



Reflections

upon the precious book divine

REDISCOVERING EVANGELISM

ACCORDING TO ACTS

- by Brant Stubblefield

Psalm 4:4

“Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.”

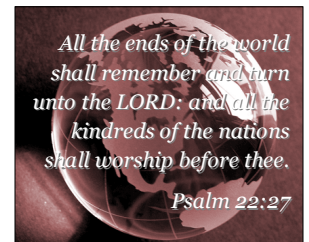
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Revelation 3:18

“[T]hat thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear”

As I read through the book of Acts I stand amazed at the great evangelistic nature of the first-century church (Acts 8:5). We see both passion and persistence in the apostle Paul (Rom. 1:14-16). This sentiment must continue to live within “the church of the living God” (1 Tim 3:15) today! I humbly beseech every reader of this periodical to read the entire book of Acts from start to finish with one simple goal in mind. Let us familiarize ourselves with how the early church carried out evangelism. Paul commands Timothy to, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13). I am suggesting that the book of Acts becomes a pattern for our evangelism today just as the New Testament serves as our pattern for worship. This vibrant book is often neglected and cast aside because of the historical nature of the book itself. It may not be to some as practical as say the book of James or Philippians. Yet, Acts serves as our blueprint for the church of Christ today! A closer look at this timely book ought to renew our zeal in the proclamation of truth.



All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
Psalm 22:27

Enduring Hardness as a Good Soldier

The first lesson we must glean from Acts is the sobering fact that those who evangelized the world for Jesus were not above persecution and hardship. “And Saul was consenting to his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them unto prison. Therefore they that were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:1-4). The inward character of a man certainly is noticed by the Lord (Jho. 2:25) as he remains true in spite of unfair hardships and criticism. Listen to the afflictions that Paul had to endure, “Of the Jews five times I received forty stripes save one. Thrice I was beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” (2 Cor. 11 24-27). What made it extremely difficult for the apostle Paul was his constant struggle with persecution, as mentioned above, coupled with all of the dependence the “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16) had on him at this time. That’s why the next verse reads, “Beside those things that are without, that which

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Co-Editors:

Rick Popejoy

Brant Stubblefield

Staff Writers:

Ben Bailey

Jerry Brewer

Landry Brewer

Nathan Brewer

Larry DeLong

David Dugan

David Harris

Gary Henson

Richard Melson

Wayne Price

David Ray

Kevin Rhodes

Preston Silcox

Stephen Wiggins

John Gary Williams

Denny Wilson



Students at Oklahoma Christian are no longer being urged to flee youthful lust (2 Tim. 2:22; cf. Gen 39:12) but rather to join in classes that promote soft core pornography.

Oklahoma Christian University, going along with popular definitions of pornography, sees no problem with allowing classes that depict full frontal nudity. On March 30-31, 2007, **Reflections** held a seminar on the topic of Restoration at the campus of Oklahoma Christian in Judd Theater. At the same time across the hallway to the Judd Theater was an art studio left open for public viewing, wherein art-porn, was displayed in full view of those traveling down the hallway to enter Judd Theater. It was here that members of the church from several states, including a ten year old boy were caught off guard by the displays. Full frontal nudity in the classrooms of a Christian College? Yes, and in full view for the whole world! Yes, you can imagine my outrage as I began to speak on my assigned topic of the day. “[O]ffending and purposefully embarrassing your host institution” was the only criticism that President Mike O’Neal offered concerning the whole situation and the only apology that we have received to date is over the phone by an assistant who was concerned that the ten year old boy had seen the art-porn.

Remembering the phrase, “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted” (Acts 7:52), today, I continue my outrage at any Christian University that would allow such in their classrooms and at any president that would hide behind “artistic value.” This is the same term used by the producers of the movie *Hounddog* which featured “child actress Dakota Fanning in a strip scene and a rape scene, as well as a series of other sexually provocative situations” (WorldNetDaily, Saturday, February 17, 2007). In a related story, the Shell Oil Company has now determined that *Playboy* and *Penthouse* are no longer pornography but instead are “adult sophisticates” (WorldNetDaily, Wednesday, April 18, 2007). According to Rebecca Hagelin, “Years ago, its [pornography] lowlife customer base had to seek it out, under a brown wrapper or in a seedy section of town. Now porn peddlers seek you out – at video stores, on billboards ads that line interstate highways, on television, at the newsstands, in your e-mail inbox” (WorldNetDaily, Thursday, March 22, 2007). We can now add to this long list, Christian Universities. Mrs. Hagelin would continue with this admonition, “We must not acquiesce in the pornification of our culture. We shouldn’t meekly retreat into the progressively smaller corners we’re so graciously allowed to inhabit. It’s time to fight back.” What better place to start than our own Christian Colleges by demanding that pornography is eradicated from their campuses?

Quotes from the Oklahoma Christian Covenant developed by Mike O’Neal:

- The values and behavior of this Christian community are derived from the Bible, rather than the prevailing culture.
- As members of this Christian higher learning community, we are guided by specific principles set forth in the Bible (Psalms 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

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Reflections is a biblical publication sent absolutely free of charge by your friends at the church of Christ in Lindsay, Oklahoma with the aid of members of the church at large.

HARMONIZING THE BIBLE

- by Nathan Brewer

One of the primary reasons that there are so many different churches, with different kinds of worship and different kinds of organization, is that people misunderstand the Bible.

For this same reason, asking preachers the question, “What do I have to do to be saved?” produces many different answers. Even preachers misunderstand God’s word.

The Holy Spirit inspired men to write exactly what He wanted, so why all the confusion? Can’t the Spirit of God produce a book that people can understand?

Sure He can. The problem isn’t with God—the problem is with us.

One of the biggest mistakes people make is interpreting two biblical passages in such a way that they contradict each other. In logic, there’s a rule that two true statements can never contradict each other. If they do, at least one of them isn’t true. The word of God is truth (John 17:17), so no two verses, and no two biblical doctrines, can contradict each other.

There are passages that may look contradictory on the surface, but digging a little deeper shows that they fit together like pieces of a puzzle.

Matthew chapter eight says that Jesus healed two men possessed with demons. However, parallel accounts in Luke eight and Mark five mention Jesus healing one man. Critics might charge the Bible with a discrepancy, but there is a plausible explanation for this seeming contradiction. Just because Mark and Luke don’t mention Jesus healing a second man, that doesn’t mean it didn’t happen. Mark and Luke do not say that

only one man was healed. For whatever reason, they emphasized one of Jesus’ miraculous acts and omitted the other. Choosing not to include all the same details in two accounts of the same event does not constitute a contradiction.

The Gospel accounts supplement each other. Some give information that the others leave out. If they all said the same thing, we wouldn’t need all four. Comparing different accounts of a single event in the life of Jesus gives us the complete picture of that event.

Ephesians chapter two, verses eight and nine is an example of a passage that is usually misinterpreted so that it ends up opposing other parts of the New Testament. Here, Paul says that we are saved by grace through faith, “not of works.” The typical explanation is that there’s nothing we can do to be saved—that it’s all by God’s grace, and trying to obey commands in order to be saved is an attempt to be saved by works.

Yet another apostle challenges this interpretation of Ephesians 2:8-9 in the very first Gospel sermon. In Acts 2:40, after Peter explains all about Jesus’ death and resurrection, about His being the promised Christ of the Old Testament, Peter goes on to tell his audience to save themselves.

A closer look at both passages shows that they complement, not oppose, each other. In Ephesians two, Paul is talking about the source of our salvation—that salvation would be impossible apart from the cross. Only Jesus’ death made salvation available. Without the cross, all of the good works in the world wouldn’t be enough to remove one sin. But when Peter tells a

group of believing, penitent Jews to save themselves in Acts 2:40, he’s just telling them to accept this good news about salvation. Two verses earlier, Peter tells them to accept the Gospel and have their sins washed away by repenting and being baptized.

When a sinner obeys Acts 2:38-40, he implicitly endorses Ephesians 2:8-9 by doing what it takes to contact the blood of Christ, the one and only source of our salvation. These two passages harmonize perfectly. The trouble comes when people bring denominational preconceptions to the table and allow error to cloud their judgment.

Two other passages that may at first glance appear to be at odds are John 10:28 and I Corinthians 10:12. In the passage in John, Jesus says that He gives His sheep eternal life. They will never perish and no one can snatch them out of His hand. This sounds like once you’re saved you can never be lost. But Paul tells the church at Corinth to be careful so they don’t fall and miss out on heaven.

Considering the immediate context of both verses clears things up. In John ten, a group of antagonistic Jews demands that Jesus tell them whether He is the Christ. Jesus explains that He has already told them and shown them by His miracles that He is the Christ, but they don’t believe Him. Their unwillingness to accept the evidence of Jesus’ identity will keep them from obeying the truth and being saved. But Jesus says those who do accept Him will receive eternal life, and neither man nor the Devil himself can capture His disciples against their will.

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CHURCH GROWTH - GOD'S WAY

- by Gary Henson

God makes it abundantly clear: the church is to grow (the mustard seed, Luke 13:19; leaven, Luke 13:21; the fig tree, Mat. 21:19; the talents, Mat. 25:14-30; the branch on the vine, Jho. 15:1-7). Thus, how is it that we are to grow? Those familiar with 2 Peter 1:3 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17 know how to answer. Since God has given to us in the Bible everything that pertains to life and godliness so that we may be perfect and completely furnished into every good work, then God answers this question--telling the church how to grow GOD'S WAY--in the Bible.

How the Church is not to Grow

As we study the Bible, we learn that there are some methods which are not to be used in the attempt to grow.

We are not to grow by teaching false doctrine. In Galatians 1:8-9, those who evangelized with false teachings were condemned; and those who believed and practiced that false doctrine were lost (Gal. 5:4). Thus, to attempt to convert the lost and grow numerically by teaching false doctrine not only fails to save the hearers, it also results in the loss of the teachers! So, to attempt to grow in this manner not only fails, it produces shrinkage. Brethren, teaching anything short of: faith, repentance, confessing Jesus as the Son of God, and baptism for the purpose of remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and salvation (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21) will get a lot of people in the building, but it will get no one in the grace of God.

We are not to grow by refraining from telling them what they need to hear. We see Jesus, in John 6:60-67,

attempting to make followers. Yet, He spoke some hard sayings which turned all but His twelve away. He knew ahead of time that this would happen (Jho. 2:25), so why did He not refrain from saying such things so He could "gain numbers"? The reason is, it is the truth of the Word of God (and only that) which sets men free (Jho. 8:32; 17:17). These people had something out of line with that truth and they needed to hear what was amiss so they could make the correction and be set free from sin and the wrath of God. To have withheld such a truth would have only deceived them into thinking they were right with God, when they were not. Brethren, a truly horrible hindrance to the conversion of multitudes as cunningly laid by Satan is this nation's epidemic involvement of divorce and remarriage for reasons other than the reason which God permits and accepts (Mat. 19:9). Yet, God Himself knows it will be a hard saying--a very hard saying--for one who is living in violation of God's law in the matter to cease the adulterous relationship (Mat. 19:10-13). Too, it will be painfully hard for us to tell them these things, but the church is not to grow by refraining from telling them what they need to hear.

We are not to grow by using gimmicks. A gimmick is the use of deceitful lures to draw people into our number. The only drawing factor which God authorizes us to use is the message of the Gospel (Jho. 8:32). Jesus, our example, never used guile (1 Pet. 2:21-22). Guile is bait--it is the worm on the hook. The

fish comes for the worm, but the fisherman intends on the fish getting the hook. Never should we be deceitful in our effort of evangelism. Jesus would have nothing to do with it (Jho. 6:26), and Paul renounced it (2 Cor. 4:2-4). Brethren, using entertainment, food, community counseling, or anything else that does not pertain to the teaching of God's Word in our attempt to evangelize in order to make the church grow, is not pleasing to God.



How the Church is to Grow

This truth is so simple (cf., 1 Cor. 1:19-20) that many have missed it and thereby in their own wisdom enlisted such erroneous methods as described above. With great clarity, Jesus said, "Go preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15; Mat. 28:18-20). That's it. Teach the Scriptures. Tell another person about the good news. Inform others of the contents of the Word from God. All throughout the book of Acts, you read that that's precisely what they did. Nothing fancy. Nothing deceitful. Rather, up-front they preached Jesus: in all the cities; in the villages; in the synagogues; to the philosophers; yea, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "Go preach the gospel." And the result? The church grew--as God wanted it to grow (Acts 2:47).

May our loving God, Who yearns for all to be added to His number (2 Pet. 3:6) with even a greater desire than all of us (Jho. 3:16), help us to fashion our efforts in harmony with His Will in our work to make His church grow. ~R

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- We strive to honor the Lord and be Christlike in all of our conduct (Colossians 3:12-14; Titus 2:11-14).
- We strive to practice honesty and integrity in everything we say and do (Colossians 3:9-10; Revelation 21:8).
- By choosing to be a part of the Oklahoma Christian University community, every member of the student body, staff, faculty, and Board of Trustees affirms his or her understanding of, respect for, and commitment to abide by the principles, and standards of conduct set forth in this covenant.

Would Mike O'Neal sign the following propositions?

- The Bible teaches that art depicting full frontal nudity is acceptable Christian behavior.
- The Bible teaches that art depicting full frontal nudity is following specific principles set forth in the Bible (Psalms 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- The Bible teaches that art depicting full frontal nudity is striving to honor the Lord and be Christlike in all our conduct (Colossians 3:12-14; Titus 2:11-14).
- The Bible teaches that art depicting full frontal nudity is practicing honesty and integrity in everything we say and do (Colossians 3:9-10; Revelation 21:8).

We ought to be asking an important question at this point, "Where is the Bible Department in all this?" Isn't the Bible Department obligated to serve the campus as sort of a "moral compass?" You would think that Lynn McMillion, as head of the Bible department and elder for the Memorial Road Church of Christ, would be outraged as well, but not so. It seems, by silence, that brother McMillion either believes that the College of the Bible has little or no influence on the decisions of the university or that the College of the Bible condones the fact that Oklahoma Christian University now promotes soft core pornography.

Some might be asking, "Why make this public?" For these reasons: First, the art-porn is public in nature. Second, after some correspondence requesting that some response be given to the mother of the ten year old boy as well as to the brethren who hosted the event on their campus, I received this statement from brother O'Neal, "I do not intend to issue any public statement or individual statements regarding the matter, but it will be handled privately on the campus among those responsible" (Monday, 14 May 2007). This mother goes without an answer from the President of a Christian University as to her son's question, "Mom, why are their naked women in that room?"

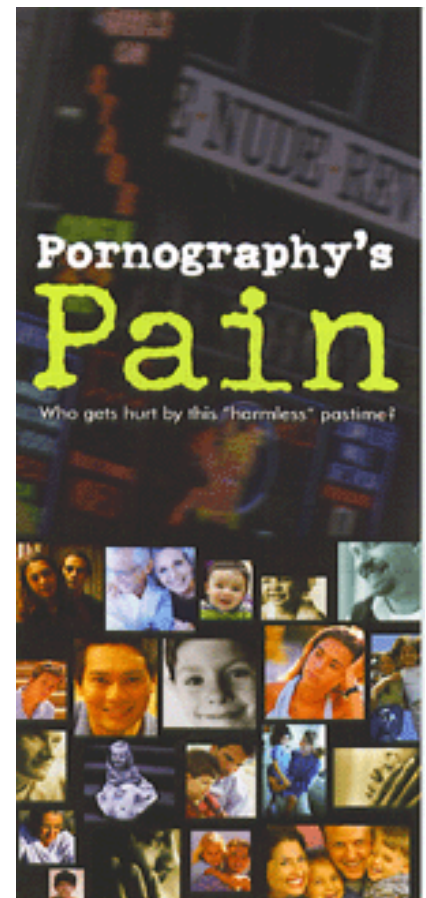
We would close this article with this warning from Judge Robert Bork... "But the manifestations of American cultural decline are even more widespread, ranging across virtually the entire society, from the violent underclass of the inner cities to our cultural and political elites, from rap music to literary studies, from pornography to law, from journalism to scholarship, from union halls to universities. Wherever one looks, the traditional virtues of this culture are being lost, its vices multiplied, its values degraded-in short, the culture itself is unraveling... One pay-per-view network operator says, 'This thing is a freight train.'" (*Hard Truths About the Culture War*, Robert H. Bork, First Things: June/July 1995). "Can a man take fire into his bosom and his clothes not be burned?" (Pro. 6:27). ~R

PORNOGRAPHY'S Pain

Who gets hurt by this "harmless" pastime?

Because of some of the classes now being offered in our Christian Colleges we thought that offering this tract free would be opportune.

- "Pornography, sexually explicit movies, etc., have paved the way for many an act of rape, adultery, incest, homosexuality, and other equally vile sins... One simply cannot feed upon the impure and be pure!" (Wayne Jackson).
- "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phi. 4:8).



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cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (2 Cor 11:28). A qualified and experienced man of God was perfectly fit to instruct Timothy to, “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3).

Daily Teaching

A persistent teaching and preaching of God’s word characterized the early church. Several reasons contributed to this fact including conviction, zeal, fellowship, persecution and overall enthusiasm for this new found religion. Not only did the new converts themselves “continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42), and “search the scriptures” on a “daily” (Acts 17:11) basis, but the early church had ambassadors who in the face of immediate danger were teaching the same message to their opposers! “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:41-42). Every time in Acts the result of constant teaching and preaching produced the following truth: “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:20). What was the result of the constant daily teaching of the gospel in the first century? “Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47).

Debates Over Spiritual Matters

The traditions of men in the religious arena caused problems for Jesus and His disciples in his day (Mat. 15:7-9). This same calamity causes much

confusion in the world of spiritual thought today! However, truth is absolute and can be known by those who seek after it with a proper attitude (Ezra 7:10; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2:15; Jho. 8:32). Many have said, “It is a sin to argue about the Bible”, or, “It is wrong to dispute about doctrinal matters”. Acts answers these questions by approved examples within the text that serve as a reminder of the aggressiveness that the early church had. “Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures” (Acts 17:1-2). “Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met him” (Acts 17:17). Again, “And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8). Time and space does not permit to give an exhaustive list of all of the disputes that Acts records. The results in every case can be summarized from Acts 28:24, “And some believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not”. We need to become far more aggressive and militant with the gospel message than we are. Remember, we are to, “put on the whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:11) and, “fight the good fight of faith”!

Follow-up Methods

Good evangelists will follow up on new converts and new congregations. The mere baptizing of souls without the, “teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you” (Mat. 28:19) is shameful upon our part. In Acts 14:6-7 the Bible says, “They were ware of it,

and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: And there they preached the gospel.” Now pay particularly close to the concern Paul had to his brethren that were new in the faith. “And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the gospel and see how they do” (Acts 15:36). The exact method is not disclosed within the book. As we read all of the New Testament we know that Paul edified, exhorted, chastised and at times rebuked his brethren (1 and 2 Corinthians). His attempt was with the proper motives (2 Cor. 5:14) to equip the saints for victory in Christ. Although their conversion was necessary, Paul understood they had a long journey ahead of them, thus his constant care and compassion becomes evident as he returns to strengthen the brethren. By application let us not neglect this factor in our evangelism of the world.

Summary

In closing, many more items could be mentioned but hopefully these shall become a small serving of spiritual food to wet our appetite for further study concerning the topic of evangelism. Please pray for more evangelism to be created within the scope of today’s church. Let us unite together in a call to sound forth the name of Jesus Christ. I wonder how many congregations would be ashamed of the apostle Paul if he were alive today. Have we replaced the pattern of Biblical evangelism with post-modernistic ideas? Think on these things. Within this issue of Reflections you will see a chart that denotes the last three evangelistic campaigns that we have had the privilege of assisting brethren on. Rather than writing a lengthy

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treatise on every specific detail Rick and I thought it best to include a chart that will inform you as to the results. By the way, if you heard about a rumor that our lives were threatened in Virginia it is true but we made it out safe and sound. For further details check out our website at the following internet address... www.divinereflections.blogspot.com !

A special thanks to all of those who supported or campaigns! ~R

THANK YOU SO MUCH

(Continued from page 3)

In First Corinthians ten, Paul gives examples from the Old Testament book of Numbers of Jews dying in the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land of Canaan. He then warns Christians at Corinth to live right so they don't fall short of reaching heaven. Christians can't be captured by Satan against their will, but saved people can *choose* to leave Christ. There's no contradiction at all in these two passages.

The Bible does not contradict itself, but people contradict the Bible when their interpretations ignore passages' immediate context and the extended, remote context. Unfortunately, too many members of churches just accept whatever their preacher tells them, and these preachers are just repeating what they learned from John Calvin, Martin Luther and from their teachers at seminary. Don't fall for it. Rigorously examine the passages that lay behind what is being taught. Don't settle for teaching that pits one verse against another. Don't wait until Judgment Day to find out you've believed and obeyed something that isn't true—something that contradicts the word. That word will judge you (Jho. 12:48). ~R

FELLOWHELPERS

"We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth" - 3 Jho. 8

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The Lindsay Church of Christ is blessed with a fine eldership that promotes evangelism locally and abroad. These mighty men of valor apply their oversight to a good old-fashion house to house work ethic in spiritual matters. Theo Dacus, Bud Helm, Wayne Loafman, Delmer Payne and Gerald Taylor are notable men who serve this congregation as shepherds. Many souls have been brought to the kingdom and the gospel has been preached under their watchful care. May continue to grow these men and more men like them in His vineyard.

As David (2 Sam. 23:8), I am surrounded by mighty men and women of the gospel. A group of dedicated and tireless workers who take their vacations; their Saturdays; who close their shops and join hands with other committed members of the Lord's church in order to seek and save the lost. Congregations have been revitalized, rekindled and revised because of their labor in the Lord. Their names need to be written down for church history. I want you as well as them to understand how much I appreciate their work of faith. Jim & Glynna Condit; Detrick & Natasha Watts; Brandon & Nicole Winn; Chris & Rachael Ince; Kyle & Kristen Slater; Brant & Charity Stubblefield; Joshua & Danielle Popejoy; Brad & Sarah Williams; Gage & Kelly Coldwater; Caleb Popejoy; Larry Winn; Rhonda Scruggs; Tuffy Harmon; Valerie Scruggs; Mona Popejoy; Ashley Scruggs; Jeff Martin; Bobbie Jo McKenzie; Kourtney Roe; Katelyn Roe; Ty Stucks; Kelsey Vanoni; Jack Cadenhead & Carolyn Brown.

The following chart is from the last three campaigns.

Place	Doors	Studies	Baptisms	Restorations
Ardmore, Oklahoma	@ 5000	180	18	12
Bassett, Virginia	@ 8000	80	15	0
Palestine, Texas	@ 2000	80	12	2



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