

Stutzman Family News

~ 2011 Ministry Minutes ~



“For they searched for a city...”

Belonging. Somewhere deep inside of each of us, as a person, is a person yearning to “belong.” The Holidays are upon us again, reminding us of our families, and where we “Belong.” We travel many miles just to sit around a room with those we call family. Often we go “home” – to the place where we grew up, where our parents are, and spend a day just belonging.

Women gush over the new babies, the children, and how they have grown. The men hob-nob in another room, talking about the sour economy and how things aren’t like they used to be. The youth are bored- but everyone knows, someday they too will return to this place – to belong.

Not having a place to belong can be one of the worlds very painful feelings. I remember one day when one of my boys, at a very tender age – maybe 3- came crying to Dorcas. She was doing a Creative Memory album-

and due to the business of our lives, was several years back in the album. The sad lad had noticed that his picture was not included with the others... in fact, he was not even in the family pictures. His little mind had been very busy, and he began to fear he did not belong. “Mommy,” He whimpered, “Did I really come from Wal-Mart?”

It seems that the boy had observed carts coming OUT of the store, loaded with all manner of merchandise... and a baby. He began to fear that somewhere in that big, horrible store we had purchased him along with supplies. Of course, we calmed his fears and comforted him with the truth- but it showed me how early in life a feeling of not belonging can surface and hurt.

The desire to belong is a powerful motivation. Gangs operate on this principle. Wars are fought over who belongs where, and who belongs to whom. Many times when this desire to belong is not met God’s way, entire lives are spent trying to answer the cry. Millions of \$\$ are made and hoarded, empires are built, and the homeless huddle under a bridge- all because of the hurt to belong.

Many times the greatest pain people carry around in their lives is the pain of not belonging. The homeless feel rejected-no place to belong. Prisoners feel like society has no place for them- they “**belong**” only behind bars. The molested child grows up feeling alone and isolated- even in a family. People are hurt and ousted in school, from cliques, places they had tried so hard to belong in, but couldn’t make it.

Then the church gets involved. Using the desire to belong as a way to promote good behavior, we deliver stinging blows of rejection to whip folks into line. The landscape is littered with wounded, scabbed over, and bleeding believers, who simply have given up on belonging. They don’t trust leadership, and won’t “just submit”, because they are still reeling from a wounding of spirit even they don’t understand. To many, this pain of not belonging is too much to risk again.

Last night I heard a group sing a song that had a line: “Heaven is my Home, because that’s where my Father lives...” How true. After all, we “belong” to our parents, right? So if we are “Born Again” to God in Christ through the spirit, then Heaven is home. We have no continuing city here, and we find ourselves joining a parade of believers stretching clear back beyond Abraham, “searching for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” When an accident claimed the life of my mother, one sister, and one brother 37 years ago, my dad taught us a certain song. Every morning, those of us not in the hospital would gather and sing the lines, “God’s way is best, if human wisdom, a fairer way may seem to show, tis only that our earth-dimmed vision, the truth can never truly know...” Perhaps much of our struggle to belong comes from that “Earth-dimmed vision,” and we forget where we truly belong.

Where do you belong? To whom do you belong? According to Col. 1:27 and Eph. 2:6, the reality of an Eternal Christ within us makes us heaven’s “homeboys”, residents, citizens. We may sojourn here on earth awhile, but heaven is Home. One day our visa to earth will expire- and we will return HOME. Home to where we **belong**. To belong is to believe. To believe is to belong.

Do YOU believe?

**For information on our schedule of events
and teachings please visit our website
www.straitpaths.com**

Heavens Gates – Hells Flames



One of the reasons behind the Stutzmans recent move to PA from the Carolinas is the opportunity to reach hearts through a “new” venue – Living Waters Theatre in Strasburg. The first large event we were a part of there was that production “Heaven’s Gates, Hell’s Flames” By Reality Outreach. This Drama graphically portrays end-of-life scenes- and what follows them. Thousands of people attended the event, and some were turned away because of building capacity. Every night we saw many folk- gripped with the reality of what we MUST all one day face- coming to the altar to surrender their lives to Christ. Watching people flood to the front- young, old, from street people to Amish, we realized that a miracle was taking place before our eyes. This event was in August, and we plan to do it again in March of 2012.

Pray for a Harvest of Souls.



Our oldest daughter, Tanisha, is in Thailand in a Semester of Outreach training through an organization called IGo...Institute for Global Opportunities. This is an intensive program of Bible instruction, mentoring, and practical travel experience into unreached areas. Because Tanisha sacrificed her entire teenage phase of life in the family ministry, the Board of Strait Paths elected to pay for her

term at IGo. She left in August, and plans to return in mid-December. Thank you to all the generous folks who helped Tanisha with her trip! The following is an e-mail we received following a 30 hour one-way trip into the mountains of Tibet:

Sent: Sat, Oct 1, 2011 2:15 am

Subject: The return of the Tibetan Warrior Princess

Q: What weighs 30-50 lbs, and is full of spam, ramen noodles, peanut butter, squashed bread, contraband radios, and 2 changes of clothes? That’s right, a backpack all prepped and headed to Tibet!

We had an incredible time on our trip! If you really want to get me going, ask me about a night sky full of the brightest stars and clearest galaxies you ever saw. Or what happened at the monastery that day the monks danced for us. Or getting taken in by the police. Or prophesying over 14 Tibetan villages from a mountain ridge. Or what the sun does to you at 13,000 ft. Or sleeping in a tent in 40 weather. Or a simple “miracle fire” that warmed our hearts on a cold Tibet night. There were more experiences and little miracles packed into that short trip than I could possibly re-tell here. So I’ll just leave you with a few pictures, and I hope to tell you the rest in person sometime.

Thank you SO MUCH for your prayers, especially against the altitude sickness, and for our spiritual protection and guidance. We definitely felt those prayers!! There was a lot of spiritual warfare, probably more than I realized we were facing. Once it was over and we started heading “home,” I kinda fell apart. I got physically sick, was so emotionally drained I didn’t want to go back to IGO, and felt like I didn’t have any more spiritual energy reserves left to draw from. But it’s when you reach that point that you realize—you can keep going :) So here I head into round 2 of classes, and prep for my next missions trip. I can’t wait!

*Thank God for His faithfulness in the Tibet trip—and to me personally. Wow. He's so good :)

*Pray that whatever God has for me during this term of studies,

He would give me a soft and pliable heart to receive it and allow Him to change me.

One thing He's twisting my thinking on—perhaps the greatest gifts He ever gives me are the difficult and trying times when I am changed into His image.

So if you feel Him leading you to pray for difficult times in my life, go ahead!

I'm not brave enough to ask you to do it myself. ;)

Remember that 5 am wake up call I told you about, where you're rudely awakened and given 5 minutes to dress and be downstairs? Well, that happened the other day. And I missed it :) By some miracle (that's what I call it) I randomly got up at 4:56 that day to go running and neither of the deans saw me leaving. When I got back, the building was empty cuz they had all left to go prayer walking. So I just had me an hour of solitude. It was awesome. =D (those of you who know Matt Troyer, ask him what happened to him during that drill :)

I also got the chance to give a 5 minute presentation in class on Modesty. I was terrified, but man that actually turned out to be a lot of fun! I even used my stuffed puppy as an object lesson. :) Ya'll must really be praying, cuz everything I do here seems to be blessed... even being in charge of making brunch this morning when all the staff was done. I had lots of good help, the food turned out well, and no one has gotten food poisoning from it—yet. I guess that was only a few hours ago tho. Now I'm gonna tear into my homework—we're pretty loaded down this term.

Sakes alive, how do these emails always

get so long?

I hope to update you again in 2 weeks before I leave on my next ministry trip.

Please know that your prayers and support mean the world to me!

Thanks so much. :) Love,

Tanisha



Gianna's thoughts on [THIS THING THEY CALL "SHAME"]

Me: "It's easier to move when I'm driven by guilt."

God: "Guilt? Guilt is a cruel master, he is impossible to please."

Me: "He is.... But one must be driven by something..."

God: "Driven? One can be driven, or led. Someone who drives chases, scares, pushes. There is no rest there. You have no choice in the matter, only move or get beaten. If you are being driven, you have to look out for yourself. You must choose where to step, where to go, how to get there and you must always leave yourself an escape route in case your plan doesn't work out. You never want to meet a dead end when being driven, because the guilt will fall on you, and you will be forced to move the barrier with your own strength, or backtrack with the weight of yourself and whatever is driving you working AGAINST you. When you are led, it is your choice to follow. Whoever leads you chooses your steps, your direction, and how fast you get there. A leader will allow you to rest, because he has something invested in you. Anyone can drive. Few can truly lead. When you are led there is rest, because you do not carry the weight of the responsibility to plan your own pathway, or to create escape routes just in case. Wherever you end up, your leader is ahead of you. If there is an impossible barrier, it is your leader's job to remove that barrier, or to lead you around it. So tell me, Child, are you led or driven?"

A man once told me [in passing] that in our culture when something is dirty and defiled, we throw it away and get a new one.... He told me that this was not how it has always been... In the Old Testament, the people were commanded to take something that was defiled and dirty through a cleansing process, and then treat it as though it had never been dirty or defiled. Something about what that man said cut me all the way to the core of who I was. It sliced right through the walls that I had built, the prison that I had locked myself inside, and the warning signs that I had posted all over myself to protect the people around me from who I thought that I was. That little glimmer of light and truth, changed my life forever. Something "clicked" inside of me.... "That's the power of redemption" a little voice whispered into my soul, and I melted into a little pile of broken rubble. The rubble, I guess, was made up of my own walls. And to think that I thought I was doing God a favor by building them so tall and thick. I made mistakes... and I carried the blame of it. I did not expect to be forgiven, and I did not want to forgive myself. Not just yet. I needed to pay the price for what I had done. I needed to put up restrictions on myself to make sure that I would NEVER make those mistakes again. And I needed to deny myself the right to an opinion on the areas I had made mistakes in,

& I needed to refuse myself the ability to warn people of making those mistakes.

After all, if I had sense and wisdom in those areas, I wouldn't have made the mistake. I assumed people would reject me, and so I gave them full rights to. I did not allow them the right or the chance to accept me in spite of the mistakes I had made, because I didn't want them to feel like they HAD to. I did the work, I carried the blame, I even had my own time schedule all lined up for when I would allow myself which spiritual freedoms. I would not, obviously, have any right to speak to anyone about my mistakes and what I had learned, for at least 4 or 5 years... When I had proved to myself and the rest of the world that it wasn't a part of my life anymore. When I caught a

glimpse
of redemption in it's rawest form, I fell on my face in repentance for all of it.

It's simple... Jesus died on the cross. He took a painful, bloody, disgusting, shameful death... He paid a high price for freedom, because he wanted it to be the most valuable thing in the world. And when He was wheezing in his last breaths, he was courageous because He saw the mistakes that I was going to make, and He would give ANYTHING so that mistake wouldn't keep me from Him. He didn't want it to separate us. He didn't want it to hold me back. He SAW the plans that He had for me, and he was paying in blood and shame and horror so that those same things wouldn't keep me from continuing in my walk with Him towards His goal for me. So now, here I am 2000+ years later, and I make my mistake. Was I sorry? yes. Did I repent? yes. But then I turned right around and practically slapped him across the face and told him that what he did wasn't good enough BECAUSE I DIDN'T ACCEPT THE POWER OF REDEMPTION. I marked myself "defiled" and "unclean", and I carried that around! I restricted my own gifting and future because of the mistake that I had made. I even refused to reach out to the people around me because of it. I clung to shame like it was my redemption, when in fact IT'S THE OPPOSITE!!

That day I repented of the mindset that when things are dirty and defiled, they are meant to be thrown away and replaced. I saw that restricting myself, holding myself back, refusing myself the right to the testimony because I didn't trust myself, holding onto shame, and even doing the same thing to other people in the same situation because it's what everyone else did, was SIN. It's not in God's nature. It's not in His plan. It's not how He wants His people treating anyone... But it's in our mindset. Well... it was. :D

Since then I've been even more shocked to learn that God doesn't love me IN SPITE of my past... He loves me knowing everything about me, and everything that I have done... He loves ME. My past is a part of me, as is my present, and my future... And He doesn't try to cut out pieces of me before He loves me... Instead He does something far more beautiful... Something that our human minds cannot comprehend, because we are incapable of it... He redeems us. That means he redeems those parts of us that are mistakes of the past. Not only does He find a way to completely forgive us, and take the shame and pain of it away, but he turns it into something completely beautiful. I honestly can hardly fathom how I can look back over my past even now, and wonder if I would be where I am today without those mistakes. THAT'S THE POWER OF REDEMPTION. Not fearing the future, and not fearing myself... Knowing that I can love and forgive, and be transparent, because God can make beauty out of the places where I stumble as I run after Him. He doesn't require perfection before He loves, because His love is the perfection that we lack.

So what does it take? Honesty, Transparency & Belief. You cannot experience the amazing power of redemption without honesty. You have to believe in the goodness of God that is complete in all the areas that you are not. You are growing! You are changing! Keep your chin up... Follow the voice of God, don't be driven by shame and the things of your past.... Excellence? Yes. That's where we're going. Redemption? Yes. It's gonna get us there :]

Those would be my thoughts on the matter.... I guess it's possibly just a different perspective on things that I had sort of known my entire life... But yet it changed me. I'm never going back. :] The freedom that I have experienced in repentance for my downfalls, and the ABSOLUTE JOY that comes with knowing that everything works together for good for those who Love the Lord keeps me running towards the sound of His voice. I'm not afraid. I'm not ashamed. I'm just following the only thing in this world worth chasing :]

**The Lord is my Shepherd. I do not want or need anything else. He lets me rest in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters....
He restores my soul.**

“Training Seminar”

Seeing the overwhelming number of hurting people- in our prisons, in our churches, in our streets- has caused us to feel very overwhelmed. When we began reaching out to local people close to us, and trying to help, we never really intended to become “counselors.” Now we find ourselves often too busy and too tired to effectively deal with needs close to us.

For years now, we have wanted to do some kind of “training”... Equipping of others, to enable more people to help people. For me, this brought up a lot of questions, like;

- Where is this counseling model in the Bible?
- What does God think of it?
- What is His purpose in all that has developed?
- How did he intend that these things we deal with in folks lives be healed?

In answering some of these questions, a “Training Seminar” was birthed. 11 couples with hearts for ministry met with us for 7 days (and nights) in Myrtle Beach, SC. The agenda was fairly simple and straight-forward:
To see Christ as He is portrayed in Scripture- the All-in-All, the Answer to every need.
To redefine, through experience, what God's heart is for the BODY of Christ.
To bring to light hidden issues in our own lives through relaxing in the sun and waves!
To give practical knowledge and confidence in helping others around us as God directs.



After one week of walking together, worshipping, laughing, crying, praying, learning, eating, then worshipping some more- I think we all agreed that God has radically changes some of our thinking and hearts. We are excited to see now how that change gets multiplied into the lives and hearts of these who are ministered to through those who attended this training exercise. We are also anticipating another such week in the near future.

A huge THANK YOU from our family to all of you who supported us in various ways this year. We recognize our Father in Heaven as our Supply and Supplier- and we recognize you for being the channel He chose to use to bless our lives.

The economic crunch has affected us too, and we have struggled some this year, making us even more aware of our dependence on God. We take what He delivers into our hands seriously in an effort to be good stewards of His wealth- both in dollars and revelation. If you would like to contact us about anything, please use the following address:

P.O. Box 176 Ronks, PA 17572

Or see us on the web at Straitpaths.com. We have added a support page with a listing of special projects that we are also seeking sponsorships for. This page will be up and operating by months end! All donations are tax-deductable.

