

WORDS FROM THE WILDERNESS

Establishing a Prayer Team To Share God's Heart to Reach the Lost

Let me introduce you to my friend, Pete

Last month, as I gave some examples of people the Lord is leading us to meet and build relationships with toward the gospel, one of the people I mentioned was "Driftwood Pete." Now, let me take a moment to introduce you further to Pete and what he is all about, and how that is a beautiful picture of the effect we pray the gospel will have here on the gulf coast....

Pete is a fisherman by trade. He lives in a house next to where one of the local rivers meanders into the Gulf of Mexico. All in all, it's not a bad life, nor a bad place to be. But where Pete draws his fame (and his nickname) is from how he spends his "free time," when he's not out on the fishing boats:

Pete likes to take his own small boat and go up into the river delta, where he goes diving....for wood. You see, back in the 1800's, there were over twenty sawmills along the river. But over time, they were abandoned, and mostly forgotten. So, the river took them, along with the piles of lumber that had been left behind, and they all got swept away and covered over by muddy river bottom.

So Pete takes his boat, and finds the right places in the river — and jumps in! With mask and snorkel on, he dives into eight to twelve foot water and crawls along the bottom, to see what he can find. It's murky down there, and usually he can only see a couple of feet in front of him. That makes for some interesting intersections (once, he reached out and felt an alligator lying on the bottom of the river)! But it is also the way Pete finds the treasure that he is seeking — Old, river soaked pieces of hardwood lumber and timber. When he finds these, he pulls them out and takes them to his boat. Of course, after nearly or even over a hundred years in brackish water, there are barnacles on them. And other little creatures, making their home in the wood and drawing their nourishment from it.



Pete finds other things in the water, too: Old fishing nets. Buoys. Abandoned crab traps. Glass bottles. And rope. Lots and lots of rope that has been cast off or lost from the fleets of fishing and shrimp boats that make their way through this area. All of these things, Pete brings up and places in his boat.

But as much in awe as I am of how Pete harvests his treasures, and as much as I may think, "Man, you'd never catch me going in that water, with gators and who knows what else," the really amazing part is what happens when Pete returns home with his catch: Coming in from the river, Pete takes the castoffs, the bobbles, the "river junk" to his studio....and he starts to work. He cleans. He polishes. And he crafts. He has the eye of an artist, and sees the potential in what to you and me would mostly look like junk. He sees how different pieces of wood can fit together with just the right matching shapes to create...a pelican, or a duck, or even a house for real birds. He mends nets and casts them as decorations. He takes rope and lays it out in

arrangements that are perfect for landscaping or other decor. And nothing goes to waste - not the smallest float or fishing bobber, not the channel markers, nothing. Everything finds its use and its purpose - under the eye of the one who takes what was once junk...and re-creates it with new purpose, and beauty.

And the end result is astonishing. So much so that local artists come and purchase Pete's wares that they will then use to add their own touch and flare to. And when Pete takes his re-claimed treasures to art shows, they sell out within minutes. And there is even a man who comes and buys Pete's re-claimed wood and craftsmanship and takes them by the truckload to Miami — where he re-sells them to tourists and makes a fortune!

And Pete Is Telling the Story of the Gospel

The connection is clear - and beautiful. Here is Pete, taking junk. Trash. Things that once had a purpose...but they were then swept away, covered over by the river, and forgotten. But Pete goes and finds them. At great risk, he himself enters into the mud and the filth to find what was once lost and bring it home again. And there, he works, with a loving touch, to clean, polish, and re-fit. Giving things that everyone else would have given up on and written off new purpose, new beauty, and new "life."

My friends, That is the Gospel! It is exactly what our Savior did - and does! He dives under the surface....to rescue us when our lives were being flooded by sin and by disconnection...and He brings us home. At great risk, and against great enemies and threats, He takes people like you and me, who have known the rejection of this world, who have heard this world speak into us and say, "You're worthless." He takes broken, rejected, worthless things, and He makes them new again, beautiful again, loved again, and useful again.

Wow! I am thankful for my new friend, "Driftwood Pete." And for the truths he is living out in front of me, whether he means to or not. I am thankful for the painting of the gospel he is creating with his hobby - that is really his life's work.



What I Am Discovering

As Christians, we can easily have a tendency and a natural inclination to hang out in safe, familiar places. We talk about the need for the gospel in the lives of lost people. We have conferences. And retreats. And conventions. We talk. A lot. But the idea of taking the gospel to people, of going where they are, of diving in with them, of really listening to their hurts and their stories, and of feeling what they feel because we enter into where they are — That often seems too scary, intimidating, and uncomfortable. Trust me, I feel all of that too, friends. But our Savior was willing to leave the comfortable, to leave the place of great worship and great glory, and He was willing to leave sacred space - to come to us, and become "God with us," and to make us into new creations that shine with His purpose!

That is the example I pray we will follow in this work in Ocean Springs (and the One whose power we need to do it). I am praying that we will be able to take that story to the lives and the people God is leading us to in Ocean Springs. I have written before about how this is a tourist area, a place of great fun and festivals. But how, if you look beneath the surface, the lostness and the pain run deep. There are people whose lives and whose stories have been swept away by circumstances, or floods of suffering, or loss. There are people who are struggling with addictions, or most painfully, the loss of hope. And the Lord is giving Stephanie and me the privilege to come alongside and weave ourselves into their stories.



Some of these people may be from the “Government Street District,” where the brokenness is so real, and so easy to see and hear. Or some of these people may be from believing families we are having the privilege to find and begin to draw close to. We hope that some of them may be part of the new core and new church that God starts down here — but Christians are just as broken and just in need of the gospel every day!

And for all of them, I pray that, together, we will be part of the great reclamation project of the gospel. That what was lost will be found again. And what was broken and useless, will shine anew with the beauty that only the love and the gospel of Jesus can bring.

So, in this calling, will you pray for us and with us?

- Pray for me as I go on “Fishing Trips” to Government Street. I may not be named “Driftwood Mark,” but pray that the Lord will lead me to dive in with people and create open opportunities for them to share their story, that I would listen, and gain their trust. And over the course of many, many conversations, that I might get to be part of the gospel coming into their lives to rescue them and reclaim them.
- Pray for Stephanie and me as we begin to assemble and meet with believers whom the Lord has also led to Ocean Springs - That together we would become a community of the gospel, reminding each other of our need for grace, and God’s provision of it. And that we don’t exist for ourselves, but rather to be a rescue and reclaiming station for the gospel into the town of Ocean Springs.
- And a praise report: As of last week, we are now in our new house! And we feel that God has specifically and powerfully provided just the right house, for our family and for our ministry. As we unbox and settle in, please pray with us that the presence of God’s Spirit would be in this house, that He would make it a place of welcome, and of hospitality. Of worship, and relationship. Of safety, and of people being able to come with their questions, their fears, their disconnection...and that they would find here a place where they can be connected once again to their Savior and Creator. For He is making all things new!

Thank you for praying for us! And for your support!

The need here in Ocean Springs is even greater than what I realized when we moved here a few months ago.... But so is the potential for the gospel! Thank you for coming with us in prayer.

As you pray for us, if the Lord leads you to also partner with us financially, here is how you can give:

- Use the QR code to the right, or visit <http://give.pcamna.org/to/1749>
- Checks can also be sent payable to "Mission to North America"
PO Box 890233
Charlotte, NC, 28289-0233.
(Write "Mark Horn, Ocean Springs Church Plant" on the memo line)
- And finally, more information for all of this and updates on our Ocean Springs journey can be found at our website: www.PlantHopeOS.org!



Thank you. Thank you! God is at work. The Master in His harvest field, and the Father is running down the road. And we believe with all of our heart that He is going to use the prayers and partnership of people like you to change the very horizon of eternity itself! Grace and peace to you!

A closing encouragement:

"And the wrens have returned and they're nesting, in the hollow of that oak where his heart once had been. And he lifts up his arms in a blessing, for being born again."

— Rich Mullins

