



COFFEE,
CREAM, AND

Jesus

.....
BREAKING THROUGH BARRIERS ONE CUP
OF COFFEE AT A TIME

As summer transitions into fall in Pittsburgh, colorful foliage lines the riverfront trails along the major waterways. The loyal residents love their city. They want everyone to love it, too, and to share their passion for team sports, pierogi hoagies, and lots of French fries.

The city also sees other kinds of change happening, not just the changing of the seasons. As the years pass, the city's gloomy skyline continues to transform as vibrant tech start-ups and major company offices slowly replace blue-collar businesses. Many think that along with the city's traditionally blue-collar identity, its rich religious history is fading into the past as well.

The Steel City is now recognized as the second most irreligious city in the US. Though residents in its neighborhoods are friendly, many are skeptical of the church, or have been hurt by the church or its members. Building deep, true trust is a challenge for missionaries like David Domalski, who serves as a journeyman with the North American Mission Board (NAMB). Even so, David has found that Pittsburghers are often willing to listen, and he is willing to talk. Just give him a cup of coffee and a little time, and he says conversation will turn into "Jesus talk."

THE GENSEND EFFECT

David blends in well with the locals—especially the college students since he is a recent college graduate. Before dedicating his career to full-time missions work with NAMB, David visited Pittsburgh multiple times on short-term mission trips. His last mission trip there was as part of a six-week program called GenSend.

GenSend is an immersive short-term missions experience for students on school break looking to find their place in God's story.

GenSend is designed to teach students how to have missional impact. David spent two summers learning to live on mission, and he brought his experience back with him to his college town. Suddenly, department stores, restaurants, and his campus became missions fields to him.

"Intentionally sharing my faith has changed the way I see the world and see people," he said.

David's passion for evangelism is best seen when he's engaging in one-on-one, faith-based conversations. "I know witnessing is more than literal words when sharing your faith, but I believe that to truly share good news with people, verbally sharing the gospel is pertinent," he said. He has learned through experience that sharing the gospel becomes easier and more enjoyable with repetition. Now it is something he genuinely seeks.

David's experience with GenSend solidified his desire to move to Pittsburgh. In summer 2020, God answered

his prayer to move into the Oakland neighborhood where he had served. With 80,000 college students living in the same neighborhood close to the University of Pittsburgh, the setting was perfect. He came alongside Zakk Roberts and Chris Richards, who were planting Steel City Church, and in June 2022 he became the church's college ministry coordinator.

A FORMULA THAT WORKS

In the beginning, David said he "had the freedom to spend nights connecting with people and building relationships." Now, he says, "Thankfully, my job also allows me the freedom to meet some people for coffee or lunch throughout the week."

On weekends and weeknights, David has often been found on the soccer field or basketball court, where he has initiated witnessing opportunities. He knows building relationships is crucial. He also understands the importance of his own relationship with God to his ministry work, and knows God wants to maintain a relationship with him first before He wants his work. This is the driving formula from which David operates. If it were the other way around, he believes his life and ministry would become unbalanced. Galatians 1:10 keeps his mission in perspective: "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ."

PROJECTS WITH PURPOSE

Coffee, ice cream, deli sandwiches—David has used them all as an impetus to change lives. When a new church plant needed to advertise, the only business that would allow a tent to be set up on the property was an ice cream shop. Word got out about the new church, and "sundaes" took on a whole new meaning for the ice cream shop employees.

Poverty, hunger, and homelessness are prevalent in the Pittsburgh area, opening the door to a variety of ministries. David assists in a monthly food bank and helps serve a meal every other Sunday before the church service. He also works to provide groceries for those in need and backpacks for the homeless containing ready-to-eat, tear-open pouches.

Children in the community are primarily reached through the neighborhood community center. Basketball serves as David's gospel inroad to middle- and high school-aged students. Another ministry, the Foster Love Project, provides backpacks equipped with clothes, games, and accessories to help foster children feel at home when they are introduced to their foster family.

For a while, David ministered alone but yearned for co-laborers, saying he appreciated the sense of accountability,

missional motivation, and peace a ministry partner could bring. He said God showed His faithfulness by providing a few more team members recently, including his wife, Casey, who he married in November 2021.

“Casey has been volunteering in many capacities with me since our relationship began,” David said. “She helps connect with mission teams in town and also discipled a few girls last summer [who] were here on a GenSend summer experience. Casey loves discipleship, so her help often comes in conversations with me on how to effectively set up a culture and environment where people can be held accountable and grow in holiness.”

One of the newer ministries in which David has become involved is Eden’s Farm, a nonprofit organization that seeks to care for and support survivors of human trafficking. Whether it’s serving the ladies at Eden’s Farm, people at the food bank, or homeless people, helping those who are in need causes David to reflect upon his many blessings and intensifies his desire to serve “the least of these.”

He said Proverbs 24:11—“Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter”—encourages him to persevere in his role to share the gospel with everyone, whether they are victims of human trafficking, struggling college students, homeless individuals, hungry children, or hurting adults. David prays what he calls the “scary prayer,” asking to be given divine appointments, to recognize them, and to act upon them. He knows a prayer like that will surely be answered, so he must be ready. Only through the Holy Spirit does he find confidence, wisdom, and success in his witnessing.

“I can’t save people,” David said. “The only way I can ever be successful in a witnessing opportunity is through the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit moves according to His time and purpose. Sometimes, it only takes a single moment for a person to surrender him or herself to the Lord, but more often, David has seen this happen through extended conversations and relationship development. Recently, a college freshman to whom David had been ministering called him one morning to talk about God. The young man’s circumstances were crumbling, and he was broken by the guilt of his sin. Something had to

change. David pointed him toward the lifeline of Jesus, and he grabbed hold, moving from death to life, finally experiencing the joy of the Lord.

Even when he is unable to develop a relationship, David is quick to offer a smile and ask for a name. “Trying to brighten someone’s day is not the ultimate form of witnessing for Jesus, but it is a start,” he said.

Just ask Bill, a blind man David often sees on the busy sidewalk in his neighborhood. Whenever David passes by, he says hello. Bill shakes David’s hand, feels his arms, and, upon recognition, says, “Hello, King David!”

While working to develop relationships with others, David has sought the wisdom of other men to help him grow in his faith and ministry. He says he has been blessed with these spiritual and personal mentors within his church family.

BEING FAITHFUL DESPITE CHALLENGES

David confesses one of his primary challenges in ministry is maintaining a sense of peace. He struggles with comparison to those in secular jobs and ministry vocations. On busy days stress takes hold, making him feel inadequate. On slower days he may find himself feeling devalued.

David also struggles against the consumeristic attitudes of many in the church and community. Instead of expecting the church to supply all their needs, David wants each individual to have the desire to serve and help others who are in need.

David asked for prayer for the following areas:

- The opportunity to lead an evangelistic Bible study for male college students
- Development of a mentoring program with Christian college students
- God’s direction in his life for vocational ministry; this summer he began serving full time as a college ministry coordinator for a church plant in Pittsburgh

“God is the agent behind all successes for His kingdom, and He simply calls me to be faithful,” David said. Let’s be faithful to join David in relentless prayer for the lost in Pittsburgh and in our own communities.

KAREN ALLEN lives in Birmingham, Alabama, and often participates in short-term international mission trips. Read about some of those trips on her website, ewerblessed.com.



Pittsburgh: Coffee, Cream, and Jesus



FOR GROUP OR CHURCHWIDE STUDY:

BEFORE THE SESSION: On pieces of paper, write down the following Scripture passages— Matthew 26:11, 25:35–40; Isaiah 61:1; Deuteronomy 15:7–8, 10–11.

1. On a display table, place a few grocery items such as easy-open food packages or non-perishable food items, as well as a basketball or soccer ball, a bag of coffee, a jar of ice cream topping, and a map of the community surrounding the church.
2. After participants arrive, explain the part each of the items displayed have played in David Domalski's ministry efforts in Pittsburgh.
3. Say: *While these are useful tools, David states his relationship with God is the true key that enables him to build relationships with others.*
4. Divide participants into five groups. Distribute the papers with Scripture passages written on them. Ask each group to read and discuss the meaning of their assigned passages. Using David's ministry methods as a guide, encourage them to brainstorm and share initiatives your church could use to reach your community.
5. Read David's requests aloud and pray together over each. Close by praying your church congregation would be servants to those in need in your community.



FOR FAMILY STUDY:

1. Display the items listed in number 1 under the Group Study to spark interest for family discussion.
2. Ask: *What kind of ministry does our church or other nonprofits provide in our community?*
3. List the various methods David Domalski has used to reach the people of Pittsburgh with the love of Christ.
4. Ask: *Do you think you, or us together as a family, could use one of these methods to talk to our community about Jesus?* Choose one method of outreach your family could take part in together.
5. Close in prayer, asking God to open your family's eyes to the needs of those around them and that He would give you wisdom in meeting them.



FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDY:

1. Pray God would open your eyes and heart to what He may reveal as you study.
2. Consider the various ministry methods David Domalski has used to reach the people of Pittsburgh for Christ. How could you use your own skills to share Christ with your community?
3. Read Matthew 26:11; Isaiah 61:1; Deuteronomy 15:7–8, 10–11; Matthew 25:35–40 and ask God to show you people or areas in your community you can serve in His name.
4. Pray for David, his wife, Casey, and their coworkers as they serve in Pittsburgh. Ask God to open your heart to service in your community.
5. If you are not already involved in your church's community ministry efforts, make a commitment to do so. Write down ideas that would help you build new relationships with non-believers in your community.