

LIVING FAITH IMPACT!

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“Though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.

Ps 37:24

The last issue explored the importance of having a vision. This time we bring you stories of people who are *pursuing* their vision; people still in the battles that bring calling and purpose into meaningful experience. They are from the heart, and we hope you are encouraged by them.

*The article written by James Taylor is about building cultural bridges, and maintaining family *first*.

***A Woman’s Touch**, by Barb Barrett tells the story of a woman who walked out a vision few would dare.

***Measure of a Man**, from Tom Stutsman is an account of the power of humility and the importance of waiting for God to open the doors.

Our next issue will feature stories that focus on those who have faithfully walked out their vision.

Got a story? Contact us at impact@LFF.net

If God is for you...

by James Taylor

Sometime I get asked, “James, why do you continue to beat yourself up and why are you trying to push a boulder uphill?” The questions are about what I seem to be going through. My answer: “This is what God has called me to do; this is my purpose and calling in life.” I see myself as part of the giant task of bringing cultures together - my inner-city culture and the Caucasian mainstream Christian culture. My “Why?” in life is to be a connector, a bridge builder and a builder of men.

I don’t believe in ‘separate and equal’ as was declared 50 years ago during the civil rights movement. That’s a fallacy and that’s not God’s will. Call me a dreamer, but my dream is to see God’s Bride of all peoples worshiping collectively and showcasing our diversity.

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Like Paul the tentmaker, James Taylor supports his ministry and family. He and his wife Jacque are partners in a successful real estate business. They had just finished taking an offer for one of their listings when this picture was taken.

...Who can be against you?

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Allow me for a minute to bring you into my life and struggles. Walking out this vision of bridging culture has been very demanding on my family and myself. Leadership is not for the faint of heart, and it definitely is not about making all the rules. It is self-sacrifice, denial of self and of denial to one's family. This has been extremely taxing on my family. We have faced financial struggle, power struggles and devastating disappointment. We do feel that the success and breakthroughs are worth the struggle. We are committed to what the Lord wants to do in this next season. Also, I've been looked at by some from my culture as a "sold-out" one who is disconnected from the block (inner-city neighborhood). However, I know that God originally revealed to me that the races could be united, and then He began to show me that my part was to build a bridge between the different cultures.

"How, God, can a little guy from the south side of Elkhart do this?" I asked. He let me know that He had prepared me for this job years ago. I now see why, as a child, I had to live in poverty in the ghetto and among my brethren. That was so I'd never forget where I come from and how hard life was coming up. Then He showed me why, as a pre-teen, I was sent to a predominantly "white" school. I was one of only three black kids in the whole school. He told me He did this so that I would be able to communicate and move in circles that I would otherwise be unable to go. I also see why He allowed me to fall in love with and marry a wonderful bi-racial woman. This was so I'd always know how to look at things from others' points of view. This is perhaps the strongest of all my gifts.

The ministry platform God has given me is Fusion Radio. So here I am, very much connected to my roots and my brothers, moving in a mostly white business and church world. This position as a bridge builder is extremely difficult. I often find myself explaining to either side the view of God as related to race.

I continue to toil in the rocky soil of Fusion Radio for the Lord. I do love Hip-Hop and the culture in which I was reared, but I realize my love of the provident will of the Lord is far greater. I've come to understand that if it were only about music, I would have stopped years ago. I know that God has given us this tool of radio and



James and Jackie Taylor with their daughter Kaesha and sons Tre and Christain. "I had come to a place where I told Jackie that I'd lay it all down for her sake and the sake of the family. But she totally supports this ministry. What a blessing!"

Christian Rap to draw those who would not normally come to our church or even to our faith. I've had several wise men of God sow into my life and encourage me to keep swimming upstream and fulfill the call on my life.

It's also true that getting here has not been easy. The music industry is competitive. Some brothers also pursuing Christian Rap have tried to destroy my name and credibility. The result was to expose flaws in my life and leadership. This is part of leadership. It is the refiner's fire. It's the price leaders pay to bring others to that better place the Lord has called them to. All things considered, still I rise and yet will I trust in the Lord. I will not stop until God says well done.

I want to encourage you if God has called you to do a job for him. Please know this, you'll have some rough days and some sleepless nights. You'll be exhorted and persecuted. You will be challenged, but I'll tell you this: If God is for you, who can be against you? Please pray for us as we continue to reveal the truth of God to a generation with no hope. Also, we look forward to God building us into even more of a multi-cultural fellowship.

"The only man who never makes a mistake is the man who never does anything."

-Theodore Roosevelt

A Woman's Touch

By Barb Barrett

RECIPE FOR A BLENDED FAMILY

"I will never marry someone with kids!" "I would never be the wife of a police officer or fireman!"

Such were my ideas. I've learned it's good to watch what I might so dogmatically declare. Significant time has passed, and I have often compared my proclamations to the words the Lord spoke to me twenty-seven years ago... "I want you to help this man with his children."

When Jerry and I met, he was a widower and struggling to raise three needy kids, ages 13, 12 and 9. Their hurt and fragile emotions would present many future challenges. My own son, not yet 16, and raised in a single-parent home, had no siblings. Jerry also juggled a small business and the rigors of being a city firefighter - 24 hours on-duty, 48 hours, off. And Jerry and I got married!

One could euphemistically describe the "adventure" ahead as an adjustment. I often referred to it as a pre-fabricated debacle! Whatever the description, the problems we were about to encounter proved to be of a magnitude only the Lord could untangle.

The "merger" had to be housed. The logical answer

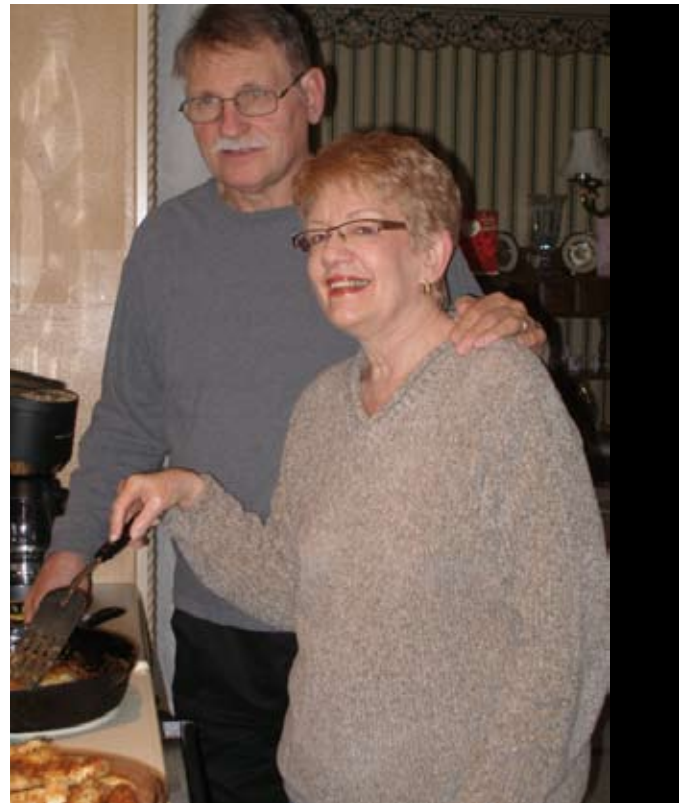
was Jerry's home. Mine was too small for three more kids. And though moving into what seemed "another family's" dwelling was difficult at first, the Lord had that covered as well. The years ahead were tough. Real life is messy. The Brady Bunch we weren't, but leaning hard on the Lord, (leaning *hard* on the Lord), we did it.

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Nearly 80 people have been on a Vision Retreat this year. Here's what some have said...

"We were able to be reminded of our marriage vows and commitment to each other. We reviewed our family mission statement and were able to focus more on our goals; to stick with the plan and commit our plans and desires to God."

"Good job! It forced me to step out of my comfort zone to do the things that my wife has asked me repeatedly to do. I need to be pushed."



Jerry and Barbara Barrett are still cookin' up lots of homemade love for a family that includes many "non-traditional" relationships.

I Held the Hand of an Angel

Anonymous

I parked my car in a lot with plowed snow mountains surrounding it. My choice from there was a long walk back the way I had driven in, and then another long walk to the building I wanted to enter, or - a climb over a snow mountain. I was in a hurry, and I had on heels which are nice for “pick-axing” your way up the mountain, so up I went.

I hadn't thought of getting down.

Again, I had a choice. I could jump from the top, a good two meters (12 ft?), or slide down on my rump in my wool skirt. I stood pondering my dilemma when a voice interrupted my scheming. “Can I give you a hand?” Surprised out of my thought process, I looked up to see an Asian American gentleman offering his hand in assistance. With the help of someone planted on a firm foundation, I quickly made my way to the bottom of the mountain. Then the man walked away before I had a chance to thank him.

Reflecting on the experience, I think God is asking me, “Can I give you a hand?”

I'm holding on to His hand for dear life. I know He'll lead me down the slippery mountain slopes in this life and into His arms.



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The golden moments in the stream of life rush past us and we see nothing but sand; the angels come to visit us, and we only know them when they're gone.

-Geroge Elliott

A Woman's Touch, continued from page 3

The cuts and bruises of childhood can be kissed away. Deeper pain cannot, especially when early loss hardens into anger and teen-age mindset. Addiction and severe emotional trauma often made the journey seem like a precarious ascent up Mt. Kilimanjaro. There were many times when my frustration made me feel so inadequate, angry and tempted to abandon the whole thing. Those were the times when I most needed to remember that Jesus was making this jagged climb with me. He always provided the encouragement and amazing resources needed along the way.

Unity was a powerful asset for Jerry and me. The kids might not have understood what they saw, but they knew it was there. It was there during those 24-hour stints of going it solo when Jerry was on-duty. When I said “no,” they heard dad's unspoken agreement.

We have seen miraculous changes in those “needy kids.” And we hope for more. Help has come through others in many ways, but especially through the power of prayer. It's good to be able to call into a network of prayer warriors who so generously labor with us.

Today, my step-children call me Mom. I love that.

And, there are two words the Lord has taken out of my vocabulary since I became His child. One is “coincidence.” A long time ago, I learned that there are really only “God-incidences.” The second word? *Never.*



Tom Stutsman is happy to demonstrate the machinery at his company, now rolling along with divine success.

It Just Took One

by Jim Tyson

Hanging,
Helpless

(was what they thought).

Straining, He cried out,
“Father, forgive them!”

(but they didn’t understand).

Sighing, He released a breath.
“It is finished!”

(but they weren’t).

Piercing, the spear ran red
Dead was His body

(or so they thought).

But, His blood had just begun to give life.

Drop
by
Drop

(and one by one, we begin to understand).

Measure of a Man

By Tom Stutsman

At year’s end, as has been our custom, the LFF community looks back, and looks up. We look back and are amazed at how far we have come. We look up, to remember Whose we are and Who we serve. We seek to hear from Him, what we need to do to prepare for what is to come. He gave me, as well as others, two specific words: “community” and “humility.” I was drawn to consider anew the verses from 1 Peter 5: 1–10. They are instructions to “the elders and young men” who lead God’s flock; they are an encouragement to be humble, and to live our lives with the idea that others are watching – to “be an example.”

The scriptures advise that young men, (new believers) are to be submissive to those who are older, (in the faith), and to clothe ourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble....that He may lift you up in due time.”

In my family, we’ve learned there is nothing quite like troubled times to cause humility to arise in one’s heart. Any ideas of being better than anyone else, or looking down on another gets put away during times of personal difficulty. We’ve recently come through a financial trial. And the Lord definitely gets the glory.

During worship one Sunday morning, someone spoke that there was “a door no one could open and no one could shut.” It was a reference to Revelation 3:7–9. At the moment those words were said, I had a picture in my mind of a door in a wall. The door had no handle – no one could open it. There was a well-worn pathway up to the door. I knew it was an image of a “door” I had gone up to many times. The picture changed, and I again went up the path to the door. This time it was open, and through it I could see not the cold dirty snow on my side of the door, but a fresh, vibrant green landscape on the other side, the side that was now open to me.

It was only a short time after this that the financial troubles we’d been experiencing began to change. That door upon which I’d been “knocking,” was at last opened by the Lord.

It is my great joy to know that the business I opened last year is blessed and favored by God. It is “my Father’s business.” Any success we have is firmly established in Him – not my talent or good looks, (...still waiting for that to manifest). We stayed humbly before Him, fulfilling our responsibility, maintaining our integrity, and trusting His sovereignty. If we are “exalted” it is only in Him.

Grandma Loves-a-Lot

Need to have dinner ready in a hurry?
This excellent recipe can be cooking
while you are away from the kitchen.



Slow-Cooked Swiss Steak for Two

1-2 Tbsp all-purpose flour
1/4 tsp. salt
a pinch of garlic powder (or garlic salt)
1/8 tsp. pepper (or Mrs. Dash's Table Blend)

3/4-1 lb. boneless beef top round steak, cut in half
1/2 medium onion cut into 1/8 inch slices
1/3 cup tomato sauce (or diced tomatoes)
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce (optional)

In a large resealable plastic bag, combine flour,
and spices. Add beef, seal bag and shake to
coat. Place half of the onion slices in the a
3-4 qt. slow cooker coated with nonstick cook-
ing spray. Layer the beef, Worcestershire sauce,
celery, remaining onions and tomato sauce. Cover.
Cook on low for 8 hours or until meat is tender.

Add some vegetables and/or a salad, and ...
"Dinner is served"!

***The Lord Jesus gave everything, so that
we who call upon Him can have
everything; victorious living here on the
earth, and Eternal Life with Him. Our
lives in Him include wisdom, health and
prosperity.***

Like healthy plants in a summer garden? While
we look to the **SON** (abide in Him), and take in
the **Water** of the Word (Life), our roots will grow
deep. Then we will stand strong and bear fruit!

*"...his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law
he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by
streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and
whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."*

Psalm 1:2-3

Ripples

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GOOD THING I FOUND YOU GIDEON ... IT
SEEMS SOMEONE HAS BEEN HIDING ALL YOUR
BIBLES IN HOTEL ROOMS