

Volunteer Army Blesses Downtrodden COVID Patients With More Than Just Prayer

A single mother of three and a nurse in a rural northern California town, Cheryl Gibbs celebrated Christmas with her three daughters in December by preparing a turkey dinner with trimmings. She posted a picture to social media of the feast and two desserts—pumpkin and fruit pies—to showcase her accomplishments on a very “different” Christmas Day.

Sadly, all four of them ate their dinners alone in separate rooms, quarantined by COVID-19.

“With almost zero energy and limited Christmas cheer, I ensured I put this bad boy together to give the girls a little bit of normalcy during a very COVID Christmas. Time has taught us that it is a choice to be happy and, if this brings my girls happiness, then I have succeeded,” Gibbs wrote on Facebook December 25.

Unable to breathe and desperately ill days later, Gibbs was denied treatment by her doctor who released her to go home alone—with no signs of improvement—to care for herself and the youngest of her three girls sickened by COVID.

Eight days after celebrating Christmas at home in Mariposa, California—a community west of Yosemite National Park—a worsening Gibbs contacted a Christian ministry located almost 1,200 miles away for help.

Within a short time of emailing Colorado-based Winsome Ministries, one of its 120-plus Christian volunteers called Gibbs.

“She was so sick,” recalls Pat Pilkington, a Winsome care

advocate. "I knew in her mama's heart that she was struggling, trying to take care of her baby. It just weighed on me. I wanted to give her something positive when she was laying there, giving her hope."

So, after connecting Gibbs to a doctor supportive of Winsome Ministries' approach to COVID-19 care, Pilkington sent her a text of the song, "The Blessing," popularized by worship leaders Kari Jobe and Cody Carnes.

"I didn't know where she was at, spiritually, but I just felt like she's laying there so sick. After sending the song, I listened to the lyrics, 'He is for you,' and I knew it was an encouragement to her," Pilkington said.

Gibbs cried tears of joy over "The Blessing."

Meanwhile, a "telehealth" appointment with a doctor in northern Colorado revealed that Gibbs needed oxygen and medications immediately. So, Pilkington contacted a church in Mariposa, where a former service chaplain agreed to pick up and deliver medications ordered by the doctor, along with oxygen.

God, prayer, people, medicine and oxygen saved Gibbs' life.

Beginning the third full week of February, Gibbs is back to work as a nurse. She's grateful for Pilkington, Winsome Ministries and the church chaplain who delivered life-saving supplies and food.

"She is an angel," Gibbs said of Winsome's Pilkington. "All four of us were very sick and when my own doctor wouldn't help, Pat did. She made those connections in Colorado to ensure that I was cared for. I have an everlasting appreciation for Pat," Gibbs said.

Pilkington believes Gibbs is a miracle like her daughter, who survived a complicated birth—all three of them overcomers,

thanks to care from Christian doctors.

"I've seen God's hand in every aspect of Winsome. His presence is so apparent in the people. The Holy Spirit is working through all of them, and it blesses my socks off," Pilkington said.

Winsome's founder, Vicki Sutter, celebrates Gibbs' healing of COVID and she values the growing friendship with Pilkington.

"God revealed to me that I'm only half done," Pilkington said. "She's healed now of COVID and she's doing fine but, spiritually, I'm only half done. I'm going to be in contact with this woman for the next 20 years," she added.

The wife of a church pastor, Sutter leads another kind of army—all of them Christian prayer warriors and servant leaders—committed to caring for COVID-19 patients. Finances, vaccination status, political views and spiritual beliefs aren't considerations when people like Gibbs contact Winsome for help.

In less than three months of its founding in December, Winsome has cared for 539 (and counting) people in 17 states from its base in Sutter's Loveland, Colorado home. Her husband, Carl Sutter, is the founding pastor of Foundations, a Spirit-filled church. He remembers providing the kind of pastoral care his wife and Winsome volunteers are now offering people with COVID.

The ministry connects people to early treatment and medications; provides guidance and support through care advocates; supports patients with prayer and encouragement; offers financial assistance; and delivers meals and "encouragement baskets."

Winsome has provided information and resources to 50-plus people seeking guidance on supplements, vaccine-injury assistance, long-term COVID recovery and doctors who provide

prophylactic medications.

Volunteers have delivered oxygen to 17 people who avoided hospitalizations.

“We have experienced the immeasurable privilege of being used by God to bless those with COVID and their families,” said Sutter. “We’ll never know the lives that were saved because they received early treatment and were kept out of the hospital,” she added.

Sutter believes COVID-19 has presented opportunities for churches to revolutionize care by pulling Christians off the sidelines into ministry, extending the hands of Jesus to sick people.

When Winsome Ministries formed in October of 2021, Sutter sensed that many people feared losing their freedom to speak against “global tyranny” tied to COVID restrictions.

The ministry’s first event, titled “Faith Over Fear—For Such a Time As This,” drew 900 people to a Tuesday night, three-hour conference at a high school. [View it here.](#)

“Our goal for the night was to encourage, educate, organize and activate,” said Sutter, who spoke after four experts from legal, medical, family policy and constitutional backgrounds offered perspectives on the pandemic.

A woman who effectively manages multiple sclerosis—an “underlying health condition”—by using homeopathic remedies decided to volunteer with Winsome after attending the conference with her husband. Both of them took the medication ivermectin for COVID-19.

“We have had phenomenal results with treatments because people don’t need to die from COVID, or go to the hospital. That’s not what our government is telling us,” said Judy Papenfuss, a Winsome volunteer.

What's great about Winsome, Papenfuss said, is that God has raised an army. The army is—in practical ways—ministering to people who don't know Jesus. Those people, in turn, spread news about Winsome to others who don't know Jesus.

Most everybody who contacts Winsome welcomes prayer or a customized text with Bible verses. "You wouldn't believe how many people have taken us up on that. That is really a blessing to people," Sutter said.

Recently, an elderly single man without family needed transportation to his treatment with monoclonal antibodies. As the volunteer drove the man to and from the clinic, they recognized each other from a Christian motorcycle ministry.

While COVID-19 has divided, isolated, broken and killed people, God is using for good what the devil intended for evil. "We're all so filled with joy because we're seeing God work every single day.

"Beyond that, we're seeing lives saved. We've kept people from being in the hospital. They've been very far into their illness, and we've gotten them medications. And they've responded; they've recovered. You know that's just the practical part—healing the body," Sutter said.

"What's most important is I want to shout from the mountaintop all that God is doing. He gets the praise," said Sutter, who credits the body of Christ—with 150 deployed volunteers—for being the hands and feet of Jesus. "These amazing volunteers are the cream of the crop. We are planning on a praise and thanksgiving service in April or May," she said. {eo}

Steve Rees is a former general assignment reporter who, with one other journalist, first wrote about the national men's movement Promise Keepers from his home in Colorado. Rees and Promise Keepers Founder Bill McCartney attended the Boulder Vineyard. Today Rees writes in his free time.

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