

Community of Christ



WEAVE US TOGETHER

TESTIMONIES FROM A PEOPLE OF FAITH

Volume 8 – September 2008 – December 2008

Dearly Beloved,

This is the eighth issue of your Testimony Journal. It is my prayer that, as you read and study the testimonies included in this issue, you will come away with a renewal of your own faith in Jesus Christ and will encourage you to share your own.

Love and Blessings,
Tom Barrett, Compiler and Editor,
CCM Leadership Team

SUBMITTED BY VI BURNETT, BOONVILLE, MISSOURI AN EASTER SERMON

From Acts 10:34-43 we read: “Then Peter began to speak, ‘I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling them the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached – how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.’” We are witnesses of everything He did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree.

Where new life begins, it starts at the cross. This is where we see the light of what God did for us through His Son, Jesus: JESUS LIVES!

Why we preach in Jesus Name: To fully understand why we preach and teach the oneness of God (Jesus Name), we must also understand the Trinity. The Trinity teaches one God in three separate persons: God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit.

It teaches that we must worship God in the three separate persons, so that we do not take away the deity of any one person in the Godhead. God the Father, the Father of Jesus Christ, is the

creator of all things. The Son Jesus, the Savior, is the one that died for our sins and whose blood fell down from the cross and onto the mercy seat.

And the Holy Spirit: The Spirit of the Living God, the Great I AM!

Who is the Father? Matthew 1:20 states, “for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. Luke 1:35 states, “And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also the Holy babe which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

Jesus lives. The Lord then presented this concept to me while I was looking up information about Jesus’ blood. The Lord gave me an insight to share with you. The Lord shows us things when we are still and know that he is God. The Lord will open up wonderful treasures for us if we just take time to study, pray, and listen to him and follow his ways. He will guide us where he wants us to go.

First of all, Jesus Lives, so this means His blood is alive. Human blood is alive only when the person is living. When a human dies their blood becomes dry blood, and dry blood is dead blood. It is impossible to get a chromosome count out of dead blood, but you can get DNA.

There is a man named Ron Wyatt, a Christian archeological researcher. The Lord sent him over to Calvary’s hill where Jesus died on the cross. While he was there, he saw the three holes where the crosses stood. He noticed the place where Jesus’ cross would have been. There was still some of the wood from the cross deep down in the hole. Beside the hole was a big crack in the soil where the earthquake tore the earth apart the day Jesus died. The blood from Jesus Christ’s body flowed down the cross that day and onto the ground and into the crack from the earthquake. Ron was able to take some of the wood that still had blood on it to a laboratory in Jerusalem to have it tested, to see if it was human blood.

Ron came back a few days later for the results. The researchers discovered that the blood was indeed human blood. Then Ron asked them to test it again, this time with white blood cells added. As he entered the laboratory the researchers were discussing the test. They all turned and said, “Sir, this blood only has 24 chromosomes; human cells have 46”.

Scientifically speaking, there are 23 pairs of chromosomes in each human being. In each pair, one chromosome is from the mother and one from the father; therefore, each of us has 23 chromosomes from our mother and 23 from our father. In each set of 23 one chromosome determines whether you will be born a boy or a girl. These are called X and Y chromosomes. Females all have two X chromosomes; males have one X and one Y. Therefore, the mother can only contribute an X to the child, whereas the father can contribute either an X or a Y.

If the child received an X from the mother and an X from the father, the child is female. If the child received an X from the mother (as is always the case) and a Y from the father, the child is male.

Now consider Mary, the mother of Jesus. The angel told Mary that she would conceive through the power of God’s Holy Spirit and would give birth to a son. Mary had the normal 23 chromosomes to contribute to the child. The blood found on Calvary was tested and determined to have only 24 chromosomes whereas it should have had 46. This number of 24 consisted of the 23 from Mary and the Y (sex determining) chromosome came from God’s design to have His

Son come to earth to show us how to live in trust and obedience to our Heavenly Father. **The Son contains the essence of the Father.** How wonderful is that?

The researchers asked Mr. Wyatt whose blood it was. He said, "It is the blood of your Messiah".

In 1 John 5 we read, "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three are one. We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son Jesus. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

Jesus lives! Jesus' blood came flowing down the cross onto the ground right after he said, "It is finished!" Then came a great earthquake that caused the ground to groan and crack. It opened up and the blood of Christ flowed down into the crack unto the mercy seat. When Christ died, He went into the heavenly tabernacle and sprinkled his own blood before God as the atonement for our sins.

The Jewish high priests used to go into the holy of holies in the temple once a year to sprinkle the blood of an unblemished animal over the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant for atonement or covering the sins of the people for the prior year. But now we have Jesus, our great high priest, the unblemished Lamb of God to intercede on our behalf. The covenant Jesus had with God cleanses us from sin. Before Christ our sins were covered; after Christ our sins are cleansed. The blood of Christ cleanses us, covers us, and enables us to stand in the glory of God.

God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. Jesus was seen seven times by his disciples before going to heaven. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen, and by us who ate and drank with him. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him; that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Many of us here today can testify of Jesus Christ our Lord and that He lives! JESUS LIVES – HE IS RISEN! Bob and Jeannie have God's grace and mercy. Pam has received of Jesus' healing power. Heidi received of Christ's deliverance. Tom has the peace; he knows Jesus freely gives. Russell has received of Jesus' forgiveness.

Russell truly knows of the forgiveness God can bring through his Son, Jesus. My family witnessed it the night before my daddy died. Between Russ and his grandpa forgiveness took place right there in that room at Ashley Manor. I watched Jesus work such a love between the two of them.

The Spirit of God was there in the fullness of His glory. Jesus' blood covered all the bad that had taken place through the years and turn it into good. Just like it says in Romans 8:8-30, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

And the holy words that have just been spoken came to pass. In the last weeks of my daddy's life so many things happened. I had been praying for my dad for many years.

I prayed that Jesus' peace would come to him, and Jesus would forgive my dad for things he had done and that my dad would be forgiving as well. I asked Jesus for my dad to be saved and baptized before God took him home. I saw Jesus cover his hurts and his pain with his blood. My daddy and I fellowshiped with one another and shared a pizza three days before he passed. I spoke the words of Psalm 23 over him. We talked about heaven, what it would be like, that Jesus and mama would be coming soon to take him home. He would say, "I hope so". My dad knew that hope that Jesus gives. My family and I were truly blessed by God with those last weeks we had with my dad. I watched my daddy become more and more peaceful. My daddy asked for Jesus to forgive him for being a sinner. My dad sat at the Lord's Table with me and ate and drank of the Lord's body and his blood. He was baptized three days before he died. My dad was a resurrected man here on earth and in heaven.

Jesus called him forth on the third day, just like Jesus called Lazarus forth for his glory to be shown. Then Jesus called him home. For now I have both my parents who are working for Jesus and watching over me and my family.

We wouldn't be here on this Easter Sunday if it were not for the blood of Jesus. We live because of that blood. God sent his Son into the world to redeem us from our sins. God knew that Adam and Eve would sin, and yet he still created them. He knew his son would choose to come to save us. That Jesus would die on the cross for our sins. Can we even imagine giving up one of our sons so the world would have an opportunity to have eternal life?

I can't imagine giving up Russell or Evan to save anyone; I would be too selfish and want my sons to live. God didn't want one person lost to the darkness, so he sent his Son Jesus as a sacrifice for us all. Jesus didn't sin, He didn't deserve to die, except He said to His Father, Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever. Every benefit and blessing we have in our salvation, including complete and total victory over evil, is based on Jesus and His triumph over darkness at the cross. We have victory because of Jesus' shed blood that came down the cross at Calvary's hill.

In John 3:16 we read, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

What does the Bible mean when it says Jesus is the only begotten Son? The expression "only begotten" is a Greek word that means "unique", "only", or one of its "kind".

Who is the Son? Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh. Jesus is the Word. John 1:14 says, "And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Jesus Christ is the promise; He is the Lamb of God; He is our Savior and our redeemer. He is the one, the only shepherd of his flock, and we are his sheep; we know his voice just as the disciples did. He had 12 that followed him. They knew him. They also listened to his teachings. God gave me this insight as well. 12 is the product of 3 times 4. 3 is the Divine number of the Trinity. 4 is the number of days that Lazarus was in the tomb. These 12 watched him heal people of all kinds of sickness. They witnessed him feeding 5,000 people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. Jesus did many things throughout his life, the greatest being the giving of his own

living blood for us. God has given us a wonderful tool to use, this sacred blood of Jesus. This is our shield, our hiding place.

Before Jesus was crucified, we read these words:

From Luke 22:39-44 we read, “And he came out, and went, as he was accustomed, to the Mount of Olives; and his disciples followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.’ And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood falling.”

Revelation 12:11 tells us that the “brethren” will overcome Satan by the blood of Jesus and by the word of their testimony. The word testimony means to give witness to, or testify of something. In other words, this scripture tells us that we will overcome Satan’s devices as we give testimony to what the blood of Jesus does for us. We give witness to the power of the blood as we activate what the blood of Jesus does for us and by our faith by applying it to our own lives.

The Lord recently spoke this word to me, “If my people will embrace me, my blood will meet their every need, and they will have victory over all the works of the enemy.” The word embrace means more than just accepting Jesus as Savior. It means to clasp or hold in the arms; to hug, or to surround. The Lord then presented this concept to me: We need to apply the blood by faith personally by each of us over our lives, over our homes, over our finances, over our health, over our ministry, over our families, and over our work places. By doing so it will give testimony to the victory that the shed blood of Calvary has given to us. The shedding of the blood of Christ on the cross (when applied by faith) disarms Satan’s ability to hold us in any form of captivity.

When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised”, but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision – the cutting away of your sinful nature. You were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life, because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. You were dead because of your sins, and because of your sinful nature, it was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive in Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He cancelled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

The life we have is in our blood: a physical fact. We wouldn’t be alive spiritually were it not for the atoning blood of Jesus, shed on the cross. The physical blood is not selfish. It gives of itself so the body can live. This is the same with the blood of Christ. He gave of himself and his blood so we could live and have the freedom he died for. Jesus Lives!

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SUBMITTED BY TOM BARRETT, NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS

His name was Robin. A couple of weeks ago, I drove over to Wal-Mart to fill up the gas tank, it being the cheapest gas in town. I pulled into an open lane, stuck in my debit card and began filling. While I was just standing there waiting, another guy pulled into the other side of the pump I was using. For some reason, I walked around to his side. He asked, "Is everything ok? If I need to move out of the way, so that you can use this side, I will."

No, I said, my pump is working fine. As he looked intently at me, he asked me where I go to church. I told him, then he said, "I used to go to the Tree of Life but haven't been there in a long time." I asked him why and he said he didn't really know. He did say that his home life was not the best. His way of saying it was, "My garden is full of snakes."

He then said, "You act like a minister; will you remember me when you pray?" I said, "Let's pray right now." And so, there we were, two men ushered into each other's presence, each one allowing His Divine Grace to make us vulnerable. We prayed, he wept a bit, hugged me, and we parted company - all the while there were others waiting to get gas. The odd thing is that they didn't seem to be in any particular hurry; but were instead intently watching us.

I believe that's what it means when God says, "Be vulnerable to divine grace". These moments of being open are there for you also.



SUBMITTED BY DEREK SANDERS, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

My intention for writing this article is to share my testimony of resting in the Spirit this summer so that those who may be more uncertain of this experience and its purpose may have a better understanding and acceptance of, what I believe to be, a ministry of the Spirit.

Overcome by the Spirit

I have such a hunger for more of God in my life—more of God's Love; more Peace and more of His Presence. In fact, I'm rarely able to sing all of the words to the song "Breathe":

And I, I'm desperate for you
And I, I'm lost without you

without feeling the deep emotion of those intimate words.

This pursuit for greater intimacy with God has led me to connect with many people and places where I sensed God moving. To be sure, this pursuit is not out of purely selfish motives. Equal to my desire for more of God in my life is my desire to be a part of others experiencing the Love and Peace I know. Each new God encounter has been powerful and some absolutely profound.

My wife, Ginger, and I directed this year's Celebration at Graceland University. Often when I am leading an event my hope is to create an environment where those attending can have a spiritually significant experience. I don't often expect the same for myself. This Celebration was to be different though.

Throughout the week of the camp I was absolutely amazed at the power of the Spirit working in and through the people of the camp. When the time is right, I hope to be able to share some of those testimonies in the CCM testimony journal, *Weave Us Together*, edited by Tom Barrett. One such testimony I would like to share here.

During the Wednesday evening service I was called out of the service more than once to handle issues with the camp. Finally, I decided to stand at the back of the auditorium. While there, a

dear brother and spiritual mentor came to my side and slightly behind me. I felt his loving presence immediately as he gently rested his hand on the back of my head. I knew we was praying for me and blessing me. Closing my eyes, I could feel waves of the Spirit washing over me.

Rather quickly, I was overcome with the Spirit and it seemed natural to fully submit to the Spirit. Submitting to the Spirit at that time meant releasing all of the cares and concerns of everything going on around me. To release everything meant to even release the concern of balance and I soon found myself tipping backwards. Fortunately, the dear brother praying for me was tracking with how I was being touched by the Spirit.

What I experienced is called by some as being “Slain in the Spirit.” This is a description that I do not prefer because the word “slay” implies force and that does not reflect the Peace that I experienced. Personally, I prefer the term, “resting in the Spirit” which more adequately captures the work of the Spirit as I know it.

This rest is not just a physical rest, but a rest of the soul. It reminds me of the rest that Jesus promises in the Gospels:

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [Mat 11:28-29]

Some will, rightly so, question the purpose of “resting in the Spirit.” I can share that at least for me, the 15-20 minutes that I rested was a time of deeper intimacy with God than I had ever previously experienced. I was engulfed in a Spirit of Love and Peace. In the encounter God took me to a place deep within His Spirit—a place that I have heard others speak of as a deep meditative state.

I have heard others testify to healing, both physical and inner healing, while others have had visions; for some, it is simply a time of rest for the soul. Regardless of the outcome it most certainly is a time of deep intimacy with God.

Recently, while ministering at a retreat in Tulsa, I found myself feeling engulfed in God’s presence once again. As I sat in silence, I found that I could meet God back in that same place where I met God this summer and I found the same Love and Peace deep within my soul.

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SUBMITTED BY PATTI SMITH, ST. JAMES, MISSOURI

Dear Beloved CCM Family,

Ultimately I would like for this message to be put in the CCM Newsletter for all to read. It is my testimony once again of the goodness, grace and timeliness of God. I have taken advantage of Tom's email addresses and replied to all of you, taking off unfamiliar names--those who I suspect do not know me or have my email address ... although please know that you are at liberty to share this testimony with others.

Do you need a timely WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT? Then wait until you have the time and be prepared to read the whole thing through. Although it is lengthy, it is God's Word for us in due season! Although the "story" is originally that of David Wilkerson's, my personal comments, words of encouragement and testimonies are in brackets.

May God add his blessing and peace to His Message, and may you continue to be empowered by the power and strength and certainty of His Holy Spirit living within you. God bless you all.

“FEAR NOT” TESTIMONY (11-23-2008)

As fall approached this year, and I knew I was to be the one to deliver the Ministerial Alliance Community Thanksgiving Service message, I went to the Lord in prayer and inquired about what He would have me share. His answer was, “Fear not. Be not afraid.”

Given the political upheaval and the economic crises within our country, I could easily accept this theme as one the Lord would share. So often in scripture, as the Lord sent His Heavenly Messengers to us as His children (Mary, Joseph, etc.), and even as He approached Peter before Peter walked on the water (“Be of good cheer; it is I. Be not afraid.”—Matthew 14:23), “Fear not” was His message.

Then I inquired further, “Lord, is there a scripture or a biblical story that you want me to focus on?” And the Holy Spirit reminded me of a story I had read entitled, “Muzzled,” written by David Wilkerson, from his book “I’m Not Mad at God.” I was thankful that the Lord chose to give me His Word ahead of time, and I rested assured in my upcoming responsibility because, since the Lord gave me the Word, I knew that He would be with me to deliver the Word. But little did I know what yet faced me that the Word was not just for this occasion, but for me personally as well.

As I stepped up to the podium that night, as I had much of that previous week, I felt the Lord’s anointing, I felt a heaviness of His love and presence abiding with me; I felt His Strength. I was not afraid.

I began the message with my testimony of what is above, adding that I had read David’s book, “The Cross and the Switchblade” when in my late teens or early 20s. David was a young country preacher from Pennsylvania who strongly felt the call of God on his life to go and minister to the youth in the gangs of New York City. His book was his testimony of this experience; a movie was also made from his book. “I pray this becomes a message of hope and encouragement for you for whatever troubled times lay ahead,” I began, and then I read David’s message: “Muzzled.”

“Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn” (I Corinthians 9:9). The secret of success for every Christian worker is found hidden in this verse. I consider this one of the most important truths the Holy Spirit has opened to me in my entire ministry. It revolutionized my life and ministry, and I will never be the same as a result.

To muzzle means to fasten or cover the mouth to prevent action—to *bind the mouth*. Paraphrased, this verse reads: “Thou shalt not bind the mouth of the worker who labors in the harvest.”

Paul the apostle discovered this verse in Deuteronomy 25:4, and through a revelation of the Holy Spirit took this truth far beyond the concept of money and finance—bringing to the church world one of the most relevant messages for modern man ever delivered.

Paul begins with a question: “Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it [referring to the quote of Deut. 25:4] altogether for our sakes?” God’s humanitarian law provided that oxen that tread at the corn mill should not be muzzled, but should freely partake of the corn they were treading. The laborer is worthy of his hire—even oxen. Paul was certain this verse was more than a reminder of God’s care for oxen: he states emphatically, “No doubt about it in my mind—this is written for us today ... there is a principle involved.”

Jesus said: “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me... My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” [I interjected: a yoke is a frame fitted to shoulders to carry a load in two equal portions; it refers to servitude, meaning, to put to work. We could say, Take my work upon you and learn of me... My work is easy and my burden is light.”] Oxen wear yokes. In typology, Jesus made His disciples to represent oxen plowing the field of the world.

It is so very clear that the Holy Spirit seeks, through the word of wisdom, to lead Christian workers into a state of mind free from all bondage, full of faith and hope. [I told them that this point was important; that I wanted to repeat it, and did.] “He that ploweth should plow in hope; and ... he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.”

How many Christian workers today [I paused again to explain that he isn’t saying “ministers,” but workers, meaning disciples, members of the body of Christ.] labor for the Lord only out of a sense of duty? How many have lost hope of ever reaping a real harvest, to be truly successful? How many plow away in certain harvest fields, bound and fettered because in their honest heart-searching they must admit they have not been a partaker of all they preach? I meet them in my travels all over the world. Servants of the Most High God that once commanded devils and moved mountains, now stand fearful and alone amidst the ruins of a dying vision. They once testified to the world that all things are possible to them that believe, but today they wander aimlessly looking for that lost glory. Nothing is more tragic in my mind than to see a Christian worker who once had God’s hand on his life—to stumble around in fear and indecision because he allowed himself to become muzzled.

My mother used to tell me, “David, don’t let anything bring you under bondage. Don’t get bound.” Now I understand how important it is to labor with a free spirit. I must work for God fully persuaded that unseen forces are behind me to bring to pass all the promises. I must never lose hope. I must taste every truth I preach! I must test every divine secret in the proving ground of my own heart! I must not be dishonest by preaching a gospel I have not proven. It is not enough for me to say Paul said thus and so. I must be able to thunder from my own vantage point of experience, “I know what Paul was saying. I have walked the same path of revelation.”

... It is in spiritual things we find the muzzle so devastating.

The 25th chapter of Matthew contains the perfect example of the muzzled minister. I suggest every born-again believer is a minister—called to be a witness for Christ. [You are called to be a witness for Christ.] The story is simply told. A man, traveling into a far country, called his

servants and deposited with them his goods. To one he gave five talents (\$2500), to another two (\$1000), and to another one talent (\$500). After a long time the master returned to reckon with those in whom he had invested. This story is vital to every Christian worker because the master of this story is Christ the Lord; we, the servants who must give a detailed account of our actions when we are on our own.

Two servants stand before Him to face their finest hour. It is a happy occasion. They are well adjusted, fruitful workers who are able to say, “Master ... I have made progress ... I have gained....” The five-talent man and the two-talent man both doubled their accounts. No sweat; no foggy ideas about guidance; no mental blocks of anxiety or fear; no fearful stories about how the devil hounded them or how people were against them; no haggard demeanor; no defeatist philosophy; no excuses about the spirit of the age; no reference to having been placed in the hardest field in the country! These were men [“and women,” I again interjected] of purpose who knew they had it! Their job was simple and without complications: the master wanted results—and got them!

But now we focus attention on that maladjusted servant who stands before the master empty handed. The one-talent servant—he is the type of the *Muzzled Man!* Examine with me the three tragic steps that lead to a bound and fruitless ministry. If Bible statistics hold true, about one-third of God’s servants will stand before the judgment bound and gagged—with no fruit. Beware of these three steps.

STEP NUMBER ONE: A WRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD

Listen to his confession: “Lord, I knew thee ... that thou art a hard man” (vs. 24 [of Matthew 25]). They all knew the Lord, but here was a servant who labored under a wrong relationship. Two servants had already demonstrated that the Lord was not difficult or hard to serve. But in this servant’s mind—*He was hard!* This concept of a cruel, hard-driving Father is the chief propaganda of Satan.

Satan is subtle. [Subtle is defined as “keen, skillful, crafty, sly,” and I might add “devious,” I added. Satan was “subtle” in approaching Eve in the garden.] He knows he cannot trap God’s servants with vulgar temptations involving the misuse of money or immorality and sensuous pleasures [The big things, I said.] The enemy of our soul seeks to paint in our minds a picture of a fire-breathing, vengeful dictator in the sky—ready to breathe wrath on every child who disobeys or falters. [And I might add now, to rob us of our joy, to disarm us by disbelieving in God’s promises—by having us “think” we are unworthy of them and of Him, by turning our faith—which is trust—into fear and inaction, when God would have us “press on!” “... *press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:14).] The devil baited certain theologians with this line and they swallowed it hook, line, and sinker. They couldn’t live with their mean God so they just buried Him; and in saying God is dead, they admit: “We just couldn’t understand Him. He was too hard to handle.”

[Here David begins a personal testimony.] I came to New York City with a broken heart and my entire ministry to delinquents was based on the scripture: “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” I well remember those first months of ministry. I slept in my car because I had no money to sleep elsewhere. I knew no one. I was a naïve country preacher—but I felt a divine glow and

urgency. I walked the streets in the wee hours praying for souls and for guidance. In those months of reaching gangs on a person-to-person basis, no temptation could touch me. The prostitutes and the promiscuous took one look at me and fled in fear. Every seeming failure and discouragement was only a stepping stone to greater victories. But Satan was not about to let this important ministry go unchallenged. In a few short weeks and before I knew how it happened—my relationship with the Lord became strained. [This should always present itself as a RED FLAG to us!]

It all started with a tragedy. I was scheduled to conduct a weekend series of meetings with a fine young pastor in a small town. I arrived shortly after an ambulance—with sirens wailing—pulled away from the pastor’s parsonage. A distressed woman stood at the door, sobbing and wringing her hands. I was told that the minister, his wife, and little child were all in the ambulance headed for the hospital. Less than an hour later I arrived at the hospital to find out what had happened.

After an introduction, the pastor took me into a private room and pointed to a small child lying unconscious in an oxygen tent. Faint tire marks were visible over her face. “Who’s child?” I asked. “She’s mine, Brother David,” said the pastor. “I rushed out of the house because I was late for a funeral. I didn’t know she was playing under the car—I ran over her.” The sight of a weeping minister, his hysterical wife, and the unconscious child was shocking and unnerving. I have never prayed more diligently for anyone in all my life. But behind the prayer a blanket of fear had already fallen on my heart. I was questioning God... “Why?”

I was still asking that question when I viewed the lovely child in the funeral parlor. She looked like an angel. I glanced over at the father and mother and, taking one final look at the child, gritted my teeth and whispered, “God, don’t ever strike my home with this kind of judgment. I’ll do anything you ask me to do—just don’t touch one of my children.” It started that moment, standing before that child’s casket. A terrible thought possessed my mind: “He must have committed some terrible sin to deserve such punishment.” My concept of God suddenly began to change.

I rushed home to my wife and children, gathered them in my arms and under my breath said, “God, I’ll give my life for the gangs in New York, but don’t ever take one of my children.” Gwen was expecting our third child. I had not been with her when Debbie or Bonnie were born, and she wanted me with her just once. I had scheduled a crusade for delinquents at St. Nicholas’ Arena and this necessitated my going to the city, some 400 miles away, each week for two or three days. I was still pasturing a small church in Pennsylvania. She begged me not to go this time; she felt I was desperately needed at home. “I must go, honey—or the child could be born crippled if I don’t obey God and fulfill my call.” I did go. But this time I went bound in the spirit. I was no longer free. Oh, I still knew the Lord—but now as a Hard Man!

When I returned, Gwen was not there to meet me at the door as usual. I found her in bed in a near state of shock, and unaware that I was in the room. As I stood over her a scripture rang through the corridors of my mind so loud and clear I was taken aback: “A man who neglects his own household is worse than an infidel and has denied the faith.” [I have to stop here now. We remember that when Jesus fasted in the wilderness, Satan tried to use scripture against Him. Remember that we must “try the spirits,” to see if they are of God. And now I remind us that the adversary “misuses” scripture, where God uses scripture to edify, uplift, encourage, teach, convict.] I fell to my knees and asked God to touch and heal her. She fell asleep.

I slipped quietly into my study, spread a blanket on the floor and began to pour out my heart to God. The yoke was not easy and the burden was too heavy. I wept through tears of sorrow, wonderment, and self-pity. I had not smiled in days. I was determined to “have it out with God on the spot.” Suddenly a blackness I dare not even try to describe came over me. It was as though the angel of death was breathing on the back of my neck.

“Stand up,” a still, small voice commanded. Then came a torrent of accusations: “You’re going to New York only to seek fame. You want to be somebody. You’re a fake. Your wife will lose her mind and baby. God will judge you for a heart full of pride.” I fell to my knees, quaking and shaking. “No. God!” I screamed. “It’s not true ... I love you ... I’ve given all ... you can’t possibly think so bad of me after all I’ve gone through”

Then a ray of light came through in the form of a scripture verse: “Try the spirits to see if they are of God.” Another verse came to mind, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” I stood to my feet, looked up and prayed, “God, I don’t believe these lies, but even if they are true, you are my advocate; Jesus, forgive me.”

The voice began to curse, and I knew it was the accuser of the brethren—Satan. I began to laugh. The load began to lift; the darkness vanished. [I am just now remembering when I, too, suffered a time of darkness; and when the light of scripture revealed truth and I understood the truth of II Corinthians 10:3-5, “*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [meaning, “of the flesh; material or worldly”], but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;*”) You see, the darkness we buy into becomes a “stronghold” or a “chain” of the adversary. Yet the weapons we hold as Christians have the power through God to PULL THESE STRONGHOLDS DOWN; the darkness is dispelled by the light of Christ. The scripture continues: “*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ...*” I will now remind us also of Ephesians 6:10-18, which begins to counsel us with: “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, {and WHY? ...} that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” Praise God!]

I ran into the children’s room where Debbie and Bonnie were sleeping in bunk beds. From the top bunk I gathered Debbie in my arms and went into the living room. It was about two o’clock in the morning and she was fast asleep. But she was so starved for Daddy’s affection she clung like a vine. In the middle of the room, I seemed to hear a voice say, “*Drop her—let her go!*” I held even tighter and said out loud, “Never. She’s my girl. I’ll never drop her—never let her go.” As clear as any still, small voice, I heard, “Yes, and you are My son. I’ll not drop you. I’ll never let you go or harm you.” I began to see it all. I laid Debbie back in bed and began running through the house praising God. A torrent of scriptures came pouring into my heart:

“If God marked iniquities, who among us could stand?”

“He knoweth our frame—He remembereth that we are but dust.”

“My yoke is easy—my burden is light.”

“His mercy and loving kindness endureth forever.”

I woke up my wife and told her the good news. “Honey, I’m not mad at God any more, and He’s not mad at me. My relationship is all right now.”

I have felt and known His love. I am no better than before, but there is no power on earth or in hell that can separate me from this relationship of love and mercy. I have failed Him many times since, but in the midst of it all, I have rested in the constant love relationship between us.

STEP NUMBER TWO: A FEAR COMPLEX

[We are now returning to Matthew 25, the story of the talents and the response of the unfruitful servant.] “So I was afraid” (vs. 25). A wrong relationship with the Lord always breeds fear. Fear is bondage. Fear hath torment, and this tormented servant was misled by a concept that is prevalent even today. This is the idea that God does not need me, a frail human being, to perform a job. He can do it by just speaking a miracle into being (“reaping where thou hast not sown and gathering where thou hast not strewed”). What this servant really meant was, “You can save the heathens without me. Why should I evangelize them? You have the power to save my loved ones by just an act of power. Why should I have to sweat and cry and pray?”

Everywhere I go today, I meet Christians who are bound by fears of all descriptions. Fear of pride, fear of the future, fear of failure, fear of losing one’s mind, fear of past sins, fear of people, and many others. Wherever you got your fear—you didn’t come by it through God. So why put up with it? The Word says, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” A right relationship with the Lord is one of perfect love—and that drives out all fear. David said: “*I will fear no evil.*” [This is taken from the 23rd Psalm. I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. We know this scripture well.]

A seminary student tells me his sermons seem to fall on the ground ten feet in front of the pulpit. A teen-age girl confesses, “I’m all bottled up inside. I pray and cry and read my Bible, but I’m bothered and frustrated. I’m tied up in knots inside.” [Just now as I’m realizing that David, here, is giving instances where individuals are unknowingly revealing that they are bound, it is because of fear, of unbelief, of not determining to “stand on God’s promises” or trust in His Word over the “vain imaginations” of the adversary. David continues.] A mother tells me, “I’ve given all to the Lord, but I keep doubting. I can’t seem to get through. I am tormented with fear.” [And I say, “Don’t stand on the fence, and don’t be lukewarm! You are only reaping anxiety and tribulation (which is suffering and distress), when God’s Word and Spirit offer peace and hope.]

Why? Why all the doubts and fears? Why are there so many today who know not how to live a life of real faith and victory? Because they are muzzled by fear! Until that fear, which is really unbelief, is driven out, man can never be a free soul. *Shake off your fears. They are all of the devil!* Don’t put up with them!

STEP NUMBER THREE: AN OBSESSION FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY

[Again we return to the response of the unfruitful servant.] “... and went and hid thy talent in the earth” (vs. 25).

He had no adventurous spirit. He was afraid to risk for his master. Fear of competition led him to bury the talent. Rather than be out-bid by men of greater talents, he settled for security. He was playing it safe. He would console himself with the idea: If I can't do it, I won't be a hypocrite or a hero.

... When churches, ministers and Christian workers seek only to maintain the status quo—then shall the end be in sight! God uses men who are ready to risk everything—to step out in faith—to invest in vision—to launch out into the deep.

How many great things will never get done in God's work because laborers are trading their vision for security. Away with nest eggs; away with fears of "rainy days"....

The love of security is addictive! It is a bottomless pit. It is a desire that can never be satisfied. Many are laid on the shelf and are useless to God's work because of this fly in the ointment.

I stepped out by faith to go to New York. I slept in a little office and began my ministry to teenagers without a dollar in the bank account. God has never failed me. He has loaded me daily with His benefits. I have proven God. [Again I must stop. To prove means "to test." Malachi 3:10 tells us, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." This is God's Word, but there is more: (vs. 11), "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes...."] Step out by faith and you'll discover a new world of victory, glory, adventure and fruitfulness.

Cut off the muzzle! Get free! You need not be bound! I finished this part of my speaking with: And let us also remember that "perfect love casteth out fear." I hoped that the message was one of faith and hope. I paused then, as I began to share a personal testimony.

Before coming to the service that evening, I made a call to Beth Lane, Pastor Doug's wife. Her mother had been ill and had been placed in a nursing home to recover. Beth and Doug had brought her to their home to care for her and it has been difficult to work everything out. I began my call by asking Beth how her mother was doing. She was suffering from some dementia and bed sores, etc. Beth also informed me that her brother, Kenny, who has lymphoma cancer, would be coming up to their home to stay the night before heading to the cancer center in St. Louis, there to stay for 3 days of treatment, then returning to Beth's home in St. James for the night, before heading on to their home. I asked Doug (there in the audience) for how long this would be going on, and he said for 16 weeks.

I then shared with Beth my family's recent news. Our eldest son, who lives in Texas, called this past Thursday evening, asking if he could come visit us that weekend ... that he had something he wanted to share with us. Long story short, Greg, who just turned 40 this past October, has been diagnosed with colon cancer. His doctor said that he thought Greg's life could be prolonged by 2 years with chemotherapy. He is to go Monday to have a port put in and then Tuesday to start chemo.

Beth shared with me two scriptures that the Lord had given to her which have provided her much comfort. That's what God does. He gives us His Words of faith and encouragement through

these difficult times. We truly do have much to be thankful for: God's Word and His Promises, the ministry of His Holy Spirit, the gift of His Son Jesus and all He has done on our behalf. May God continue to bless you this holiday season, was my closing statement.

But that is not all that happened. After a song, the last pastor came to the microphone to give the closing prayer, but stated he felt the need to also share a testimony. He, too, had had colon cancer and gone through surgery. Afterwards, his doctor, from India, made a point to tell him and show him how God had healed him; he is now cancer free [for 7 years now]. Praise God!

Isn't God wonderful? As we pastors stood at the back to again greet the people as they left, so many of those dear Christians said that they would be remembering Greg and our family in prayer. I know that the journey ahead may still at times be a difficult one for Greg and for our whole family, but I am at peace. I pray, as God's Word states, that "all things work together for good to those who love God..." and I trust Him wholeheartedly in what lies ahead.



FROM M.J. BALDRICA, MADERA, CALIFORNIA

Morgan Lee Baldrica

is officially adopted by Mary Jane Baldrica
God's precious Gift

It has been an interesting twenty-seven months getting the official stamp of approval on the adoption of my daughter. We are finally done with all the red tape. It doesn't make Morgan any more mine than she already is, but it's nice to have the paperwork done.

As adoptions go, I think I'm one of the lucky ones. I was in the delivery room when Morgan entered the world; it took my breath away. For the first four and a half months there was a lot of sleep deprivation on my part. I knew the golden rule "sleep when your baby sleeps," but I couldn't figure out who is going to do the dishes and wash the clothes while I was sleeping 16 hours a day.

By the next four and a half months Morgan went from tummy time, crawling (5 months) to walking. She had taken a couple of steps from furniture to coffee tables at home, my brother's and Grandma's, but one night she just walked across the floor (five steps) tried to pick up Winnie the Pooh and toppled over. The next time she took off she walked from my chair to the side door of our home (27 steps). Over the next two days there was a little bit of crawling; mostly walking. When Morgan started walking, the house had to be child proofed for each inch she grew. I think her arms had special powers. She could reach things I could barely reach (yes, I know that's not saying much). Thankfully, this is when the eye in the back of my head formed, so I could keep up with her 😊

I started signing to Morgan when she was a couple of months old. Before Morgan could talk, she could tell me simple things with baby signs. She could tell me if she wanted more, something to drink, wanted to play outside, give the dogs a treat, let the cat in, if she was hurt and other helpful and fun stuff. Once Morgan started signing back, we went crazy with learning new signs about animals, bath time, mealtime and bedtime. Her first sign was hat and hat was also her first word.

Morgan could jump off the ground with both feet at nineteen months. All that jumping sent her brain into over drive and she started talking at about twenty months. As I mentioned, her first word was hat. She'd been saying hat for a long time, but now she was starting to say other stuff and her sounds started to make sense. I must say that as a Mom I couldn't be prouder that "no" was not even in the first twenty words my daughter spoke.

Now Morgan can pedal and steer her tricycle, kick, throw and catch a ball, climb a rock wall, ladder, slide on a big slide and swing in the big kid swing. Oh, and did I mention she is potty trained. Morgan is the light of my life and still takes my breath away. I have a bicycle for her in my trunk and I'm going to give it to her as soon as I get home from court today. God sure knew what he was doing when he blessed me with this gift I am honored to call daughter.

TWO SHORT ONES FROM TOM BARRETT

A couple of weeks ago, our daughter asked if she and her friend could come by for prayer after their appointment in San Antonio. Lisa, our daughter's friend, had been diagnosed with third stage renal failure; the appointment was with her kidney doctor to discuss a plan of treatment. As it turned out, we had the opportunity to visit with the two of them at their home before the appointment. After I explained how time is of no consequence with God, and that He has a way of changing things in the present by changing things in the past (this according to our reckoning of time – everything is in the present moment with God). We then had prayer and didn't see them again until after the doctor's appointment. When they came to our home, our daughter was overcome with joy. What was third degree failure, for some reason was now second degree. How awesome and faithful is our God!!

Here it is Christmas Eve and we are visiting our "godchild", Mary Elizabeth, and her family in Florida. She just had a phone call from her sister in Maryland who was on her way to the hospital for a labor check. Cynthia is not due until March. She asked for prayer; we knelt in a circle and I offered a prayer of comfort for Mary Elizabeth and reassurance for Cynthia. I also asked that God's perfect will be done and then claimed the victory in the name of Christ. Immediately after the prayer the phone rang; it was Cynthia; there were no more pains; and she is back home. At the exact moment of asking, God was answering. How awesome and faithful is our God!

The testimonies shared in this journal are expressions of personal experiences and encounters with God. They do not necessarily represent the theology, beliefs, or practices of either CCM or the Community of Christ.

This issue of the journal is now complete and ready to go to those who need a reminder from time to time of God's Grace and Love for each of His children. The next issue will be published at the end of March 2009. Please send me your testimonies so others will be blessed. We have been counseled to "share the sacred story". Make no mistake; your story is sacred.

Love, Peace, and Blessings,
Tom Barrett, Healing Ministries,
CCM Leadership Team