

A Pastor to the Rainbows

Tedd Craven journeys into national forests to reach lost Rainbows 'tribes' with the gospel

Tedd Craven will give you the shirt off of his back, and his eyes can pierce a hole through your soul. He is selfless to a fault, but don't mistake him for being naive.

Each year, Craven and other ministers go into national forests to reach the lost tribes of Rainbows. His Order of the Good Samaritan Ministry based in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, is an outreach to Rainbows and other countercultural groups. For the last four years Craven has been on the road, traveling in converted buses and picking up youth hitchhiking alongside the road.

His vision is to have a home base someday—perhaps in South Florida—where he can set up discipling programs and a Bible study, and reach out to substance abusers. His burden to help the hurting is hard for him to hide. Fiercely protective of Rainbow youth, whom he says are a product of the degeneration of society, Craven is eager to get churches involved in reaching out to them.

"They feel that materialism is not the answer," Craven says. "There are a whole bunch of people looking for Jesus—not for religion, but for revelation."

Sitting across the table in a restaurant is 22-year-old Jerry, someone Craven picked up on the side of the road. Jerry's ears are pierced with metal studs—the lobes stretched to twice their normal size from the weight of the metal. Tattoos and bracelets cover both of his arms. His hair is matted, his clothes are dirty, and Jerry smells much like his companion—a dog waiting outside the restaurant door.

Craven calmly shares the gospel with Jerry, and the tough-guy

veneer fades.

"I'm worried I will fail God," Jerry confesses.

"We are dependent upon what Jesus has done, not what we have done," Craven reminds him.

"I have been searching for God a long time," Jerry adds. "I can't live through other people's experiences."

Later that week Jerry committed his heart to Christ and moved into a temporary home Craven set up in Spokane, Washington, to minister to street kids.

"God's heart breaks when the church watches the world go by just because they don't smell like they're supposed to," Craven says. "So what? Jesus loves and identifies with these kids because they are rejected the same way He was."

Craven's own broken heart is what first led him into Rainbow ministry seven years ago. One day while driving, he passed a teen-ager by the side of the road holding a sign that said, "We need food."

Craven returned to the spot an hour later with plenty of food, a Bible and the message of hope in Christ. The hitchhiker, who was a Rainbow, gave his life to Christ then and there. God then led Craven into Mississippi's DeSoto National Forest, where he learned more about the Rainbows and led several others into faith in Christ.

"Do you see things that hurt you, that cause you to weep, that touch your heart?" Craven asks. "Reaching out to others is not something we do out of obligation. It should be out of the flow of your life."

Don S. Otis is author of *Staying Fit After Forty* (Shaw), *Teach Your Children Well* (Revell) and *Trickle-Down Morality*

(Chosen). He and his wife, Susan, and their three teen-age boys live in Sandpoint, Idaho.