

Through One Church's Engagement, Man Turns From Alcoholism, Suicide to Deliverance in Christ

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During this time of the coronavirus pandemic especially, churches and nonprofits are working to find ways to reach out to people in need. Karl Hargestam, executive director of CityServe, a nonprofit that partners with California churches to help them serve their communities with household goods, furniture and food, knows firsthand the impact of the kind of help CityServe provides.

On *The Influencers Podcast* on the Charisma Podcast Network, Hargestam shares with host Dave Donaldson what he calls “the power of the resource.”

“This man in Hanford, California, he was at the end of the rope,” Hargestam says. “He was ... in a very dark time; he had lost his family. He had a wife, two children, he had lost his family due to mostly drinking ... turning to alcoholism. So he said he was really struggling; in fact, things had gone so dark for him that he had written a suicide note. ... He didn't see any hope.

As he wrote his suicide note, Hargestam explains, the CityServe church in the area knocked on the door. “And they had what we call ‘initial contact’ visits,” he says. “They used a gift basket [the church uses] to build a relationship in that neighborhood.”

But it wasn't about the basket, Hargestam says. In fact, the

man didn't even need the gifts himself. But the basket also contained an invitation to the church. Hargestam says the man told him, "What's incredible is I've never met people like that who would just ... be generous and give and talk about that they cared for me, and tangibly do it. ... That invitation, I put on the table. Two days after, I was drinking [alcohol] ... and that invitation was stuck on the bottom of the bottle.'

The man realized that the CityServe church was just down the street, Hargestam says, so he decided to go. "This was Saturday. So he walked in the next morning and yes, gave his life to Jesus. But what was incredible after this is that this man, he was just not just saved but just came on to the journey of deliverance, getting free from alcohol."

Hargestam and a reporter heard the man share the story of his radical change just one year later. He says, "You know in church, engagement is life. So today, his family is restored; his children were standing there; his brothers had also come to faith, his sister as well. But his young boy that was 9 years old, he was saying, 'I'm going to be a pastor when I grow up.' So that's what I think is incredible is the journey that people have when someone cares and engages in someone's life."

To hear more stories of God's incredible work through CityServe, listen to this podcast.