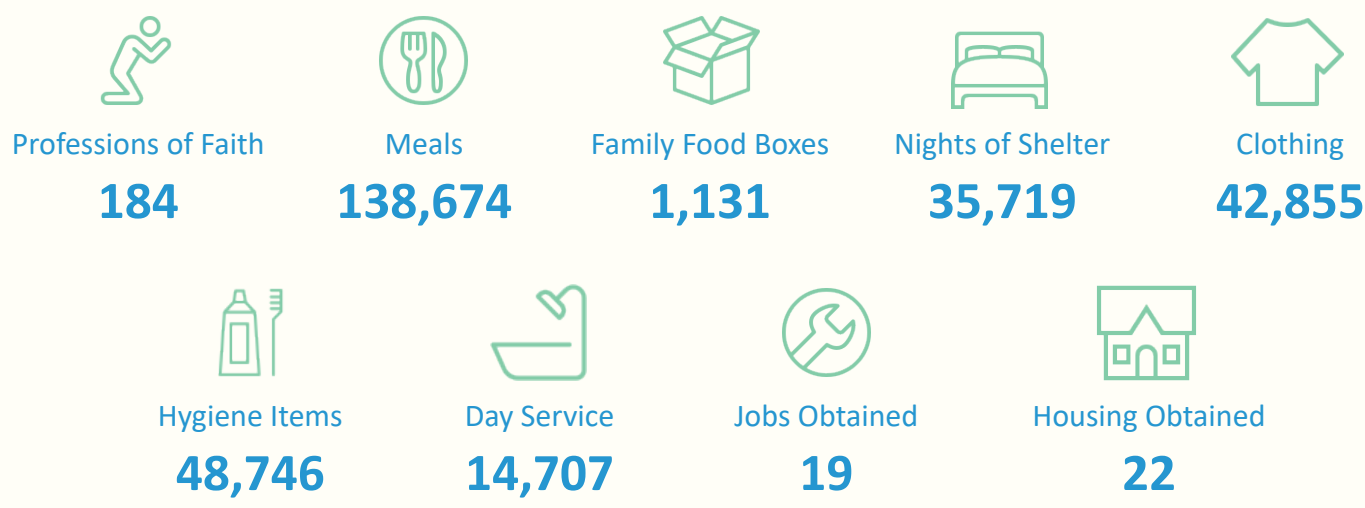
When I arrived in Denver, it seemed like the whole city was a ghost town. It was the early stages of the pandemic. The streets were empty, and the bus station closed early. I had a blanket I had picked up on the bus. It was summer and warm and, with nowhere to go, I laid my blanket on the street and tried to get some sleep.




HEADING FURTHER WEST


What I witnessed that night on the streets of Denver made me decide to leave the city the next morning. The only people out on the streets were criminals and I witnessed crimes I would like to forget. When the bus station opened, I again asked the ticket lady for a ticket and let her pick the location. After some back-and-forth and scheduling issues, I ended up with a ticket to Portland, which at the time was in turmoil with riots and

Please see “Ryan” on the back page

HOW YOUR GIFT HELPS: OUR YTD STATS THROUGH JUNE




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