

## Recovery Ministries

Innovation<sup>3</sup> Conference, Dallas, TX Jan 27-28, 2009

For additional resources from Innovation<sup>3</sup> visit [learnings.leadnet.org](http://learnings.leadnet.org)

**Jorge Acevedo**, Grace United Methodist Church, Cape Coral, FL ([www.egracechurch.com](http://www.egracechurch.com))

**“Lord, Send Us the People Nobody Else Wants or Sees!”**

*I believe that most churches in America are guilty of spiritual malpractice: they offer Jesus as the healer without offering places to heal.*

We started with a holistic approach. Today we have “Celebrate Recovery” every Friday night. We have expanded to include grief and divorce care, money, health, and reached out to the whole recovery community. We participate in many outside ministries. Our people are there; we don’t see it as us and them.

God gave us grace to fix the insides of people, but their outsides were still torn apart. So we bought a grocery store and opened a holistic ministry center where we’re doing GED and vocational training, medical, dental—the outside stuff to match the inside.

Our church DNA strand #8 says:

*“We are a center for healing and recovery, and God has asked us to assist him in rescuing people from the hell that they’re living in as well as the hell that they’re headed to.”*

What fuels it is a prayer that we pray every day in our church:

*“Lord, send us the people that nobody else wants and that nobody else sees.”*

When you pray this prayer, God will bring these people to you.

*I came to see that “these people” was me.*

*The transparency and the authenticity of the pastors is essential. We all have our issues, such as anger, anxiety, overeating, or perfectionism.*

The results have been spectacular with more than 500 in our Friday night program and more than 800 each week. Hundreds of people come to Jesus every year.

**Teresa McBean**, NorthStar Community Church, Richmond, VA ([www.northstarcommunity.com](http://www.northstarcommunity.com))

**Taking God’s Message of Hope to the Streets**

God puts us right from the inside out. Families come to us and stay messy for a long time.

*In the meantime we just tell each other the truth, over and over and over again, as gently as possible.*

We are a church focused on recovery, started in response to a failure. We weren’t reaching the people Jesus wanted us to reach.

I was brought up in an addictive family myself. I thought Rom. 12, “Be ye transformed” ought to be visible, but it didn’t look that way in the church to me. I felt internal pressure. We did a terrible job with the first couple who came to us straight out of rehab.

We started with *Celebrate Recovery* in a box, and have since developed other curriculum for Christ-centered 12 steps.

Moving our ministry out of the church turned out to be brilliant. Now we have enough name recognition for us to move back in. It’s a multi-site recovery ministry.

We tried to do everything we did using recovery principles. It is the gospel message delivered in a recovery order. We provide a place where we hope you will come, and then at some point we'll talk about what we believe, since believing is the 3<sup>rd</sup> step in the Christ-centered 12 Steps.

**Matt Russell**, Mercy Street, Houston, TX ([www.mercystreet.org](http://www.mercystreet.org))

**God's Relentless Pursuit: Stories from a Street called Mercy**

Studies show 80% of incoming college freshmen have a diagnosable addictive disorder. If our churches do not address this problem systemically, we may as well close the doors.

The American church has adopted an *ascendancy narrative* that goes like this:

"I was really screwed up, I gave my life to Jesus, got involved in a Christian small group and my life got better." But what happens if your story is different?

*The gospel of Jesus invites us to a narrative of descendancy.*

Jesus descended into hell. Often we want a resurrection without a death. We want to ascend before we descend. *But there is no ascension unless there is first a descension.*

It is there that you begin to deal with the things that cause you to resist the Holy Spirit.

Many people leave the church because they can no longer be honest about what they struggle with.

They can get up at AA or NA and say it, but they can't say it at church.

*The most important part of Recovery ministry is developing the spiritual ear.*

I need to listen to them so I can hear where the Spirit of God is active in their life.

Recovery Ministry enters into relationship and asks the question, "Where are you?"

It's the same question God asked Adam in the garden.

We are reclaiming the narrative of Genesis through Jesus saying, "Where are you?"

We are creating a community where people can step into the faith and say this is where I am, this is where I've been and I'm undone, I'm powerless over these things.

The heart of Recovery Ministry is not starting programs. It asking, "Where is Christ?" and responding.