

LOVESICK MINISTRIES

REFLECTING ON 2023 : A YEAR OF COMPLETION & A DECADE DOWN



As I reflect on the past year, Austin and I are overwhelmed in the best way possible with gratitude and thanksgiving to you all. In our humble ministry, 2023 was a year of great victory as we completed our 10th year of ministering to the least of these on a desolate corner on the south side of Lawton. It's hard to believe that it's been a decade. A decade of struggle and a decade of victories. 1107 SW Summit has become our precious and permanent home of ministry. As 2023 was ending, my spirit was full of so many emotions. Looking back at the last 15 years of ministry, going back to 2007, Lovesick Ministries was only a seed planted in my heart by the Lord. To be His hands and feet in our beautiful but broken community struggling with addiction, poverty, and homelessness. The brokenness has only continued to multiply and intensify, even today, but we continue to overcome it by the blood of the Lamb and the words of our testimonies. Here is a look at some of the battles you have helped us win.

Lovesick Ministries was originally only an idea, a concept, and a dream until the Lord told me one day that I didn't need a million dollars to make a difference. He told me I needed to start small, and He would provide for it all. He has kept His word, as He does, and continues to do. . . I come from a background of brokenness, addiction, violence, and poverty. I didn't have the support of a wealthy family or friends, but I had the support of a wealthy God. In the early years of Lovesick, I was ministering out of the trunk of my little pink '74 Duster. I began to write the 1023 application for 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt status during my last year of college while actively trying to be the hands and feet of my Savior. Lovesick officially became an incorporated non-profit in 2009. God's wisdom and hand guided me through that complex and lengthy process; for someone like me, that seemed like an impossible feat, but God was for me, and He is for you, too. I was going to local parks and shelters with a few like-minded friends to hand out clothing and sack lunches and offer fellowship and prayer to anyone in need. I did this from the back of my car for over a year. I transitioned into a more extensive yet humble operation, providing a community meal, prayer, and fellowship at Olson Park by the Salvation Army, just a short distance from where we are today. At first, it was just my immediate family reluctantly "helping" me. That didn't last long, and it eventually came to a point when I had to take an extended pause in how I was doing ministry. I was crushed, but hopeful of what was to come. This is when Austin and I were called to the ministry of Sunrise Ranch Adult and Teen Challenge. Those years of connecting and growing in the Lord gave us a firm foundation upon which we built our marriage, our lives, and this ministry. Considering our financial background, it was difficult, messy, and expensive, but God told me he wasn't done with us or the vision of Lovesick. I patiently waited for His approval and timing to begin again.



Come As You Are...

In the fall of 2013, we stepped out in faith and signed a lease-to-own agreement on an old broken-down warehouse building. On October 6, 2013, we had our very first service to worn-out people with broken hearts in a worn-out and broken building. It was powerful, and we loved it. This was the beginning of the Lord teaching us how He would mend the brokenhearted and the broken building too. We were so young, inexperienced, and poor, but we loved Jesus, and His provision continued to turn dreams into realities. I had no idea how challenging the next ten years would be to renovate our warehouse building and the people's hearts that continued to show up there. Fortunately, God is in the business of renovating. He did it to my heart, He did it to Austin's, and He has done it to countless others over the years there, too.

In 2023 we celebrated big! Austin and I saw the Lord move enormous obstacles that were meant to keep us quiet, keep us down, and ultimately shut us down from spreading the love of Jesus. On July 28th, 2023, we finally received our official Certificate for Occupancy from the City of Lawton! The vast renovation "to-do list" was finally complete. We replaced the roof, added and upgraded plumbing per code, built restrooms with showers, a laundry area, and a commercial



kitchen, installed HVAC units on the roof, added and upgraded the electric per code, and completed many other seemingly unending projects to meet code compliance. On Oct. 16, 2023, which is exactly 10 years and 10 days to the day of when we had our very first service, the Lord provided the finances to pay off the remainder of our renovation loan! We are now officially 100% debt-free and have an official Certificate of Occupancy! If you've been following our story for any amount of time at all, then you know the physical and financial struggles we've endured and overcome over the years while continuing to move forward in His grace, timing, and love. We are a ministry and people of resilience, endurance, reliance, and faith in a God who makes the impossible possible. Thank you all for the part you have played and continue to play in creating these incredible testimonies of the Lord's faithfulness.

Outreach at Lovesick has continued to grow. Our congregation is complex in many ways. We are a ministry of many different people from different backgrounds, but our love for the Lord unites us all. Our clothing ministry is still flourishing but is changing to accommodate everyone better. The amount of need, brokenness, and desperation has not changed but continues to be steady, especially in today's economy. The Duncan branch, spearheaded by Jessica Harris and her precious family, has celebrated being open and active in the community for over a year. They have a wonderful clothing ministry and community Bible study during the week. Jessica has also been providing our young families and the elderly community with to-go dinners. Jessica and her team hand-delivered gifts to needy families in Duncan and the surrounding areas during the Christmas season. They continue to meet tangible needs, all while spreading the love of the Lord! We continued Wednesday night bible study discussions, and we grew as a team on fire for Jesus and His kingdom. We celebrated the birthdays of volunteers at big, fancy parties! I love celebrating the people God has brought into my life!



Our friends from the Red Cord partnered with us again to host the annual Night of Worship! It is a night of worship and prayer to lift up victims and survivors of human trafficking. A community education bus was parked out front to spread awareness and offer hope. The bus had art displayed by local human trafficking survivors. We partnered with the Lawton Indian Hospital and many other community organizations for a free two-day community health fair event at Lovesick Ministries. The Delta Dental mobile bus was parked out front to provide cleanings, extractions, and additional dental procedures free of charge to those living in poverty. The health department gave flu vaccinations and other routine health services to people in need and even provided vaccines to their pets! A Veterans Affairs rep came out to enroll homeless veterans in various services. Free haircuts were provided as well. Our Lovesick team prepared a hot meal and provided snacks for volunteers and patients during the two-day event. Of course, the coffee bar was busy providing delicious drinks to all! About 16 community partners were represented at the two-day event to educate and offer services to those in need. God willing, we will continue hosting community events like this in 2024!

We moved our weekly outreach services to the afternoons in 2023. We had many people state that they would like to get involved, but they were serving in their churches during our service times, so we moved our times to Sunday afternoons from 3pm - 6pm. This has paved the way for other churches and people to get plugged in, and it has really been such a blessing. It also opened up Sunday mornings for Austin and I and our team to attend services at local churches to just be present with the body and spiritually fed ourselves. Outreach ministry has been extremely draining over the years, so that has been such a huge blessing to us personally. If you, your church, or your organization would like to get involved, please reach out. We love getting connected in the community! That's all I have for now. Thank you once again. We couldn't do it without you! I will let Austin take over from here!

Hey y'all! It's Austin, and I'm going to take it from here. Thank you all so much for your support over the years! None of the things Mary talked about would have been possible without you all. One thing we have seen over the years at Lovesick is that kids who grow up in these unfortunate situations end up becoming young adults who are still in the same situations. They often never get away from the destructive lifestyles they are raised in. This is heartbreaking and all too often true. The Lord has given us a vision at Lovesick for the at-risk youth in our area. They need a safe place to go and be free in the presence of a God who loves them. We have done many youth-focused outreach activities over the years, but we want to do more. The vision is called the **STOP SPOT**. It's an acronym the Holy Spirit gave us: **Stop Teen Oppressive Practices - Start Proactive Overcoming Tactics**. This has been on our hearts for several years now. We have slowly been preparing our hearts for this at-risk youth initiative. We will have a faith-based atmosphere that is meant for the youth only. We want to be open in the evenings, on weekends, and when kids are out of school. This will be a safe place to escape the harsh realities of home life to find hope and encouragement from the Lord. We know we will have our hands full, but we also know whose hands hold us. We wanted to be debt-free and have our official certificate of occupancy before we moved into this next phase of ministry. That all happened in 2023! Thank you all for helping us defeat those giants. We have already submitted another grant proposal and set aside some funding to create this space for our next phase of ministry for at-risk youth. We need \$60,000 for this project, and we have \$10,000 set aside for it currently. The grantors have already agreed to help, but have yet to disclose an amount. They asked us to raise what we could, and they would help too. Please be in prayer over this vision and how the Lord may want you to help!





There are several things we have been patiently waiting to do until we were debt-free and had our official certificate of occupancy. This next thing is a hard one for me to talk about. Mary has been running Lovesick for over 15 years now, and she has never taken an income in all that time, nor has anyone else including myself. In fact, we have always tithed into Lovesick, just like many of you have. Mary has been running Lovesick full-time now since 2017. She left her full-time career as an insurance agent with All State to run Lovesick full-time and care for my dad during his last years as he was dying. The Lord finally called my dad home nearly 2 years ago. Since then, she has been doing all things Lovesick with her life. We have been living off of my firefighter income and some money my dad left us, but that won't last forever. I am extremely grateful for my career as a firefighter and the time I have to help Mary with Lovesick on my days off, but unfortunately I don't make enough to cover all of our bills. We are getting to a point financially where I will have to step away from Lovesick to work more on my days off, or Mary will have to step back from Lovesick and go back to work. She really loves doing all things Lovesick and has her heart set on that being her life's work. I want to support her in that, and I have done the best I know how. I believe you all want to support her in doing that as well. We have some decisions to make. I have recently met with our board of directors and have their support of setting up payroll with our accountant to pay Mary a salary, but we also need your support for that as well. We have not pulled the trigger on it just yet, but we hope to this year. We have never done this before, because we have never felt like it was the right time due to a lack of funding and so many expensive projects we had to complete. We still don't have a lot, but we still want to do a lot, and we feel like it's time. We currently have about \$35,000 in the bank, and \$10,000 is set aside for the STOP SPOT. Will you please be in prayer that we can continue running Lovesick, build out the STOP SPOT for our at-risk youth, and begin to pay Mary a salary this year?

These are the things on my heart that I wanted to share. We are stepping out in faith once again and believing for these things from the Lord and His body of believers. It has been a long and tough road so far, and I know it will continue to have its challenges. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Thank you for being a part of the few through your faithful support this year in helping us to move forward and take down giants. There are surely more to come, and we will continue to need your support. The cross is heavy, but the burden is bearable with you all. Thank you for helping us carry it in a number of different ways. We love you all and wish you a happy, healthy, and blessed 2024! Let's Go, Team Jesus!

Austin & Mary Solenberg



