



February 2004

The Word of God **NEWSLETTER**

an
ecumenical
charismatic
missionary
Christian
Community

Where can you go for a good dose of sisterhood?

On Bagels, Blessings and Being Real

By Barb Brown

Growing up, I was surrounded by five sisters. Saturday mornings stand out in my memory as a time we always spent together. There were chores to be done, plans to be made, sewing projects to complete, meals to cook, and sometimes problems to be solved. Conversation and laughter laced all the activity. Nothing special ... just ordinary Saturday morning life with its ups and downs... sharing the good as well as the bad. We are all grown now and those Saturday mornings are rare for the 6 of us. But the Lord continues to provide this need I have for sisters in my ordinary life relating in an ordinary way.

Ordinary life shared

Once a month, a group of women gather at The Word of God office to share the ups and downs, the challenges and blessings, and the ordinary ebb and flow of life. We have all come to cherish these times of simply being together. .sharing real life. There is no pretense, no pressure, no presenting it as always "all together". It is ordinary life shared. Each Saturday highlights a speaker, usually someone from our own ranks, who shares what new things, or old, that the Lord is doing or has done. We are constantly inspired by the faithfulness of the sister speaking as she shares about living her life in loyal

obedience to the call placed on her life, whether as a wife and mother or a single woman facing the work world challenges. Occasionally we are blessed with the sharing of younger sisters who share with such freshness and enthusiasm that encourages us all.

We have been hearing more and more about blessing one another. The Women's Breakfast is a place to see this in action. Always time is allotted for prayer for those with specific needs and time for sharing as we enjoy the bagels, donuts, eggs and other treats. It's a place to "touch base", to make contact,

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE

**Women's
Breakfast**

**Passion at the
movies**

On to Africa

Blessing

Word & Spirit

And more ...



Sharing bagels, coffee, and life in Christ ... women of all ages gather once a month at The Word of God women's breakfast to build one another up and simple enjoy each other. Each time the Lord uses another sister to bring real encouragement for 'arising and running' with Jesus. The next breakfast is Feb. 14, 9 am. Carol Magill will be sharing.

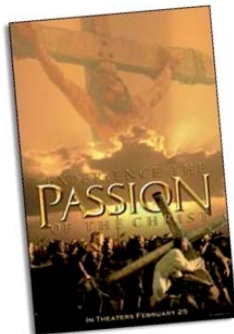
It seems to me

Confronting the Cross

This February could be the start of an historic period in our County, and maybe across the country. On the 25th Mel Gibson's movie about the last 12 hours of Jesus' earthly ministry, *The Passion of the Christ*, will open at all the major theaters in our area. On one level this could just be another quality movie about Christ, such as the *Jesus* movie used by Campus Crusade to witness fruitfully all around the world. But there is a chance that this movie may have a significant impact, especially here in the US.

Christian leaders from many different traditions and some secular media types, as well, who have seen the preliminary screenings have been stunned by its power. One tells of a viewing by Washington, D.C. mover and shaker types who were glad-handing and chatting each other up before the showing, but how sat silent and crying afterward.

By all reports Gibson has attained the highest artistic standards while remaining faithful to the Gospel accounts. The effect is a movie that cannot be discounted by sophisticated audiences who are therefore opened up to the truth and power of The Story.



Here in our County we are joining with others in the Pastors Alliance for County Transformation to urge all Christian churches and ministries to take advantage of this amazing outreach opportunity. In addition to developing their own outreach plans, we are inviting them to join together to organize some follow-up seminars that would give unchurched people a place to go to respond to the experience they have at the movie.

Let's not let this chance to reach people who might have dismissed the Gospel as irrelevant as they get impacted by the Lord through this movie.

- Pray for the Father to use this film to draw people to Jesus
- Plan on taking your friends to see the movie
- Talk with people at work, school, neighborhood about their experiences
- Invite people to attend the follow-up seminars
- Help out with the seminars or other efforts

I believe the Lord has raised up a laborer for the Harvest in Mel Gibson. Let's join with him!

Women's Breakfast

One of the trademarks ... sisters simply "being real".

to get refreshed, and to get blessed. I find that my Saturdays that begin with the Women's breakfast have more of a sense of rootedness and joy. These are my sisters and we are in this life together!

As I think back over the last year or two, I am remembering sharings on the following topics: growing up as a child in The Word of God, new things the Lord is teaching in one's prayer life, the challenges raising youth, personal testimonies of the Lord's healing emotional wounds, adjusting to life as children leave home, dealing with co-workers who make life difficult, intercessory prayer, lessons the Lord is teaching on trust. Many times the sharing is of a work still in progress or perhaps only begun. Perhaps it is the sharings such as these that rally the women together even more in commitment to the sister sharing. One of the trademarks of this breakfast is sisters simply "being real".

Who is the breakfast for? Should you consider coming? The answer is "Are you living a fairly ordinary life, with ordinary ups and downs? Do you ever experience a need for more sisterly support? Do you ever need to be refreshed and inspired? If your answer is yes to any one of the three, then the women's breakfast is for you! If you haven't taken advantage of this monthly Saturday morning blessing, I encourage you to do so. We love to have our younger sisters join us also. Our next meeting is February 14 from 9 a.m. -10:30 a.m. Come out on this St. Valentine's Day morning and experience the love of the Lord and the love of your sisters!



Can it be spiritual if it is this much fun? You bet! Sisters of all ages, including daughters, are welcome to come. Bring a guest. The breakfast is a great introduction to life in the Lord and in the community.

How does the Lord combine The Word of God, an apostolic church planting network, a consecrated family and a hungry continent?

An Evangelistic Fishnet for Africa

By Bill Brannan



After investing 4 years in Belfast, it seems that the Lord is calling Bill and Stephanie Brannan to Africa. On a recent exploration visit doors flew wide open and a vision for working interdenominationally began to develop.

Editor: The Lord has been speaking to Bill and Stephanie Brannan about His next step for them. It looks like it will be a move to Africa to work interdenominationally. This would bring together the different strands of their experience in the Lord — and, who knows, may present opportunities for us to help, as well. Here is Bill's account.

Africa? - I know!

The last time Robert Mearns was in Belfast he asked Stephanie and I to pray about the Lord's assignments for the future. As I was praying, the Lord brought to mind many of the dreams He has given me over the years and He started to explain some of the details that I hadn't understood at the time. From my time in prayer I perceived that the Lord wanted me to go to Africa. He had already given me a word for the churches there. So I told Stephanie that I believed the Lord wanted me to go to Africa to visit and that I thought we were being called to go work there. She told me "I know"! The Lord had given her such dreams in the past and there has been a witness in our

spirits. I then told her that I didn't have any open doors into Africa but if the Lord wanted me to go, then He would show me the way.

The next day I got an email from a friend in Zambia who told me that I had an open invitation to come visit and a couple days later a similar invitation came from Burkina Faso. These were friends I met in Belfast

as they were going to the Bible College in Dunmurry. They had mentioned at that time that they would love for me to come but it was only a verbal invitation and I had forgotten about them.

Doors open in Zambia

I saw the Lord provide and confirm in many ways everything pertaining to the trip before I went which was a real blessing. The greatest part was seeing the Lord act when I got there. In Zambia I stayed with Odesola Johnson, the Regional coordinator of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, who oversees all the churches in 5 countries in South Africa. It was a very blessed time. I ministered in several churches across Zambia and ministered at a pastors' conference at an intercessory prayer organization. The highlight to me however, was ministering at the interdenominational prayer conference that was held while I was there. Odesola was scheduled to minister at it but got called away to South Africa so I ended up taking his place.

It is very amazing how the Lord works. The day we met with the other ministers I was praying to the Lord about this particular assignment in the morning and when we started with prayer at the meeting one of the ministers prophesied to me the answers to the questions I had just got done praying to the Lord! Then, I prophesied to her the very things that had been in her prayer. There was such a witness as we prayed and shared that the Lord had already brought us into perfect unity. This sister told me that the prayer conference was supposed to have happened back in the summer but they couldn't get it together. She believed that the Lord had it on hold because I was meant to minister at it. It was a very wild experience.

Working together for unity

Anyway, because the Lord has shown me for many years that we will minister in Africa, I had my eyes and ears open for direction from the Lord. As I sought the Lord in prayer I perceived that I was receiving great favor across denominations and with many pastors and leaders of denominations. I came to understand that the Lord has a work for us that is interdenominational in nature.

While I was there the Lord opened up to me more concerning the king's anointing in Scripture (something He has been showing me over the last year) and what He is doing in these days to change the spiritual climate over nations. This was a real blessing to me. Basically I see that there is a battle between two kingdoms in the world the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of

‘... praise/ worship/prayer is the first place that we express and demonstrate our unity... ’



How do you get from Belfast to Zambia? The Lord put Bill in touch with a man from there who was studying at a Bible college up the road, a friendship developed, an invitation was given ... the Lord knitting his people together!

darkness. Whichever kingdom has dominion over a given territory, whether it is a family, a city, a nation, etc. that kingdom manifests itself in every area. In many places there is a battle going on where the dominion is in contest and the territory is influenced by both kingdoms to greater or lesser degrees. The goal to bringing blessing is to change the spiritual climate. The Lord has given me a series of teachings and strategies concerning this that really came together in Africa.

Coming together under the King

About a year ago, while I was ministering to the youth in Ann Arbor the Lord showed me that the Bride of Christ is coming out of the wilderness leaning on her beloved ... Jesus! I saw this to mean that the Bride is going to come to maturity as promised in Eph. 4. I came to understand that divisions are a sign of immaturity. Then I saw that the nation of Israel, which was birthed in the exodus, came to maturity in the reigns of David and Solomon. This was that seed coming to maturity, but it was still the old covenant so the glory had to fade. Despite this there is much we learn from what God did when

Israel came to maturity as a nation. Before they came to maturity they were divided, the kings brought the tribes together. They also had the authority to extend the borders of Israel, subdue her enemies, remove idolatry, establish worship, etc.

We see with David that He is at heart a worshipper. The Lord showed me that this is really where it all begins. David was from the tribe of praise, and he reigned there before he reigned in all Israel. During his reign, praise was taken to the extreme with David's tabernacle. So I saw that praise/ worship/prayer is the first place that we express and demonstrate our unity, and as we engage in this and build relationships, trust and love, we will start to bring all the tribes together, to the unity of the faith. These are very brief highlights of whole teaching.

Richness through giving

In Zambia I started to see some things about the reign of Solomon. It says that gold was as common as silver in those days. They were very rich and I saw that the church is about to become very rich because of the king's anointing. What I saw is that we will get rich as we give willingly to the house of God. What I mean is that God has already distributed all His riches into the church but because of immaturity we seem very poor because it hasn't multiplied. What I mean is that there is a day coming where we will give our best to one another and hold nothing back.

For example, if I am a pastor of a church and we have a really good worship team but the church down the road doesn't, I will have my worship leader hand it over to someone else and go and give him

to the other church. Then we will both be rich. What I saw is that we will become rich as we are humble and loving enough to give and receive from one another. Especially wise and wealthy are those who are able to receive God's riches from imperfect vessels.

About a year ago an angel spoke to me while I was at the King's Way Conference in Hungary and one of the things he mentioned was about an evangelical fishnet. This term was very strange to me, but as I was in Africa I started to get a vision for an evangelical fishnet. This brings together the two ministries that I have served in, The Word of God a community that seeks to network local churches and King's Way Connection which is an apostolic church planting network. So this is basically what we are working on fleshing out right now and hope to raise support for it.

When I got to Burkina Faso, I again found incredible favor across denominations and when I told my friend Pr. Samuel about the vision I had for an evangelical fishnet he was in complete unity. This was a great confirmation to me.

This is just an outline of what we believe the Lord is calling us to next. Please pray with us for His guidance and power as we move forward under His Spirit.



The Brannan household now includes Eliya, in addition to Trinity.

The Power of Blessing

By Martha Balmer

Blessing and the Call to Unity

I don't remember when I first developed my passion for ecumenism. I suspect the seed of it was planted when I was conceived. But at some point, when I was perhaps in my late teens, I think God touched it and it burst into bloom. I felt I was made to reconcile and bridge. When I put my hand to the cause of unity, it fit me like my own skin. It is a part of God's heart that he has shared with me, a facet of his image that he made me to reflect.

As I suppose any of us do with regard to our personal passions, I experience things that affect unity or division very deeply. Setbacks can inspire painful levels of grief, and victories provoke joy and gratitude that is nearly inexpressible. It seems to me that my spirit is always on the alert for signs of reconciliation, because whenever I witness or hear about one, whether as small as a personal conversation or as large as a Pope's act of repentance, I cannot observe it passively. My heart leaps and all my faculties fix on it. It's personal. It has happened to me. I have to rejoice; I have to praise God; I have to bless it.

I believe that this nearly visceral need I have to touch moments of unity by blessing them has its origin in the Holy Spirit. I am convinced that there is a profound connection between blessing and the healing of the Body of Christ.

Learning about the Power of Blessing

It's tempting to think that 'blessing' seems pretty passive, just a well-meaning word that has no more power to bridge centuries of denominational mistrust than a

chorus of 'It's a Small World' has to reverse continental drift. But I'm not talking about just saying 'God bless you' to someone. Like real loving, real blessing is not so much something you feel or say as something you do, probably in as many ways as there are people to bless. And it is the acts of blessing that do the work of dismantling walls, building bridges, healing

*The LORD bless you and
keep you;
the LORD make his face
shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face to-
ward you
and give you peace.*

Num 6:24-26

wounds, and reconciling hearts.

At some point a few years ago, I heard God tell me to start encouraging my fellow Christians to bless one another. Looking back, I think the Lord tilted my heart for this word, preparing me to understand it by exposing me to acts of blessing that showed me their powerful reconciling potential. He primed me to appreciate them.

The first and most important such exposure happened when I was serving on the prayer ministry team at the Catholic renewal weekend in Sarnia, Ontario several years ago. As a Protestant with an ecumenical itch, I've always loved serving in Catholic contexts, but at this one, I had a seminal experience of the

kind of blessing I believe God intends for us to practice.

During a talk that afternoon, a young priest told the story of his meeting with a Protestant minister in his city. The minister had requested the lunch appointment, and while they were eating together, he disclosed to the priest that he had been brought up in a Catholic family. He went on to confess that when he was very young he had had a profound sense that God was calling him to the priesthood. He had responded to this sense with a promise to the Lord to become a priest. As a young adult, however, he wandered away from his relationship with the Lord. Eventually, he recommitted his life to Christ through the evangelistic efforts of Protestants, married, entered seminary and finally became ordained as a pastor. But now he was eaten up with guilt. Unable to forget his early promise, he was now nagged by the thought

(Continued on page 6)



Several months ago Martha Balmer spoke on 'Blessing' at a prayer meeting and it was such a blessing to folks that we asked for more. She is hoping to expand what the Lord has been showing her into a small book, but in the meantime, here is the introduction!

The call to Bless

By Martha Balmer

that he had broken his vow and that God could never really be pleased with his ministry or his marriage. The priest responded with a compassion that the minister may have hoped for, but the words he spoke had a more powerful affect than mere sympathy could ever have achieved. He reached out to the minister and said, 'You have fulfilled your vocation.'

Those words lifted a burden of guilt in a way that I suppose any Catholic might expect priestly words of absolution to do. But because of the denominational gap, and because they did not come with any conditions, they were an act of blessing with more reconciling power than the priest who spoke them may have imagined.

Certainly he didn't suspect the affect they had on me. I wept. I was overcome with a personal gratitude to this priest. I felt as though I myself had been unburdened, as though my own ministry had been declared valid and valuable. I felt that a subtle but solid barrier that had stood between this Catholic and me, a barrier that had gone all but unnoticed because it had been accepted and taken for granted, had suddenly crumbled.

I had been blessed.

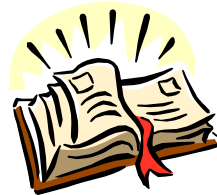
The Call to Bless One Another

As I look back on that moment, it amazes me that I knew I was experiencing a blessing. I don't remember anyone actually using that word at the time. But the experience was so profound, so tangibly of the Spirit, that I can literally call it a defining moment. Through that experience, the Holy Spirit provided me with a definition of blessing far beyond any of the hollow impressions I had had up to that point.

But I got a lot more than a definition; I got a foretaste of my heart's desire. That blessing had the power to unite far more than two individual men. I know this because it carried an anointing of reconciliation that touched me and is still reverberating in my life. It left me with an increasingly tender heart toward my Catholic brethren and a reasonable hope for the unity of all Christians. It left me with an irrepressible desire to emulate it. And it left me with a mandate from the Lord to tell all my brothers and sisters in Christ to bless one another.

Power of the Word & Spirit

Not everyone attends classes, even at a seminary, with the expectation that the Holy Spirit is going to break in. But that is just what He is doing at Sacred Heart (Catholic) Seminary in Detroit!



For the last few years Peter Williamson (that's DR. Peter Williamson to the folks at Sacred Heart) has been teaching at the seminary. The key is that he has been teaching Scripture. As he and the students have been studying the Word, even under academic sounding titles like 'Johannine Literature', the Spirit has been causing the Word to be living and active! Folks in his classes have been experiencing a release of the Spirit, and one has even been healed of a significant ailment!

Well, enough interest has developed that Peter decided to offer an opportunity for folks who were hungry for more of the Spirit to learn more and get prayer. Billing them as 'mini-retreats', he invited students from all his previous classes to come on Friday evening, January 17 or Saturday morning, January 31. There would be a talk on receiving more of the Spirit, testimonies, and prayer. Several folks from the community joined Peter and Marsha to pray with folks.



At the first meeting more than 30 former students and spouses listened with rapt attention. During the prayer ministry time many were visibly touched. The second meeting had not taken place as of this writing, but some folks wanted to know if they could come back for another dose!

Peter, of course, has a unique opportunity because his job involves leading people to engage with God's Word. However, there is a lesson for us all in this. Peter really did not expect this all to happen. He was just teaching his courses. But then the Spirit began to work on some folks, and he had the eyes to see it and took a step to lean into it. This was all the opening the Spirit needed.

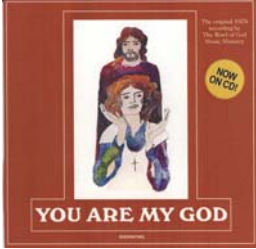
May we all have our eyes open for what the Lord is doing in the lives of those around us and the faith to step out and cooperate.

Jesus said, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." (Jn 5:17)

The Word of God Music Re-release!

Original recordings now available on CD!

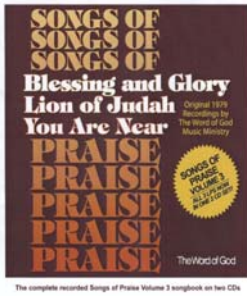
Maybe your LP's are scratched or lost – or maybe you never owned these recordings before. Now you can get them on high quality CD's.



You are my God – \$10

Featuring

A Voice Cries out in the Wilderness, The Light of Christ, For You are My God, Hymn of Glory, King of Kings, and more



Songs of Praise Volume 3 – 2 CD set for \$20

Includes all 3 LP's on a 2 CD set

Blessing & Glory, Lion of Judah, You are Near

Featuring

Awake of Israel, Blessing & Glory, Glorious in Majesty, God is Raising an Army, Great and Wonderful, Hiney Mah Tov, Isaiah 60, Lion of Judah, The Magnificat, Once No People, Proclaim His Marvelous Deeds, Unto the House of the Lord, and more

Purchasing Information

- Buy them at The Word of God prayer meetings
- Pick them up at The Word of God office – 230 Collingwood, Ste. 160B, Ann Arbor
- Call or write to The Word of God office to place an order and we will mail them to you as soon as we receive your check for the CD's and shipping & handling

The Word of God 734/994-3243
 230 Collingwood, Ste 160B
 Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Shipping & Handling: You are my God – \$2.50

Songs of Praise Volume 3 – \$3.50

The Word of God Music CD – Order Form



Name &
Address

Date
Phone
Email

Product	Quantity	Cost	Shipping	Item total
Songs of Praise Volume 3 (2 CD set)		\$20.00	\$3.50	
You are My God		\$10.00	\$2.50	
Order Total				

Send Order form & Check Payable to The Word of God
230 Collingwood, Ste. 160B
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Christian Dance Network

Winter Concert

Sat. Feb 21, 7 pm

**@ Knox Presbyterian
Church**



- family-friendly
- Bringing together movement artists from many churches of different traditions, ethnic, and denominational backgrounds
- Fellowship time afterwards. You're invited to bring a dessert or fruit to share.

For Information

www.christiandancenetwork.org

734-662-9890.

Join us in February

- 2/1 Prayer Meeting, 4:30 pm
Westminster Presbyterian Church
1500 Scio Church Road
- 2/14 Women's Breakfast, 9:00 am
Community Meeting Room
- 2/15 Prayer Meeting, 4:30 pm
Covenant Presbyterian Church
5171 Jackson Road
- 2/29 Prayer Meeting, 4:30
Covenant Presbyterian Church
5171 Jackson Road

Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 42
ANN ARBOR, MI

The Word of God
230 Collingwood, Ste. 160-B
Ann Arbor, MI 48103-3845