

The Heartbeat



Newsletter of Life Saver Ministries/ Christmas 2017 Edition Behold what manner of love

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has given unto us...that we should be called the sons of God..." the familiar melody from my childhood kept resounding as I sat to pen this month's letter to you, our faithful supporters, our treasured friends. In the years I've been writing the newsletters I've learned to go with it. It doesn't always make sense to my mind but the theme God lays on my heart is that which I will convey to you. I don't even attempt to negotiate with God anymore. I simply go with it. My wish for you, my wish for me, my wish for my children, my wish for this broken world this season and always is this: May we understand and relish the truth that we are sons and daughters of God. That's it--Merry Christmas!

Right? I mean, that is truly the best gift, the only gift that matters. When we are stripped of our youth, our health, the wealth that we were stewards of for a season, the soundness of our minds, the loved one who slips away from our earthly grasp, when absolutely everything we cling to is removed, when every good and perfect gift from our Father is taken back as what is rightfully His alone, this one thing remains. The gift.

I promise you that I will camp out at the base of this truth for the weeks leading into the New Year. I need to live here a little longer. I need to really soak that in because as I see the nativity scenes in front of churches, as I hear the Christmas carols, as I see the gifts being given, I can only hear that faint melody in my mind..."Behold what manner of love the father has given unto us...." The ultimate sacrifice of a brutal death contrasting with the warm glow of the visions we have of the lowly manger. The torment of all of hell's minions contrasting with the deafening silence of the empty tomb. The agony of separation brought by death contrasting with an ascension into Heaven that remains one of the most well documented historical events of all time. The contrasts are everywhere we look, but deeper than that, they're everywhere we feel, aren't they? We all feel it—the dull ache of knowing we are in a world that isn't our home. The hot tears that well up when we read of another brutal attack on humanity. This pain is real for those of us who belong to Christ yet it's a pain with an end in sight. That, my friends, has been such a common thread in the lessons being poured out into the lives of the women we serve here at Soulutions. This month brought an incredible Biblically based study on heart issues of depression, anxiety, hopelessness as these threats to peaceful, abundant living are very real in the lives of many of those whom we serve. As we strive to point to the truth that we are daughters of the King, sons of God, it has a way of magnifying the eternity of our existence and minimizing the temporary pain of life. As we truly behold the manner of love that our Father poured out so we could truly be children of God, everything falls into its proper perspective. I'll be honest and say that this month has been a battleground for me in some of the relationships with some of the mothers who are part of our Soulutions family. I have had some difficult conversations with some who are making tragically horrible choices, have had opportunity to offer admonishment from God's Word and have been able to do so because God's word has the truth that will guide these precious ladies into a life fit for a daughter of the king. Here at Life Saver Ministries, we want the absolute best for the lives we are called to serve. We want for the love of Christ to be realized by every single heart. When we say, "No", to handing out free diapers for the third time to a young mom who desperately needs a chance to behold the manner of love the Father has given unto her, we are saying "Yes" to a chance for her to be immersed in truth and fellowship as she attends a class and earns the diapers that she needs. When we say "No", to the idea that a young mom shares asking whether or not she should move her married boyfriend into her house with her children, "just until he can get on his feet financially",

*(continued *)*

**(After I peel the heel of my hand off my forehead and finish my eye roll)), I have a chance to encourage her to say "Yes" to living the way God lovingly instructs her to and "Yes" to choices that will leave her conscience clear and her family in a place of being influenced by good. Why? Because the love of the Father is such that as He calls us unto Himself, He gives us the step by step directions for every situation we will have to navigate. I can't think of a better gift for Christmas that always fits, never expires, is transferrable from this life to the next, and includes an unlimited membership for as many as we can get signed up. The beauty of that gift is enough to warm my heart when I can feel the draft of the ugliness of the world sweeping in like a thief in the night. So in this Season and into 2018 may we truly behold this manner of love that is deeper than anything we can imagine, that has surrounded us since before time and will continue to provide the glow by which we will exist for an eternity where the contrasting darkness of this life won't be anywhere in sight. To our infant King, the great I am, that great Shepherd of the sheep be glory both now and forever.*

Abbey Ballard- Ministry Director



"God loves each of us as if there were only one of us."

-Augustine

"The hinge of history is on the door of a Bethlehem stable."

-Ralph Sockman

"The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God."

-C.S. Lewis

Do you see what I see?

The significance of the pictures above could easily be missed unless I shared with you the amazing story surrounding each.... First we have some ladies working on crafts. Take a closer look and you'll see our amazing volunteers are instructing one of many classes that they have faithfully given time and energy to in order to minister to some precious ladies who have overcome insurmountable obstacles and heartache. There sits a woman who has found strength to overcome a long term abusive relationship that left her permanently injured. In the months since attending Soulutions, she has established herself in her own apartment, gotten involved in a local church where she attends regularly, attends Soulutions Center as one of our most faithful participants, and is taking steps toward adult literacy as her goal is to learn to read- Praise God. Look a bit closer and you'll see a woman who has gone through the agony of losing her spouse to a sudden illness and while he awaits her in glory, the pain of the separation and the reality of becoming a single parent literally overnight has been excruciating and exhausting. She has taken hours to piece together memory quilts with her husband's shirts along with a quilt for her daughter that uses sentimental clothing items. Yet another young mother finds comfort in this small group setting as she has been crippled by anxiety and depression for years. Soulutions is a place where she feels welcome and receives the loving nudge she needs to continue on in good choices. There is real healing going on in these classes as women come together and support each other with fellowship and friendship. The second picture shows some precious children getting actively involved in sharing the gospel with every tribe and tongue through Operation Christmas Child of Samaritan's Purse. Two of these children were living with a family friend for several months as their home situation (all the way across the country!) was one that they needed to be removed from. During their time here, they attended Christian summer camp at Sacandaga Bible Conference and there were most definitely

A huge "Thank you!" to the many churches who participated in our Gifts for Life initiative this month; we supplied Christmas tree tags with specific items needed for our ministry, and you did the rest! As people took tags and brought in the corresponding needed items, our inventory was able to build up, better preparing us to meet needs in 2018! If your church, workplace or other group would like to host a donation drive for LSM, please contact Abbey and we will be happy to help you help us!



seeds of faith planted as they heard the Gospel message many times before returning back to the west coast in November. We are grateful for the time spent and the friendships made through the Soulutions Center!

Giving back

To say this Christmas season has been one of overwhelming generosity from our community would be an understatement of enormous proportions! I have stood in awe as we have seen

-A group of individuals with disabilities take the initiative to collect hygiene items and toys for our TLC program.

-A group of senior saints work diligently all year on handmade blankets, hats and mittens to bless the families we serve.

- A local agency gift us \$200 toward our curriculum and classes for 2018!

- People stopping in just long enough to bring coats, toys, clothing because they know "This is a good place and you help a lot of people."

- An area rifle club who was so impressed by the mission of our organization that was shared by our own Molly Whittaker that they decided to allow us to be recipients of their Christmas toy collection AND recipients of a totally unexpected, incredibly generous gift of \$1,300 toward our client services. God is so faithful in the most unexpected ways; a common thread among the conversations I've had with the people who have so graciously given is their fondness of the way our programs are structured and administered. Our continued commitment to being a "hand up" versus a "handout" resonates with those who know the challenges in the communities we are serving. They appreciate that we are able to offer enrichment opportunities in so many areas of life for the women and families we serve and they appreciate that we honor the boundaries of requiring accountability to class attendance as we are deeply committed to the personal growth of everyone who comes through our doors. The Gospel is absolutely spoken here at the Soulutions Center as it is unapologetically at the core of everything we offer and it is so incredibly rewarding to have the acknowledgement of a watching world that by shaping our organization after Christ's ministry model, we are being WHO He has called us to be exactly WHERE He has called us to be.

To Him be the glory!

We would love to share our new promotional video with you! If you'd like to view it, kindly email us at lifesaverheartbeat@gmail.com and we will send it to you; it is a 3 minute video that shares the vision and mission of this ministry as we approach our 33rd year!

Pardon me, but would you consider....?

~ A year end gift of any amount as we are currently facing a \$12,000 budgetary shortfall? Just to be clear, God is absolutely providing for the needs of the ministry as we are increasing the programs and benefits we offer to the families we serve. We are so very thankful for His provision! As we plan for the "known" financial projections, we can clearly see that to be on solid financial footing for the 2018 budget, we are in need of financial partnerships with the people of God.

~ A year end or January gift of \$10? The reach of our newsletter is expanding as more people are requesting to be on the mailing list; that being said, if ever person on our mailing list were to give a \$10 donation, this budget gap would be filled!

~ Establishing directed giving within your will or estate to benefit the long term work of Life Saver Ministries? We know that the needs in our area are great and as we invest in the families we are called to serve TODAY, we want to be solidly positioned to be a ministry of hope for generations to come.

~ Sharing the work of Life Saver Ministries with your church and missions board? LSM has been supported for decades by churches who see the domestic missions work of our Gospel centered ministry to families in crisis as an essential means by which the Great Commission is fulfilled. We seek to acquaint every local church body with this important work and invite the furthered partnership with God's people throughout upstate New York and beyond!

~ Becoming a familiar face here at The Soulutions Center? Ministry opportunities abound as our busy center is the perfect spot for a family in crisis to land. By becoming a regular attendee at our classes, even to simply share fellowship with the ladies we serve and be part of discussions, you are guaranteed opportunities to get to better know the ladies and families we serve. There are discipleship opportunities that begin at Soulutions but often carry on outside our walls as we need people to encourage, uplift and hold accountable the families we serve with the simple yet immensely powerful force of friendship.

Thank you for considering ways you can help and be a part of this growing ministry. Please know you are welcome to contact us at 518.725.577 or via email at lifesaverheartbeat@gmail.com. You are welcome to stop in and see us at 16 East Pine Street in Gloversville!

Time to get out your dancing shoes....

And mark your calendar!

Details forthcoming/ Stay tuned!



"You can't make this stuff up," those are words I have spoken more times than I can count in response to conversations with one of our precious volunteers. This story—true by all accounts—is especially timely as it all culminates at Christmas and is one of many bizarre, almost unbelievable situations that have strengthened rather than weakened this growing believer's faith. It all started back in the Spring when the unthinkable happened; a rented storage unit holding nearly all of her earthly possessions was, essentially, robbed. Through a series of crazy events, the rental company released the key to the unit to someone claiming to be our volunteer—a case of identity fraud that caused EVERYTHING in that storage unit to be gone in a matter of less than an hour. Beyond the value of the household items was the anguish of having the most sentimental items taken—items that would mean nothing to anyone but her—items like family pictures and handmade Christmas ornaments from when her now grown children were small. My heart broke for her. I'm ashamed to admit that I viewed the chances as slim to none that her precious items would be returned. We prayed over it and I watched an unshakeable peace exemplified in her attitude toward the situation. Fast forward to late fall and a call from the police prompted a ride to an abandoned building where a number of boxes, bins, and random items were found. No sign of the ornaments anywhere. A few household items were in fact hers but her heart's treasures were long gone...or so we thought. A few weeks later a knock on her door brought a police officer and another bin of items that had turned up elsewhere. As she began to unpack the box, a familiar ornament, then another, then another. By now I'm in tears as she tells me yet another testament to God's amazing grace—a way that He knew her heart, knew her need and brought her those tiny little items of immeasurable value to a mother's heart. Her Christmas wish was granted and the love of a Heavenly Father made evident....yet again.



People helping people



What a blessing it was earlier this month to spend some time getting to better know our community and friends of Pine Tree Rifle Club; their kindness and generosity is overwhelming and it is an honor to be part of people helping people and communities coming together to love our neighbors and be the change we all so desperately want to see!