

COMMUNITAS

Purpose-Driven Prayer

by Blake Carter, Senior Pastor

We've all heard of "telltale signs." You are thinking of buying a used car, but see "telltale signs" that it has been in an accident. You are fishing, and see "telltale signs" on the surface of fish activity below. You've agreed to watch your sister's and brother-in-law's kids, but in the first few moments you see "telltale signs" that you made a big mistake. "Telltale signs" are signals that, although subtle, communicate unmistakable truths.

We have been in a fascinating study of Nehemiah as a "case study" for living the Purpose-Driven Life. Rick Warren's best-selling book of that title made its mark on Hope Church last spring as we enjoyed a high-impact study of it. (To listen to or watch this series on-line, go to www.hope-church.ws; on the left side of the page, click on the "Messages" link.) As we have studied Nehemiah's life this fall, I have begun to see "telltale signs" that there was a secret to Nehemiah's success in living out the PDL: he was a man of "Purpose-Driven Prayer." Nine times we are told that he prayed; and in chapter 1 of the book of Nehemiah we read one of the great prayers of the Bible. I think we can learn a great deal about living the PDL by watching how Nehemiah lived out a life of Purpose-Driven Prayer. In fact, we can find the answers to three key questions: *When* should I pray? *Why* should I pray? *How* should I pray?

When should I pray?

Answer: Before I do anything else!

Notice Nehemiah 1:1-4:

In December of the twentieth year of the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, ² one of my fellow Jews named Hanani came to visit me with some men who had arrived from Judah. I took the opportunity to inquire about how things were going in Jerusalem. "How are they getting along," I asked. ³ "Well," they replied, "things are not good; the wall of Jerusalem is still torn down, and the gates are burned." ⁴ When I heard this, I sat down and cried. In fact, I refused to eat for several days, for I spent the time in prayer to the God of heaven. (TLB)

Nehemiah had a lot to do. He had to rebuild the entire city walls, but did he jump right into the project? No! His first step was time with God in prayer—several days of prayer, as a matter of fact. I know that too often I feel so busy with the stuff of life—often good stuff—that I don't take the time to pray; yet deep down I know that the opposite should happen. We have learned in the series on Nehemiah that the foundation of living out the PDL is sensing what God is up to in the world around us, then joining Him in it. How can we know what He is up to unless we are actively in dialogue with Him and asking Him to clarify His activity for us?

Why should I pray?

Answer: It shows I am dependent on God, which in turn lightens my load and releases God's power.

Jeremiah 33:3 says: *"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." (NKJV)* I can't tell you how many times I have talked with people who had been facing

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Blake Carter

“When we go to God, first we communicate with Him and remind ourselves that we are not in charge, that we are not the general manager of the universe—He is—and we need His help.”

huge life challenges (work, marriage, kids, finances, whatever), and told me all the things they had done to try to solve the problem, without success. Then they say: “Finally I started to pray about it—and God stepped in and led me down a completely different path, and now things are working out great. I wish I had gone to God first!”

When we go to God, first we communicate with Him and remind ourselves that we are not in charge, that we are not the general manager of the universe—He is—and we need His help. This lightens the load on us, because we acknowledge that it is not all up to us, and that God is free to step in and do something because we have finally given up control. If you study the prayers of Nehemiah, you will see that over and over he acknowledges God’s greatness and power, and his (Nehemiah’s) weakness and vulnerability. Nehemiah never forgets that ‘It’s not about him.’ God is still searching for people to use to do amazing things today. But we must be clear on this: It is not about us; it is all about God.

How, then, should I pray?

Let’s look at Nehemiah’s prayer from Nehemiah 1:

First of all, **Base your request on God’s character.** Verse 5: “O Lord God,” I cried out; “O great and awesome God who keeps his promises and is so loving and kind to those who love and obey him! Hear my prayer!” The first thing Nehemiah did was remind himself who God is. Nehemiah began his prayer by acknowledging God’s greatness and power.

Second, **Confess your sins to God.** Verse 6: “Listen carefully to what I say! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you; yes, I and my people have committed the horrible sin of not obeying the commandments you gave us through your servant Moses.” If the first thing we do is remind ourselves who God is, the next thing we should do is remind ourselves who we are. God does not so much need talent or

ability or strength or riches or intelligence (though we want us to give Him all of these things) as He needs brokenness, humility, and a servant’s heart in those He plans to use.

Third, **Claim the promises of God.** Verse 8: “Oh, please remember what you told Moses! You said, ‘If you sin, I will scatter you among the nations;’⁹ but if you return to me and obey my laws, even though you are exiled to the farthest corners of the universe, I will bring you back to Jerusalem. For Jerusalem is the place in which I have chosen to live.” God had promised His people that if they followed His ways, He would bring them back to their sacred city. Nehemiah says in effect: “God, you made this promise; now we are ready to see this happen.” Prayer is simply taking God at His word and challenging Him to fulfill His promises—and He loves that. God loves it when people take huge risks in faith, trusting that He will do what He says. But let me ask you this: Nehemiah was able to claim this promise because He knew God’s promises in Scripture. How well do you know Scripture?

Fourth, **Be very specific.** Verse 10: “We are your servants, the people you rescued by your great power.”¹¹ O Lord, please hear my prayer! Heed the prayers of those of us who delight to honor you. Please help me now as I go in and ask the king for a great favor—put it into his heart to be kind to me.” (TLB) Sometimes we don’t get answers to prayer because we don’t ask for anything that can be answered. “Oh God, be with my kids” sounds spiritual; but how will we know God whether God has answered it? Give God a chance to show up in specific ways, and then give Him the glory.

I believe that God is yearning to work in our lives, and longs for us to live on purpose. But it all starts with prayer. I invite you to begin living a life of Purpose-Driven Prayer. If you accept His invitation, hold on to your hat—because if your life is anything like Nehemiah’s, you will be in for the ride of your life. ■

Imagine . . . Hope Under the Big Top



Photos by Sue Brinner, Charlie Brittin,
Mike Tyner and Polly Danforth



On October 3, nearly 1,000 people attended a tent service at Hope's new building site. Highlights of the event included an exciting time of praise and worship, drama, baptisms, insightful teaching, and a tour of the new facility under construction.



Focus on Prayer

Hope Has a Vision for Prayer

Editor's Note



This issue of Communitas focuses on prayer. One of the ways in which people who believe in God differ the most from those who do not is this: Believers pray. (That's why Daniel went to the lions' den—and how he got out of it.) The articles in this section illustrate many reasons for praying. In times (such as the present) of physical danger from forces hostile to this nation and to our faith, we should remember even more the importance of prayer.

by Neill Howey
Hope Prayer Ministry

The vision for the prayer ministry at Hope is that all ministry efforts be intentionally covered in prayer. The e-mail prayer line is very effective in responding to individual prayer needs, and Joyce Williams does a Samson-like job of administering it. For example, I learned about the shooting of the security guard at the Capitol on the prayer line, before I heard about it on the news. That's awesome!! The ladies who meet on Wednesday afternoons in the library are faithful about praying for many of the needs of the church and beyond. And there are other groups around the church who meet for prayer. Praise God for that!

What I am starting to work on is a pro-active prayer focus on all the ministry efforts at Hope. What I think this will look like is this: There will be one or more groups dedicated to praying regularly for every activity of the church, including the pastors, elders, and staff; worship services; Imagine and the new building; Harvestland; youth activities; and missions, among others.

I see my role as organizing that effort. This will involve:

- recruiting existing small groups to “adopt” a particular ministry to pray for as part of their normal activities;
- linking the small-group leader with a leader of the ministry who is intimate with its vision and needs;
- funneling particular prayer requests to the small-group leaders; and
- offering instruction and encouragement in prayer to small groups that seek it.

To that end, I encourage small-group leaders who read this to approach their groups about their willingness to commit to adopt a ministry area, and contact me about getting started. You can make it happen by calling 787-0986; e-mailing me at nhowey@ameritech.net; or dropping a note in box 169. Our hope is that Hope becomes a church with prayer undergirding all its activities, because we know that the prayer of a righteous individual or group avails much. ■

Prayer Ministry Is A Vital Part of Hope

by Joyce Williams

Hope's e-mail prayer ministry, now in its seventh year, is an important and growing part of this community of faith. About 100 persons now pray for others whose needs have been e-mailed to them. The last few months have seen remarkable healing and other answers to prayers (see accompanying articles).

This ministry began in 1998, almost by accident—or so it seemed at the time. Hope had a telephone prayer chain; but because many homes are empty during the day, it was becoming less effective at communicating prayer needs. At a circle meeting,

someone said we needed a better way to send out prayer requests. I heard myself reply that if we had an e-mail prayer line, word could get out faster without depending on people's being home all day. The Holy Spirit must have nudged me to say that—I had never thought of such a thing before.

A number of praying computer users signed up; and the ministry has grown, both numerically and spiritually, ever since. E-mail updates go out at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. if there are any new requests; occasional urgent messages are sent at other times.

“The Holy Spirit must have nudged me to say that—I had never thought of such a thing before.”

Many participants have been loyal “prayers” for years—in some cases after leaving the Springfield area. Some of Hope’s foreign missionaries participate by praying for needs communicated through this ministry. We are glad to share their reports so we will know how to pray for them.

Prayer is most often sought for one-time needs; other situations involve continuing challenges. We withhold names if asked, but most people needing prayer want to be identified. Praying participants are asked to use discretion in approaching persons who have been named in prayer requests, because some may not know (or appreciate) that they are being prayed for.

We have seen amazing answers to prayers—sometimes causing doctors to scratch their heads at unexpected healing. Over and over we have been told how deeply the prayers are appreciated. But all the glory belongs to

God—we merely seek His help for others in need.

Even the e-mail address was God’s idea. I prayed for a name to remind me of my faith—one that would testify to others about God’s goodness. The words “I’m blessed” came to mind—so imblest@aol.com became the address.

Recently, after many years of service, Norma Lierman stepped down as head of Hope’s prayer ministry when she and Owen moved to Quincy. But God already had a replacement in mind. On July 1, Neill Howey assumed leadership of the prayer ministry (see accompanying article).

For information or to sign up, contact Neill at 787-0986 or e-mail me (Joyce Williams) at imblest@aol.com. Remember: There can never be too many people praying! ■

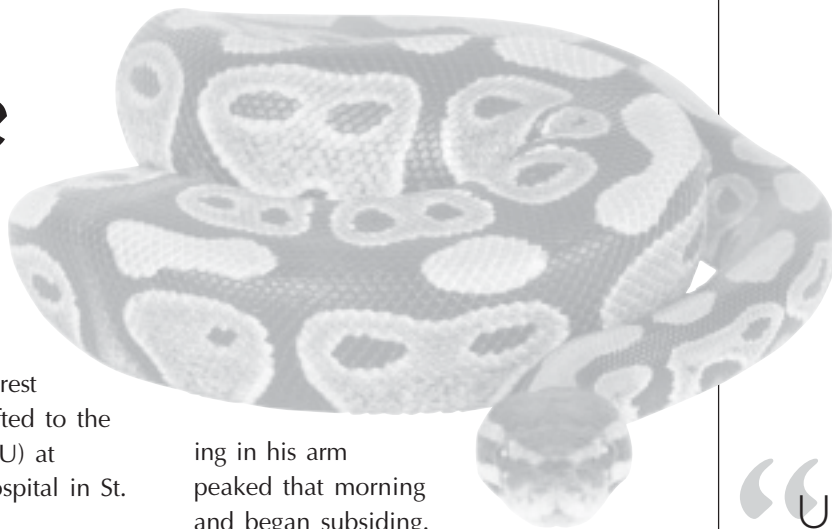
“Over and over we have been told how deeply the prayers are appreciated. But all the glory belongs to God—we merely seek His help for others in need.”

The Snakebite

On the night of June 24, 2004, while the family of Dirk and Meg Florence were camping in Missouri, 5-year-old Liam was bitten on the wrist by a copperhead. He was rushed to the nearest hospital, then immediately airlifted to the pediatric intensive care unit (ICU) at Cardinal Glennon Children’s Hospital in St. Louis.

The next afternoon (Friday), Peggy Chiles learned of these events and sent a message to the e-mail prayer line marked “URGENT.” It said in part: “Liam is being a trooper. He is in a lot of pain. Meg is exhausted. Please pray hard.”

The next day (Saturday), Meg reported that Liam was finally responding to the antivenom he had been getting. The swell-



ing in his arm peaked that morning and began subsiding. He was moved out of the ICU, and was actually released from the hospital on Monday. Dirk wrote: “His spirits are great and he is excited to get home (ready to go camping again). Our family is so thankful that God worked this out in so many different ways to provide for Liam’s quick progress. . . . Thanks to our church family, our friends and our family for all of their prayers and support!!!” ■

“URGENT . . . Please pray hard.”

Focus on Prayer

The Motorcycle Accident

by Kathleen Wolf

Monday, July 19, 2004 changed our lives forever. Marty Nagel of the St. John's Hospital Pastoral Care program called me at work that morning. He said there had been a motorcycle accident and a man had been brought in. I stopped him immediately and asked whether he was trying to tell me that my husband Christopher was in an accident. He said yes. I was on my way.

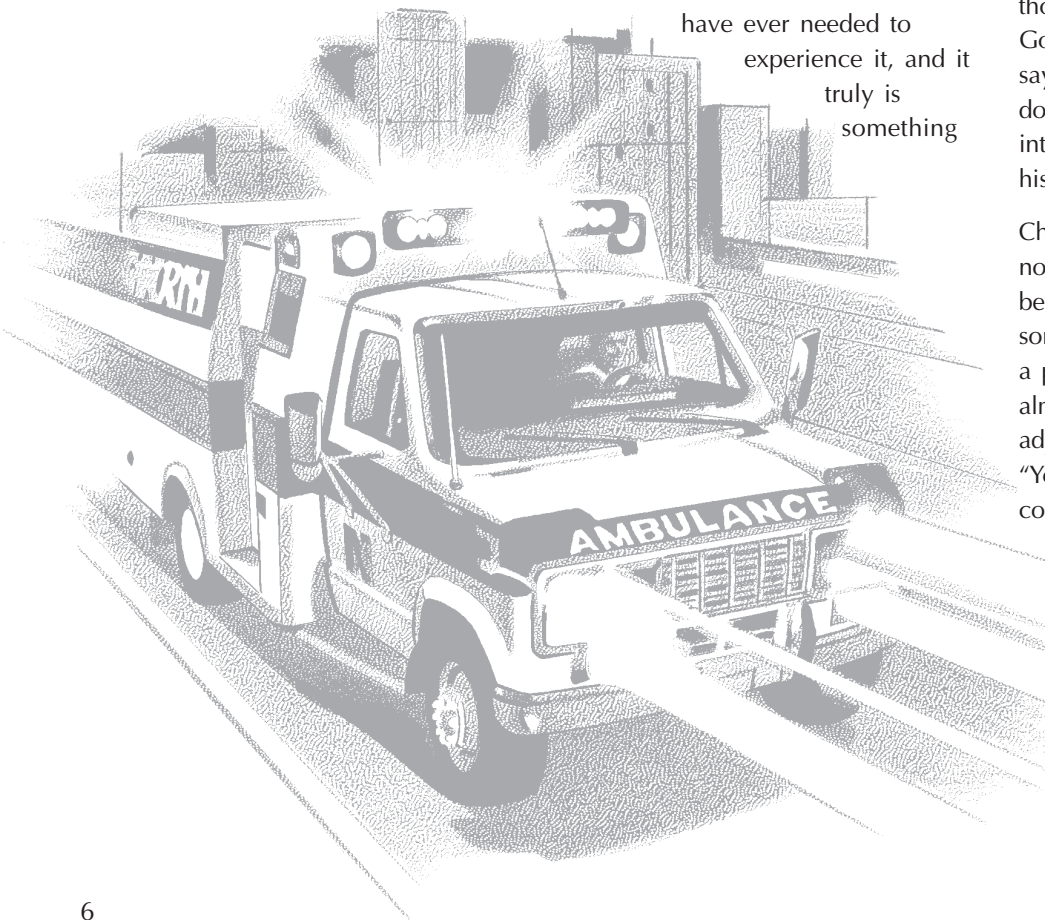
While driving to the hospital, I knew that I needed to call one person in particular: Darlene Lane. Michael and Darlene have been our friends since our first days at Hope. I knew that if anyone could get Christopher on the prayer line immediately, it was Darlene. *[An urgent request to pray for Christopher went out from the prayer line early that afternoon.—Ed.]*

Marty met me at the ER doors, took me into a room, and immediately prayed for both of us. That was when I felt God's "Spirit of Peace" come on me. It is the first time I have ever needed to experience it, and it truly is something

that can come only from God. Marty and I then went into the ER area. While waiting for Christopher to come down from X-ray, I looked up and saw Phil and Peggy Chiles, Steve Seiple, Michael and Darlene Lane, and Heather Schneider walk in. When you are a member of Hope Evangelical Free Church, you are truly in a close-knit, supportive family. From that moment on I was never alone. Hope members and personal friends surrounded us throughout the hospital stay.

Christopher's initial evaluation was this: Two broken legs, two shattered wrists, a shattered thumb, two broken ribs that apparently had punctured a lung, one shattered shoulder blade, a gash on his forehead, a cut under his left eye, a cut on the side of his neck—and from all indications, blood on his brain. But after receiving so much support in the ER from church friends and family, and all the prayers during those crucial first hours, I saw the Finger of God touch Christopher's legs and brain, and say: "Not today." After several hours the doctors came out and said his legs were intact and there was no blood in or around his brain.

Christopher was in the ICU Monday afternoon and much of Tuesday. We continued to be surrounded by church family and personal friends. Tuesday afternoon he went to a private room. With all the visitors, they almost had to knock out a wall to create an adjoining room! Even the nurses said to me: "You have an awful lot of doctors and nurses coming to your room!" I assured them that those were friends from church, and that Christopher did not have cancer, did not need plastic surgery, did not have problems with his urogenital system, and did not need oculoplastic surgery!



We had several “God experiences” during that time. The first was the touching of Christopher’s body and healing of places that doctors initially said were damaged. The second was that we were able to close on the purchase of our first home in the hospital (Phil Chiles and the bank representative let me sign for both of us). The third was bringing to us the name of the most highly regarded surgeon for hands and wrists in this area. At first the trauma team said Christopher’s shattered hands and wrists were so swollen that he could not possibly go to surgery until the next week. But after hearing many wonderful accounts from medical friends, I asked for a consultation with Dr. Greatting.

He came on Thursday, examined Christopher, and said he saw no reason why he could not operate the next day if it could be scheduled. That afternoon he called and said he would operate Friday at 7:00 a.m. He believed Christopher could regain full use of his hands, wrists, and thumb.

Christopher has no real memory of Friday. By the time he got back to his room at 3 p.m. he was in so much pain he was delusional. I tried to reassure him—but he wanted a male perspective. So I called Mike Lane, who dropped everything, came to the hospital, and calmly told Chris that he was going to be okay. Then Mike openly, for all in the hospital room to hear, prayed for Chris, who began calming immediately.

Our fourth “God experience” came on Saturday. While we remained in the hospital, personal friends and Hope friends went to our duplex with trucks and dollies, and moved everything to our house—even setting up the kitchen and arranging the furniture. Also, Kurt Dorethy and Adam Schneider loaded everything from our garage into a van and took it over to our new garage. Thus upon leaving the hospital the next Tuesday, we went directly to our new home.

Christopher was asked “What have you learned from the accident?” He replied: “I have learned two things. The first is that I have had a chance to experience my funeral. When people pass away, they are not given the chance to see everyone come to their funeral to say goodbye. I saw so many people come to my hospital room that I did not realize I was a good enough friend to come and visit. The second thing I have learned is how I had taken the impact that I have on others for granted. You go through life and give your gifts and serve people in different ways, and it doesn’t seem to be a big deal because it is the gifts you have . . . [B]ut the person receiving them realizes the value greater than you can imagine.”

Because of the love, support, and prayer we received, Christopher left the hospital on July 27 and was able to go to church the next Sunday. He continues to improve daily. I have a girlfriend who for years has told me that she prays at home and doesn’t see any need or reason to go to church. I have explained to her that you go to church not only for the time you can spend with God in His house, but also for the time you can spend with Him corporately. In doing so you create a bond and support group that can be found nowhere else. She has seen and experienced that “corporate love” from Hope, and is now wanting to come to church.

The day we left the hospital, one of our nurses told us she had never seen or experienced such an outpouring of love from any church, and she now wants to visit Hope.

A mere “thank you” to our Hope family and friends for everything you have done, and continue to do for us to this day, does not begin to be enough. Christopher and I have found it a very humbling experience, but one that we would not trade for anything. It has shown God’s love given back to us 70 times 7. ■

“The day we left the hospital, one of our nurses told us she had never seen or experienced such an outpouring of love from any church, and she now wants to visit Hope.”

Student Ministries

Longing for a Connection

by Jake Killinger
Director of Student Ministries

I long for connection. A far-off ache within my soul cries out for relationship—a relationship that is deeper than what I am

experiencing now. I could go for days and weeks feeling that God could never be closer, but I always find myself longing, aching for a deeper walk, a more substantial connection to the One who makes my life make sense. At times I am amazed at my shallowness. I'm

amazed that I can be so authoritative, confident, and sure of myself, only to turn around and act petty, selfish, and insecure. It is during those periods that I am acutely aware of being a very needy person. At that moment I want to throw myself at His feet, telling Him "Not my way, God, but yours."

This summer was a time in my life when I felt close to God. Before the summer began, I was curious about what it would bring—and it was like no other. It seems as if I try to muster enough strength to do it all on my own; but each year I always have to get on my knees and say "Thank you" to Him for controlling every aspect of it.

We changed so many of our students' lives. Some of them took huge leaps toward Jesus; others, like Bob in the movie "What About Bob," took baby steps. But all found ways to move on that straight and narrow path toward the kingdom. If you did not

attend one of Hope's weekend services on August 7-8, I plead with you to get the video

of that service. You will see the changes that our students went through and their excitement for Jesus.

Sometimes we Christians make grasping the hand of God seem so unattainable. While observing a prayer time with our students this past summer, I saw something that caught my attention. One student was praying to beat the band. This kid had had a rough go of it. As they were praying, I realized that what they were doing was not really praying at all, but striving, wrestling with themselves, pleading with God for acceptance. I could almost hear their thoughts as they strained within to arrive at a certain place in the spiritual road. "I've got to get this! I've got to get this!" They exuded a certain hardness, a heaviness, an overwhelming sense that the boat was cruising by and they had to hurry if they wanted to catch it.

This longing for a connection is what we strive to provide in the lives of our students. Grasping the hand of God is attainable by finding that personal connection. This last year we have seen so many new faces come through our doors. In fact, we have had to rethink the way we do ministry because of the growth we have seen. Students want to feel connected with others; but more important, they want to feel connected with the Creator. Every event we do has this in mind—that concept of being connected with a family, connected to a team, and connected to God.

What a joy it is to be in a role that allows me the freedom to affect students and connect them to Jesus. Please pray for Hope Student Ministries and all the student we impact. And pray as we look for people to support the ministry by providing food for our regular events, and scholarships for the summer 2005 mission trips. ■



“This longing for a connection is what we strive to provide in the lives of our students.”



Missions

Habitat For Humanity: Building More Than Houses



by Gloria Rader

In September, Hope partnered with Abundant Faith Christian Center, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Sherman, the Springfield Police Department, the Sangamon County Sheriff's Department, D's Auto World, and Jewel-Osco Stores to fund and build Sangamon County's Reconciliation House #55 for Abundant Faith member Letrice Ware and her family.

Wes Barr and Joe Rath of the Sheriff's Department, Matt Doss of the Police Department, and others participated in this project because they know what the strength and power of homeownership means to a family and a community. They are not only policing this community, but are part of it, and want to see that people from all backgrounds have an opportunity to participate in the American Dream.

The project's kickoff celebration was held on a summer evening in Iles Park. Representatives of each of the partners, including Sheriff Neil Williamson, spoke briefly, and housewarming gifts were presented to Letrice and her family. The boys loved the bright red lawn mower given by Carver's Westside Power Equipment.

Many volunteers came the first weekend to put the walls up. An amazing amount of progress was made in a few hours. Construction was nearly finished by September 12 when Abundant Faith Christian Center held a dedication service for the new home.

Hope Church committed to raise \$3,000 toward the project's cost. The generous gifts of many in the congregation exceeded this commitment by \$190.

This intentional effort to bring together people from different races and backgrounds in building House #55 is important for reconciliation in our community. Just as this house was built to last a long time, these

bridge-building efforts will last the rest of our lives. We commend and express our gratitude and appreciation to all who participated through labor, provision of food, and generous financial contributions. The investment into the lives of the Ware family will pay endless dividends.

This prayer, taken from the Old Testament, conveys the thoughts and prayers of Letrice in seeing how God has amazingly provided this dwelling for her family and all the other wonderful blessings and hope for the future that go along with it:



Letrice Ware and two of her sons at the podium with Nick Stojakovich during the kick-off celebration held in Iles Park last August.

Who am I, my GOD, and what is my family, that you have brought me to this place in life? But that's nothing compared to what's coming, for you've spoken of my family far into the future, given me a glimpse into tomorrow and looked on me, GOD, as a Somebody. What's left for me to say to this—to honoring your servant even though you know me, just as I am? O GOD, out of the goodness of your heart, you've taken your servants to do this great thing and put your great work on display. There's none like you, GOD, no GOD but you,

So now, great God, this word that you have spoken to me and my family, guarantee it forever! Do exactly what you've promised! And the house of your servant will remain rock solid under your watchful presence. You, my GOD, have told me plainly, "I will build you a house." That's how I was able to find the courage to pray this prayer to you. GOD, being the GOD you are, you have spoken all these wonderful words to me. As if that weren't enough, you've blessed my family so that it will continue in your presence always.

For you, O LORD, have blessed this house, and it will be blessed forever.

2 Chronicles 17:17-27
(The Message)



Construction on Habitat House #55 well underway at 2940 S. Glenwood Avenue.

Meet the Missionaries

The Hutchisons: Bringers of Light

by John Simpson

(This is the second in a series of articles on missionaries who are supported by Hope Church. The series is intended to help us feel closer to the work of those who are spreading the gospel around the world for us.)

Many of the missionaries whom Hope supports were at one time, in some way, a part of our fellowship. Tom and Lynne Hutchison never really left the Hope family while living and working in Haiti for the past four years. We now welcome them back.



Lynn and Tom Hutchison

Their connection with Hope began in 1977. Tom was doing fiscal administration for state agencies such as the Bureau of the Budget and Department of Corrections while Lynne had their two daughters,

Sarah and Becky. One day Martha Lorton invited Lynne to a Bible study. As you will understand if you know Martha, she soon had Lynne coming to Hope. At that time Hope had about 100 attenders, and Pastor Doug Monkemeier was its entire staff. Tom eventually came to Hope to check things out, and kept on coming. He heard Doug preach; got to know people like Steve and Sally Seiple; and then one night, while reading the sports page, heard a preacher's voice reach out to him from the radio. He asked Jesus into his heart, and was baptized in 1980.

About that time, Hope was starting a relationship with our sister church in Beaumont, Haiti. I went on our first work trip there in 1983. (So much has changed—only one other person now at Hope, Bill Adamski, was on that first team.)

Hope continued sending people to Haiti, and Tom went in 1993. Thus began his fascination and love for the people and country of Haiti. It is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and is often called the second poorest nation on earth. It is far removed in culture and living standards from Springfield. Tom and Lynne began to oversee our sister-church relationship and plan our team visits.

But God had more planned for them in Haiti. In 2000 they moved to Bonne Fin, where Tom worked in hospital administration and Lynne as a physical therapist. They had planned to return to the U.S. in April 2005, but circumstances brought them back this summer. Tom has said of those four years: "Nothing better has happened in our lives except for our children." Living in Haiti requires a grace from visitors that is not needed here. But during those years with the people of Haiti, they found God's grace sufficient.

Tom and Lynne are still in transition, and need our prayers to help close out the past four years and discern God's plans for them now. When you see them, give them a warm welcome. Haiti will miss them, but we are glad to have them back. ■

“Living in Haiti requires a grace from visitors that is not needed here. But during those years with the people of Haiti, they found God's grace sufficient.”

*Lynn and Tom now reside at
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Springfield, IL 62702*

Email: tom_lynn@fastmail.fm

Why Is America a Terrorist Target?

by Vern Rock

In the year 1271, during the Crusades, a pioneering missionary to the Muslims commented that many Christian knights went to the Mideast expecting to take it from Muslim armies by force. His own belief was that such efforts would succeed only by "love, prayer, and the shedding of tears as well as blood." From my experience, his observation was quite true.

Muslims consider their religion the culmination of Jewish and Christian monotheism (belief in only one God). They think that Jews and Christians at first worshipped God, but then went astray. According to Muslim belief, the Christians' error was believing in three Gods (a misunderstanding of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity). Thus, they think God sent Islam to replace Judaism and Christianity, and that Islam is His last word to mankind. They consider themselves the only remaining faithful worshippers of the one, true God.

A major cause of radical Muslims' antagonism toward America is that they consider us a Christian nation. They complain: If Islam is now the only true religion, why are Jews and Christians still around? They believe the continued existence of those faiths, almost 1,400 years after Islam came into existence, brings dishonor to Allah. The military and economic success of America and Israel are even harder to swallow. That explains why radical Muslims seek to wage war against the West, especially the United States and Israel. A renowned Pakistani visionary and Islamic intellectual, Abul A'la Mawdudi, wrote in 1977: "The aim of Islam is to bring about a world revolution. . . . If (Islam) commands enough resources it will eliminate unislamic governments and establish the power of Islamic government in their place."

Question: What is our view of this conflict? Are Christians missing something here?

The late Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote in 1965 of a Biblical "theme rarely touched upon [in churches]: the great conflict which exists in the spirit realm. Although almost entirely unrecognized by mankind, this warfare affects, in one way or another, the life of every person on earth and especially the life of the child of God." This invisible battle involves God, Satan, angels, demons, and mankind.

What can we believers in Christ at Hope do about these things? I suggest the following:

- (1) Diligently hold a world view firmly rooted in God's Word; then see to it that our children understand it as well.
- (2) Discern the prophetic nature of the Bible. God actively engages in historical events, fulfilling His Divine blueprint for the Lord's reigning on earth and for believers' eventually and eternally dwelling with Him in Heaven.
- (3) Encourage our pastoral staff and other gifted teachers to instruct and minister to our congregation on these Biblical matters.

More personally, we all need to be both in the Word and active in the world. Examples come from such Biblical passages as:

- Philippians 2:5. "Your attitude ought to be that of Christ" as you watch, listen to, and read about events in today's world.
- Proverbs 14:34. Since "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people," we need to stand up and be counted against influences and movements that can destroy America's families.
- Colossians 3:1. "Set your heart on things above, where Christ is seated." We should prayerfully seek God's kingdom and His righteousness.

—continued on next page

A former missionary to Pakistan, who is still passionate about Christian missions, gives his views on the reasons for terrorist attacks of recent years.

“It has truly been said that fanatical beliefs of Muslims can be overcome only by fanatical love by Christians.”

Where Are They Now?

Communitas plans to add a column on where former Hope attenders are now. It will help readers stay in touch with college students, spouses serving in the military, nursing-home residents, and others who cannot attend Hope regularly but still consider it their home. Information on such persons should be sent to Rhonda Miller at ctop62@aol.com or 401 S. Glenwood Avenue, Springfield 67204. (Please be sure that you have permission to share the information with the Hope family.)

HOPE



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Book Review

Blue Like Jazz by Donald Miller

Reviewed by John Deck

I have a not-so-short group of books on my "recommended reading" list. Everyone from friends to co-workers to church pastors at one time or another has recommended a book that I just *have* to read, so my list grows. I enjoy reading quite a bit. But I often find myself responding "Don't get too excited; it is probably going to be a while before I can get to this book." Every once in a while, someone approaches me with a frantic look. Before I know it there is a book in my hands, and from my lips escapes something like "Sure, I'll read this the first chance I get!"

That happened with *Blue Like Jazz* by Donald Miller. It was recommended to me with the sort of wild-eyed enthusiasm that might scare a small child, so I heard myself utter a promise to read it. Then in a movement too fast for human eyes, a copy of it was thrust into my hands. With all my potential excuses for not reading the book gone, I went home and opened the cover.

I quickly realized that the hardest part of reading this book was knowing that it would end. I was hooked after reading the Author's Note, before the actual contents. It said:

I never liked jazz music because jazz music doesn't resolve. But I was outside the Bagdad Theater in Portland one night when I saw a man playing the saxophone. I stood there for fifteen minutes, and he never opened his eyes.

After that I liked jazz music.

Sometimes you have to watch somebody love something before you can love it yourself. It is as if they are showing you the way.

I used to not like God because God didn't resolve. But that was before any of this happened.

What follows is the story of one man's journey in pursuit of the heart of God. It is often hilarious, constantly thought-provoking, and always carries with it a sense that the

author does not take himself too seriously. All too often we Christians pick up fantastic books that show us the potential of a tremendous prayer life or the virtue of a well-planned Bible study, but that leave us wanting when we are searching for a resolution between the paradoxes of our faith and what we see happening in the church around us.

Donald Miller is one of the most appealing poetic writers I have had the pleasure to read in some time. But the real joy in reading this book is feeling his honesty radiate from each page. From start to finish, you get to sit in the passenger seat on a very bumpy ride from a young childhood to an early adulthood, with a wild and fascinating cast of characters.

Whether you are listening to his explanation of how penguins really helped cement his belief in Jesus, or to his late-night discussions with Tony the Beat Poet, you are always part of a discussion. The book not only opens your mind to a different way of looking at the world, but also primes your heart to want to love as openly and wildly as God himself does. *Blue Like Jazz* is indeed a rare find in the literary realm, and I heartily recommend it to all readers. ■

(ISLAM — continued from page 11)

- Luke 12:5. "Life does not consist of the abundance of (one's) possessions." Thus we need to disengage what we might be holding too tightly in hand, give willingly to God as well as to human needs, and then enjoy life as God intended us to live.

It has truly been said that fanatical beliefs of Muslims can be overcome only by fanatical love by Christians. ■

(The writer has a page on Hope's Web site (under "Missions") called "Islam and Muslims" that deals with news of Islam and the nature of Islam, and answers your questions about either.)