

Our 14th Year!

LIGHTSHINE MINISTRIES IN ALASKA

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Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

October/November 2009

Winter is coming in Alaska and with it comes the challenges of the mind for those who live there. Darkness and extreme cold force people inside and without the encouragement of family and friends, some turn to suicide. These statistics are appalling.

1. During a 36 month study (9/1/03 - 9/1/06), there were 426 suicides in Alaska.
2. The age group of 20 to 29 had both the greatest number of suicides and the highest rate per 100,000 population.
3. In 2004, there were 155 suicides in Alaska, which was the highest rate in the United States. The suicide rate for Alaska was 23.4/100,000 population, more than double the U.S. rate of 11/100,000.

www.hss.state.ak.us/suicideprevention/pdfs_sspc/sspcfollowback2-07.pdf

God's love compels us to deal with the issue of suicide; this is one of the most perplexing challenges the church of Jesus Christ faces today in Alaska. It may be impossible for you to imagine how a person could be so desperate as to take his/her own life but it is happening nonetheless. The state of Alaska leads the nation in death by suicide.



I recently asked several Alaskans on my Facebook account for their personal input as to why suicide is such a problem in their state. One native woman emailed me and observed, ***"... I know our state is in sad shape when it comes to the national average ... we have a smaller population than most but highest in many rates (suicide, rape, incest & sexual abuse, alcoholism, etc.) ... that's really sad ..."*** Yes sister, it is sad and this is what motivates us as a ministry. **As believers in Jesus Christ we must be pro-active in seeking our Heavenly Father for answers. This is what LightShine Ministries is called to do.**

Another person who has worked with Native teens for 40 years told me they see them gravitate toward the darker side of pop culture (gangs, gangster rap, drugs and alcohol) as well as the darkest side of their culture which is rooted in spiritism. As followers of Jesus Christ we know Deuteronomy 18:9-13 strictly forbids spiritism. But we also know that not everyone sees it that way.

I recently read William L. Iggiagruk Hensley's book called **"Fifty Miles From Tomorrow - A Memoir of Alaska and the Real People"**. It is a must read for anyone trying to understand the struggles of native people who are being forced to assimilate to an ever changing world. Speaking of this, Hensley wrote: *"As I pondered our history, my initial reaction was rage. There were so many villains in the piece that it was almost impossible to settle on who was most to blame. The government had taken our children away and turned them against our language and culture. The missionaries had damned our dances and silenced our songs and denounced our spirit world as unworthy. The greedy traders had gyped our people and happily siphoned off their hard-won earnings as payment for swamping us with tobacco and alcohol."* (William L. Iggiagruk Hensley, Sarah Crichton Books, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, 2009, page 213, paragraph 1).

When I read that, I could clearly see that Mr. Hensley does not understand the real battle. This is not merely a clash of cultures but rather an intense spiritual struggle of rulers and authorities in heavenly

realms (Ephesians 6:12). As followers of Jesus Christ, we see the spirit world as the initiator of depression and self hate. Satan is the destroyer who hates mankind because we are created in the image of God. **We believe demonic spirits preying on weak victims are to blame for suicide in Alaska based on the teachings of the Bible.** In John 10:10 Jesus said,

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." NKJV

Many times followers of Jesus Christ are blamed for changing culture and introducing ideas that "ruin" thousands of years of tradition. That is one way of looking at it. But perhaps the real issue is that His followers have simply brought **the revelation of Who Jesus Christ really is, their Creator** (Colossians 1:15-20). Contrary to what some critics say, Jesus Christ is not a "European God". His people (the Jews) were actually a tribal, minority people of color who were dominated under a white oppressor (the Romans). The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is God (the *logos* - John 1:1) and came to this world as God in human flesh (vs.14). He came to die for the sins of the world and make a way for us to be reconciled with the Father (1 John 2:2). This fact of history affects the entire human race. It transcends time and all cultures. Yes, this message came through Europe and was brought to the North American continent by white people but they were merely messengers of a greater Truth that even shamed their own European paganism. There have been many mistakes made throughout history. But I believe that native and white believers must be able to speak openly about this and come to some conclusions together.

This is a heavy topic isn't it? But we believe it is foundational to understanding the problems people face in Alaska and the rest of the world. We believe that it is only after all of God's people (both native and white) understand and acknowledge what the problems are that we can have victory over them.



Then, we need to join hands and minister to others together **as one people (white and native), brothers and sisters together as the Body of Christ** (*all living followers of Jesus Christ*) - encouraging others to be all that God made them to be even **while maintaining their own cultural identities**. This is ultimately what we do in Alaska while serving with our hands. I am friends with many native people who understand the need to walk together in unity. Our love for each other binds us together and gives us purpose in life. This is God's way and He is blessed when we love one another.

With your help, we will press on into this New Year loving people and helping them lead others to an intimate relationship with their Creator!

Tom Denlinger - Ministry Director

www.lightshineministries.org

Transporting our teams is a major need for our ministry. Could you help us purchase a 15 passenger van? Donate a utility trailer, power tools, a generator, nail guns? Our goal is to drive a van and utility trailer to Alaska in the Spring filled with tools! Can you help us achieve this goal? All donations are tax deductible.



LightShine Alaska Staff

Tom Denlinger - *Director*
 Jeff Zimmerman - *Treasurer*
 Scott Shenk - *Administrator*
 Teri Newell - *Bookkeeper*
 Kris Polizzi - *Administrative Assistant*

Mel Miller - *Team Leader*
 Rob Paire - *Team Leader*
 Jerry Polizzi - *Team Leader*
 Jeremy Schmoel - *Team Leader*
 Dennis Schlossman - *Team Leader*

General Volunteers

Ruth Denlinger
 Bill Endslo
 Larry Newell
 Brian Shaffer

2010 Team Assignments

Mountain Home Fellowship

February 26 - March 7
 Skilled Drywall Finishers,
 Painters, Flooring

Globe Creek Camp

May 22-30
 Skilled Carpenters Needed
optional second week at:

Seldovia Christian Retreat

May 29-June 6
 Skilled Carpenters Needed

Globe Creek Camp

August 7-15
 Father/Son
 Trailblazing Team

More teams are being considered and planned. Please PRAY for us and consider joining us.

PLEASE VISIT OUR
 WEBSITE FOR DETAILS!