

Gideon Speaker Lloyd Sharp

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. It's fantastic to be here. What a beautiful church and a beautiful church family you all have. It's great to see everybody shaking hands again.

God's blessed you in a mighty way with young children and with a loving church family. I praise God for that. Gideons like to start off a lot of times with raising a Bible, and we'll say a Bible in every hand, Jesus Christ in every heart. Amen?

And that's kind of what the Gideons do. We take the Bible worldwide, all around the world, and right here locally in Middle Tennessee. We want to see every man, woman, boy, and child come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Amen?

And there's two verses that the Gideons, that I've seen as a Gideon, that I see played out over and over again.

And you'll see it as I share some testimonies and as I share about the Gideon ministry. I think you'll, it's amazing to see the power of God's Word and how it does play out in people's lives, especially when it comes to leading the lost to Christ, which is what we're all about.

[1 : 22] And the first one I'll share with you is Isaiah 55 11. You all have heard it before, but I'll say it again. So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth. It shall accomplish, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the things whereunto I sent it.

And the other one is Romans 10 17. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Amen? And you'll see that in the life of one Mr. Lee Adams.

Lee Adams was a man living a life full of drug abuse, alcohol abuse, intimidation, and violence. But you see, that kind of made sense. It kind of makes sense because Lee Adams was a member of the notorious motorcycle gang known as the Hells Angels. Lee, he represented the Hells Angels well.

He, a big, burly man. He was the kind of guy that some of you I shared with. I'm a retired Metro police officer, and it's the kind of guy that I wouldn't have hesitated to get on my radio and say, can you start me two or three more cars?

[2 : 40] But he was that kind of intimidating presence and just a mean, mean man and full of violence is what he was. But Lee's job in the Hells Angels primarily was to get, find and get drugs and supply the gang with drugs just whenever he can.

He wanted to be high, and he wanted everyone around him to be high as well. Lee had, through all that, he had destroyed his marriage, his relationship with his family, and he was just a mess.

And life come crumbling down on Lee in Southern California where he was eventually arrested with a large sum of cocaine and was sentenced to five years in a California prison.

Lee was, his mind was, he was a drug-sick mind by the time he was broken, and as he entered into his jail cell, he just fell apart.

He just realized that he had lost everything in his life, and his mind, he couldn't think clearly. His mind was circling, circling. He couldn't, his mind was just, was just trashed by drugs.

[4 : 02] But the thought came to him that if I could just get something to read, anything at all, maybe his mind would slow down if he could focus on a book of some sort or something to read.

But there's nothing in that, he could find nothing to read. He would look around looking for a magazine. He would ask the guards, oh, there's nothing here, there's nothing here. Well, finally, he ran into a chaplain, and that chaplain handed him a Gideon's Bible.

Well, the chaplain said, I'm going to give you this, but it's with one condition, that you will read it.

Well, Lee had not kept his promise for over 20 years. And he said, all right, well, okay, I've got something to read.

He took it back to his cell. And Lee began reading that Bible. It made no sense to him. Of course, it was a King James Version. And he threw it down several times, picked it back up.

But in so many cases, as folks turned to the book of John, that's where Lee found himself. And as he read, his mind started slowing down, and the Holy Spirit started drawing him close to him.
[5 : 11] And Lee got to verse John 2, 22, where it says, and the disciples, Jesus had been crucified and gone up, and the disciples remembered the words that Jesus had said.

And they believed. And after that, so did Lee. Lee got on fire for the Lord. To say he was saved is almost an understatement.

He got on fire for the Lord and started telling everyone in that prison that would listen to him about the Lord Jesus Christ. Lee began leading a Bible study in the chapel there, at the prison six nights a week, leading dozens and dozens to Christ, a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

But the story doesn't end there. When Lee finally did his time and was out of prison, he was able to lead his...

He was able to first rekindle his marriage, rekindle his relationship with his mother and father, and he was able to lead his wife, his mother and father, his children and grandchildren to Christ.

[6 : 28] That's four generations affected by one Gideon Bible. Amen? We praise the Lord for that. I'm so thankful for that. Who are the Gideons?

The Gideons are a Christian business and professional association, and our whole purpose, along with our wives, is to see the lost come to Christ.

Since 1899, our purpose has been sharing the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, with everyone that we come in contact with. We are organized in over 200 countries, territories, and possessions, and we publish scriptures in over 109 languages.

In 1908, the Gideons adopted and authorized the Gideons to place Bibles in hotels. The very first hotel that we went to was the Superior Hotel in Superior, Montana.

Distributed 25 Bibles there. And then shortly after that, the Gideons were talking to some pastors in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. As they were sharing about the Gideon ministry and about placing Bibles in hotels, the group of ministers there that represented the city, they were listening to this presentation, and they said, you know, we want Bibles placed in our city as well, but not only that, we want to pay for that.

[7 : 59] So that is how the Gideons and the church started our partnership and the relationship is through the church, and it started right there in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

It wasn't long after that, that testimonies started coming in. Testimonies of people just like Lee and others, but this was in 1908, the first testimony that came in.

And it was about a young man in San Francisco that was planning on taking his life. He went into a San Francisco hotel, walked into the room, and he had a vial of poison.

And he was going to take that poison, but he set it down, set it down on a book and was walking around, and he wanted the room just right for him to do this. Raised the window, and when he came back, he noticed that the vial was setting on a Bible.

So he moved the vial, and I don't believe that was an accident. I believe it was the hand of God that allowed that Bible to be there.

[9 : 06] I know it was. But he opened that Bible, and instead of taking his life, he gave his life to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And that was the first testimony that was ever reported to us for the Gideon ministry.

And we just praise the Lord for that. We're just so thankful for that. Amen? Amen. By God's grace, since 1908, the Gideons have distributed 2.4 billion Bibles, billion Bibles with a B, and that's worldwide.

It took 93 years for the first billion Bibles to be distributed. And it only took 14 years for that second billion Bibles.

I think it's amazing. And that second billion was distributed in 2015. God is accelerating the distribution of the Bibles on our watch, on our watch, all of us here, all of us that are partnered in this wonderful ministry of God in a mighty way.

I think that's important for us to realize. as crazy as this world is, and with God's hand moving in such a mighty way for lives to be changed and brought to Jesus Christ, I think that's just amazing and exciting to be a part of.

[10 : 34] And the Gideons are very thankful that it's just like yours that partner with us and make that happen, because we could not do that alone. It's through the partnership of churches just like yours.

We are just ordinary men, and our wives are what they call auxiliary, that serve with us. And it's a wonderful thing to be able to serve and minister to folks with your spouse. And we're able to do that, and we're just blessed to be able to be a part of that. I will share with you, you know, we recently celebrated Memorial Day, and we're getting ready to celebrate the 4th of July.

And the Gideons, we place Bibles all over the world. We place Bibles, what we call the traffic lanes of life.

It's in, of course, hotels. We're known for hotels and motels, but also in hospitals, doctor's offices, clinics, schools, colleges, elementary schools down to 5th grade, when they'll let us in.

[11 : 45] But, and then also, to our emergency personnel, police, fire, EMTs, and our military. And, I'm very thankful to be a part of that, to serve to our military, and the, the entrance, military chaplains, and also with, as people enter into the military, those, those entrance locations, we provide Bibles there.

And, I will share with you, in, in World War II, and this is just out of our, our history, our Gideon's history book. I want to read it to you. It's very powerful.

And I think, you'll be, you'll enjoy this. It's, it's, it's, it's, it's, on December 7th, 1941, just before 8 a.m., hundreds of Japanese planes, attacked the U.S. naval base, at Pearl Harbor.

Most of our Navy vessels, at port, were destroyed. 2,403, servicemen and women, were killed, including 68 civilians. U.S. declared war on Japan, the next day.

Just, just five days, prior to Pearl Harbor being bombed, the Gideons distributed, 40,000 Bibles, onto the ships, that were in port, there.

[13 : 07] We praise God for that. So thankful for that. There were, thousands of Bibles recovered, soaked with water, and, and blood, unfortunately.

where the men and women, lost their lives. But the, the blessing, and the wonderful part about that is, on the back of our little New Testaments, you've probably seen these, is a place where, you can sign your name.

When you read these New Testaments, and, and we share these, wherever we go, Cracker Barrel, and different places, but these, these service members, on the back of it, you read the, you read the passages, and then when they, you accept Christ, you sign your name, and date it.

Well, thousands were recovered, where they were signed, and dated, just five days prior, within the five day period. And so thankful for that. And one story was even, even shared, to the Gideons of that time, that there was a nurse, that was, that was working, in the area there, and she was searching for her son, and she actually found her son, her son's Bible, and she seen it, opened it up, and seen the back of it, and his, her son had signed that, and what a joy, that was for her to see that, and then she immediately, took a pen, and signed her name, underneath it, so one day, she will join him, in heaven.

Amen? Well, thankful for that. By the time the war had ended, the Gideons had distributed, over seven million Bibles, to the U.S. military. To God be the glory, his grace and hand, is on this ministry.

[14 : 47] I will share this with you, my own personal testimony. I was in the Marine Corps, in 1986, and very excited to serve, and I was a newlywed, and that was all fantastic.

I went in, and I was all gung-ho, and ready to do this, and, but, my, I had good intentions, but my judgment, on the timing, of when I joined, was a little bit off, because I joined, my very first day, was Thanksgiving, well the second day, was Thanksgiving, so that meant, that I was a newlywed, and I spent Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's, and boot camp, and I'll tell you, I was not a happy camper, I was, to say I was a little homesick, and missed my, missed my, my young wife, was an understatement, but I made it through, in part, with, by, one of the Gideon New Testaments, that I had, and yes, these testaments, not only can, can help lead folks, to Christ, but they also, are tremendous encouragement, they're an encouragement, they were a wonderful, encouragement to me, because as I was reading, this New Testament, I got to one verse, in particular, Philippians 4, 13, where I can do all things, through Christ, who strengthens me, and I'm telling you, I repeated that, over and over, until the day of graduation, and just so thankful, for that, for those Bibles, and for the encouragement, that it gives, not just for, for leading the lost, to Christ, but also for the encouragement, it gives us, as Christians, and very thankful, for that.

Local Gideons, are made up, of what we call camps, and they serve, in a very, they serve very effectively, in their cities, in which they, in which we are a part of, now we serve here, right here in,

I'm in Murfreesboro, but the other Gideons here, serve in Shelbyville, and War Trace, and provide Bibles, and of course the hotels, and the nursing homes, and the local festivals, the state fairs, and it's wonderful, to be able to do that, but it's also, very effective, in foreign countries, where the Gideons, we have camps, in over 200 countries, 200 countries, and territories, those Gideons there, they, they are there, just like missionaries, and they can go, we're a typical missionary, sometimes cannot go, and may not be as effective, and one example of that, is in a, in Ethiopia, and just outside, of the capital city, of Addis Ababa, is a little village, about 20 miles, just outside, of that, of the capital city, and that, that village, had not been, had not been, ministered to, in over 60 years, but in 2014, a Gideon camp, was established, in that capital city, and they, they wanted to go, and minister, to that little, that little, that little town, that little village, but the challenging thing, about that village, was they were ran, primarily by witch doctors, and they, that's where they got, their faith, and they put their faith in, but the Gideons, they, they, they, they wanted to go, and they had, they got permission, to go into a school, a small school, in that village, and they were able, to pass out, the little New Testaments, and minister to the, to the students, and they had, they had five students, give their life to Christ, in that little village, well, and they also, as they, as they walked around, they shared with the teachers, and people were, a little standoffish, but they prayed, they prayed for them, and over the course of, over the course of, the next year, year and a half, the Gideons, kept returning, and each time, they were returned, to that little village, more and more, were added, to, to the roles there, as far as Christian, because one of the Gideons, had a home, a family home, just outside, that village, and he allowed, the, those that were saved, that gave their life to Christ, to be able to do Bible study, in their home, well, within a year and a half, they were up to, over 200, that had given their life to Christ, so basically, they had started a church, that little community, a Christian church, in this, this Gideons home, well, the Gideons, were able to, get a missionary, from, from the capital city, to come, and to be their pastor, and we're just so thankful, for that, once again,

Isaiah 55, 11, it just, God's word, does not return for it, does it not, amen, very thankful for that, the continued need, for Bibles, to be distributed, worldwide, is great, we're thankful, for the support, of the churches, for your church, and the Gideons, we just, we covet your prayers, and your financial donations, to us, for the Bibles, the small testaments, they're about a dollar, twenty, each, when you purchase those, and the large Bibles, that you see, in your, in the hotels, and motels, and different areas, they're five dollars, a piece, and the Bibles, have a, I guess you'd call it, a shelf life, in these hotels, of about six years, and have the opportunity, to reach at least, twenty, three hundred people, so if you would, please continue, to pray for us, and pray for the lost, to be found, and saved, for the boys and girls, men and women, that they receive,

[20 : 34] God's word, would not only open, the word, but open their hearts, to Christ Jesus, you can support us, in those ways, but I'd also, like you to, to know, that you can become, a friend of the Gideons, and the friend of the Gideons, is free, and you can do that, by going online, and it's, friendsforgideons.org, and the wonderful thing, about that is, you can, it allows you to order, these New Testaments, be without the, the Gideon emblem, but it's a very powerful tool, you've got the helps, in the front, or if there's anything, on the, on people's mind, as you share with, whether it's in Cracker Barrel, or out and about, and in the back, it's what we call, the GPS, God's plan of salvation, and there's scriptures, in the back, and, and you can lead them, to Christ right there, and I can tell you, it's my own personal testimony, I'm standing, before you today, through,

I told you, I was a retired police officer, and I also work, as a retiree, with AT&T;, directing traffic, well one day, I was in Murfreesboro, right outside, of MTSU, and I was directing, a little bit of traffic, and I, while I was directing traffic, I was also praying, I had my eyes open, but while praying, I asked, God, I want to be, a mighty witness to you, but I, a lot of times, I, you know, I get cold feet, I, I, you know, I need boldness, I'm praying for boldness, to be able to share, share with others, and witness to others, and I think, all of us are kind of, kind of, can kind of be that way, we, we become Christians, and we want to, you know, we want to fulfill, the great commission, we want to, lead the lost to Christ, but, you know, a lot of times, we say, well, just, you know, I just don't have the confidence, to do it, well God shared with me, while I was praying, well, little Bibles, what a, what a wonderful thing, to be able to have, is to be able to share, if I had a Bible, that, that would be the icebreaker,

I needed, well then, the thought of Gideons, came to me, well as I got out of the street, I couldn't stop thinking, about the Gideons, well that would be perfect, so I got my cell phone, and I googled

the Gideons, and I didn't, had no idea, that the Gideons, were actually headquartered, in Nashville, Tennessee, so I, I called them, and they, they transferred me, to a, to a Gideon, it was actually the president, in, of the Gideon camp, in Mount Juliet, and he said, well Lloyd, where do you live, and I said, well I live in, Mount Juliet, he said, well I'm, I am the president, in Mount Juliet, why don't you come, Saturday, and join us, at our Bible study, we have every Saturday morning, so, the rest is history, and I'm standing here, before you, through, I guess, being obedient, in prayer, and God sharing, with me, an opportunity, that his hand, is on this ministry, and, and I'll tell you, it does, it's, it's amazing, the confidence, that it gives, gives us, and it will give you, you know, if you, if you decide to join, as, as a friend, of the Gideons,

I think you would, find it very, very helpful, amen, well, in closing, I'd like to share, with you that, I recently heard, a pastor, and he was, he shared, at the end of his, sermon, that, it's a terrible, and tragic thing, for, for someone, to be lost, but it's even worse, when that person, thinks that no one, is out there, looking for them, well beloved, I promise you, that the Gideons, are out there, looking, and I want you all, I ask you all, invite you all, to join me, in that search, for the lost, amen, well thank you all, for the opportunity, to be able to share, with you about this ministry, I've been blessed by it, and I hope you, as as well, God bless you all, thank you, applause, applause, so, so, so, Thank you.