

Mission Tuesday #140



One of our Mission friends asked me at lunchtime one day last week, "Julie, what's this unconditional love?" I wasn't sure if I heard him right. He was reading one of our new brochures, and was pointing to a quote inside from Pastor Barb. Pastor Barb wrote it in her letter announcing her retirement to the Board of Directors a few months ago. Her quote is about unconditional love...

"At the heart of our vision is to love every human being unconditionally as Jesus loves us. This simple principle is Christ's instruction to His Church, regardless of whether people change or not. It is Mission of Hope's belief, though, that through this ministry, NO ONE can continue to be subjected to His love and remain the same. Therefore, we know we are making a difference in each one's life and in the life of our community. I am fully confident that this vision will continue on!"

I tried to answer our friend's question the best I could, using the analogy of him and I having a brother/sister relationship, and how I, being his sister, loves him no matter what. He then asked with amazement, "You consider me like a brother?" "Yes, I do Tim," was my reponse. He then asked a third question, "So, if I did something bad to disappoint you, you're saying you would still love me?" "Yes, I would," I answered him. He replied with a shocked look on his face, "Seriously?! You would still love me?" "Yes, Tim, I would. That's what unconditional love is." One of the other guys eating at the same table said, "That's what they do here at the Mission...they love us unconditionally." I couldn't help but smile. :)

This concept of unconditional love isn't always the easiest to grasp, so I understand why our friend was having a hard time with it. I look back at all the things I have done in my

life and how many times I turned my back to Jesus. Yet, He never stopped loving me. He never turned His back on me. He never made me jump through hoops to come back to Him. He was there, waiting with open arms to welcome me back. I'm so thankful.

Some of our friends who come in have never experienced that unconditional love before...until they experience it at Mission of Hope.

One of our friends, whom I haven't seen for a few weeks came in Friday. I said hello to him, shared that I was happy to see him, and asked him how he was. He said he had been "out having too much fun in his addiction," he lost his job, lost his apartment and was starting over...again. He has struggled with this addiction for as long as I've known him which is close to eleven years. He needed food from our Food Pantry, and I think he also just needed someone to talk to. As we talked, my heart was warmed realizing that our friend knew where he could go where he would be accepted and encouraged to start over, through being loved unconditionally. He knew he'd find that at Mission of Hope. It's humbling to think God could possibly be using Mission of Hope to bring our friend back to Him.

I pray for our friends every day, that they will experience the love of Jesus when they come in to Mission of Hope. I pray for us as staff for Jesus to pour out His love through us. Pastor Barb's quote above is so true..."NO ONE can continue to be subjected to His love and remain the same." It's only through His love that lives are being changed and hearts are being transformed!

Until next time, may you experience Jesus' unconditional love in a very real way!

Julie