



Ministry Newsletter

March 2022

Our Hope - An Evolving Relationship with Every Atlas Client



After more than a year of ministry operation I want to share how the relationship with each of our clients grows and changes through contacts made over time. The building of growing trust measures the success.

To begin I must define and share the relationship with those we serve. I realize that I will never be able to share the true nature of a positive Atlas mentoring relationship. Each relationship begins the same and then evolves differently due to the client's background, current situation, willingness to seek life change, and differing outcomes achieved.

These relationships range from referrals who never make a contact or never show up for their first scheduled meeting to those who continue to engage over an extended period of time. Even what we consider fully successful relationships also can be very different from each other due to the uniqueness of each client, but the life-changing interactions follow the same pattern.

The initial meeting with every first time contact begins with an introduction to Atlas as a Christian ministry. We also share that we seek to help people with their crisis problem but more important, we desire to provide mentoring support as they work toward positive changes leading to optimistic and constructive lifestyle growth for themselves and their families. I always share that our experience for positive life change is greatly improved if they allow God to be a part of that change.

We begin with asking the stranger across the desk to share their life story with us. They start very generally, and by asking simple questions we bring them back to their childhood and a full life story. I find that almost all of the people we talk with become comfortable in transparently sharing the vulnerable details of their very difficult lives. When they finish their story I ask them a simple question, "How does God fit into your story?" By then, they are so comfortable they honestly share their answer, no matter what it is. It gives me a great starting spot to add Christ into our relationship.

I often think that the story I am hearing seems like the most devastating one that I have ever heard. Then the next person shares an equally shocking description of their life, merely differing in detail. I have long believed that one of the main gifts that Atlas offers to clients is a new sense of hope, even if only temporarily. The source of this hope comes from the shared conversational ministry, and as they talk, their burden is lightened as their full story adds definition to their situation, actually reducing the weight of their downward spiral. Simply telling their story always allows them to leave my office feeling better than when they came in.

Our goal is to address the crisis problem and make some strides toward solving or at least improving that part of their life. The bigger goal is to then begin looking at other ways that by making changes, their lives could be improved. Gradually, as we continue to talk, the relationship grows and trust is built as we hold them accountable for their actions while encouraging them along their new path.

How effective is the Atlas ministry in helping those people we encounter?

- We have had 70 referrals since Atlas opened the office doors.
- 10 percent of referrals failed either to contact us or keep their appointment.

Our Mission:

Changed Lives Through
Christian Love and
Advocacy

Our Vision:

Fostering Community
Awareness, Concern,
and Response to the
Needs of Area Residents

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For your Prayers,
Ministry, and Financial
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- Another 10 percent met with us but are unwilling to do what they need to do to receive assistance.
- For 30 percent, we can only provide limited assistance and occasionally help them relocate to a to a homeless shelter or better relational situation in another community.
- For 35 percent we find significant financial help but they do not continue toward improved life change.
- About 15 percent have truly turned things around and changed their lives for themselves and their families. These are the clients that we are truly here to serve and the hope is to grow this percentage.

The positive thing is that fully one third of these contacts are still in some form of client relationship with us today and therefore have the on-going potential for future progress. The Atlas mentoring relationship can be traced as follows: We meet a referral, quickly become a confidant, evolve into a helper, through the process become a supporter-encourager, are seen as a genuine benefactor, and become a friend. After the referral it takes a dedicated journey until we become their friend. That is the journey of Atlas of the Lakes Area.

Is God Calling You To Help Others?

I am convinced that there are many people who feel the call of God to help others. Atlas clients have many needs where someone providing a helping hand feels more like a lifeline lifting the burden of the unknown from their shoulders. The potential areas of need are many, and short-term volunteer help allows the Atlas staff to concentrate on spending needed time meeting with new clients.

The **current goal** is to establish a volunteer database of people who are willing to help with specific tasks. Currently the need for volunteer services is only occasional due to the number of clients being served but will increase as the ministry grows. Those who sign up create a pool of willing helpers so the time spent does not become an burden to any one volunteer. Much of the assistance needed is with things that most of us take for granted. We are either equipped to do things for ourselves, have friends who are willing to help us, or can afford to hire people to do what we need. Atlas clients often have none of these possibilities.

One major problem area is transportation. Often there is no vehicle, or else no license, insurance, or registration. There also may be no money for gas, flat tires, or mechanical problems. Occasionally clients need significant transportation to different towns, homeless shelters, bus depots, or airports for those who are best served by relocating. Other more frequent short distance transportation needs are rides to work, getting to appointments, or just running errands. These needs come up fairly quickly and take limited time to complete. Volunteering for these duties provides another person who cares enough about them to give of their time and vehicle and is an additional contact that demonstrates to them the love of Christ.

Another need is help people move. Evictions sometimes force clients to move their possessions into storage while they seek a new place to live. If they find an apartment, they then need to move the stuff from storage into their new place. If they have a vehicle, it often is not adequate to transport the bigger items. The real need is for trailers or pickups to transport their large items while they are in transition. Some just need help packing the many smaller items in a household or organizing the move. Lifting, carrying, and loading a houseful of stuff can be overwhelming and paralyzing to a single parent who also has to watch her children during this stressful time.

Those who comes to Atlas for help are facing a blend of problems that build upon each other, eventually spinning out of control. Most face combined problems including addictions, abusive or broken relationships, children's issues, emotional/mental/health issues, employment problems, financial difficulties.

The **future Atlas goal** will be to add people to the volunteer database who are willing to become client mentors. Have you experienced any of the difficulties faced by Atlas clients and survived? Would you willing to guide someone who is facing similar problems? If you are sensing a call to help others and become a loving presence in their lives, Atlas needs your help. You become the hands and feet of Jesus. Call us at (712) 332-6390 or (712) 320-2572 to volunteer your experienter to help others survive their crisis and build better lives.

Prayer Requests for Atlas:

- Please continue to pray that the staff search provides God's choice for a Ministry Director.
- Please pray that by the end of 2022 a full Atlas staff will be in place to serve the mentoring needs of clients and build the Atlas ministry to serve a broader range of the community.
- Please pray for the devastating life decisions that our clients face each day, when no good decisions are available. Pray for God's special touch on their lives and that they see Him.