

Raising faith in

The Backyard

with a passion for generous stewardship

July 2009



Spilling Over

I grew up in a small township of a medium-size city and got from "Point A" to "Point B" using my feet. All my friends had bicycles, but with seven children and my father working two jobs with an annual salary of \$2,500.00, we simply could not afford bikes. It was 1964 and I was nine years old. One day, my father told the five oldest children to get into the car. Since I was the #5 child, the command was also meant for me. "We're taking a little trip," he said. He had that serious look on his face which usually meant that one or more of us had done something wrong and the whole lot of us were going to pay for it. So we looked at one another with silent, stern stares that seemed to be asking, "Who did something wrong THIS time? Was it YOU???" Each of us shook our heads "No!" at the same time so this now meant that this was going to be a long ride with certain punishment waiting for us at the end.

It turned out to be a short ride ending with Dad pulling up and parking in front of the famous "Wesley's Schwinn Bicycle Shop." Each of us knew this shop and had secretly visited it, walking through it slowly and dreaming of the day we might ride a "Schwinn," the best bicycles in the whole wide world. Dad said sternly, "Come with me!" Who could argue with the voice we were sure resembled God's voice? So we swiftly exited the station wagon and followed him into the store. "Wait here," he said, then he left us to talk to Mr. Wesley himself who was standing at the cash register. We couldn't hear the conversation but it sure made us strain our ears out of curiosity. Mr. Wesley left for a moment then, one by one, he brought out five brand new Schwinn's from the back room; three girl's bikes and two boy's bikes. I thought to myself, "Hey, things might be looking up!"

With a grin that he could no longer keep to himself, my father said, "O.K., you guys, come and get your new bikes!" My sisters screamed and my brother and I let out a whoop as we ran to the bikes. Mine was jet black, my brother's was fire engine red, and my sisters' bikes were sky blue. Two-speed kick-backs with Bendix brakes! They were beautiful!

Dad told us we could ride them home and he would follow in the car. We all rushed them outside and hopped on for the ride home but I was delayed because (shrimp that I was) I couldn't reach the peddles, even though my Dad ordered a frame two inches shorter than my brother's! Dad got a wrench from Mr. Wesley and dropped the seat down as far as it would go but I still could not sit on the seat and reach the peddles. I thought I would have to give the bike back to Mr. Wesley until I grew some more and, just as a huge wave of tears began to gather in my heart, my Dad just giggled and asked, "Think you can ride all the way home standing up?" Like a bolt of lightning I jumped on the bike and started peddling for home, yelling at the top of my lungs, "I'll race you home Dad!" and caught up to my sisters and brother. What a day! What a ride!

A few days later I asked my Dad how he could afford bikes for all of us and, though he was a bit irritated by the question, answered it with a gentle voice saying, "Well John, we received a bit more than usual this year in our income tax return, so your Mom and I wanted to take the extra money and do something special with it, getting you kids something you could really use. So, we thought about it and decided that bicycles were the best thing and Mr. Wesley gave us a really good deal, since we were buying so many at the same time." I paused for a moment and let his words sink in. Then I said, "Thanks, Dad! I love you Dad and I really love my new bike!" He simply replied, "You're welcome, son!"

I know this is a long story but I share it with you because I experienced the abundance of my parents spilling over to me as they gave us the gift of one bicycle each. They chose to spoil us a bit with the extra that they had received. I look back on this moment and I see God's hand prints all over this story; more like God's heart print. It also reminds me of God's heart print throughout the Scriptures and right up to today, where we see God's abundance spilling over to His children. God's abundant generosity is the core of stewardship, and we can't help but race home to God, simply to say "Thank you!"

- Pastor John

Noisy Offering

July 19

The Mission of the Month for July is the Northwest Assistance Ministries Back to School Drive



Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM) is seeking cash donations to provide needy children with basic school supplies and clothing to help prepare them for school in the fall. With our support and the support of others NAM helped over 2,200 students from the Spring, Klein, Aldine and Cy-Fair school districts in 2008. According to Texas Education Agency reports, more than 80 percent of Aldine Independent School District students, over 65 percent of Spring ISD students, 35 percent of Cy-Fair and 31 percent of Klein ISD students are economically disadvantaged. For young people to start the school year ready to learn and feeling good about themselves, they need required school supplies and clothing.

\$55 provides supplies, clothing and shoes for one student. Supplies and clothing vouchers are distributed to pre-screened families. Donations help make a difference in the lives of area children in need, and there is no shortage of need. Last year Hosanna provided funds to assist 10+ children. **Let's help 15 (or more) this year!**

Please dig into your pockets and purses and pull out any loose change you may be carrying. Deposit it in the buckets that will be passed during the Mission of the Month moment at worship services Sunday, July 19.

If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area in his life.

-Billy Graham

A letter from one of our Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) guest families...

To the hosts and volunteers who welcomed us,

I would like to thank each and everyone of you for being so kind and caring to my children and I. This is the second time we've come to this church and been among your wonderful church family. You all have welcomed my family with open arms and made us feel loved. You have fed, sheltered and treated us like part of the family and I thank you all so much. I really thank God for people like you all that reach out and help the less-fortunate, like myself. Thank you all so much.

Love,

Joseph Weatherspoon and family

Thanks to everyone at Hosanna for your support of this wonderful program. As stated in Matthew 25:40, "Whatever you do for the least of my brothers you do unto me."

Nickie Brooks, Hosanna's IHN Coordinator

Glimpses of Grace 2009

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| World Hunger | \$360.00 |
| African Initiative | \$12,775.00 |
| Mission of the Month | \$3,512.75 |
| Mulkey Scholarship Fund Income | \$5,594.00 |
| Benevolence (through June 09) | \$10,994.38 |
| Northwest Assistance Ministries | \$300.00 |
| Abby Grace Fund | \$1,271.00 |
| Buffalo Hot Wings Fundraiser | \$750.00 |
| Equal Exchange Coffee Project | \$490.00 |
| Art for the Hungry | \$721.00 |
| Garage Sale | \$5,000.00 |

Mission of the Month Gifts:

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| January—Lutheran Campus Ministry | \$512.84 |
| February—Interfaith Hospitality Network | \$703.50 |
| March—Lutherhill Campership Fund | \$410.20 |
| April—Habitat for Humanity | \$528.40 |
| May—Central Asia Institute | \$617.00 |
| June—Ron and Heda Christ's Botswana Mission | \$740.81 |

Helping Hands Fund

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| January: | Two families received money for rent assistance and Wal-Mart gift cards. |
| February: | One family received rental assistance. One individual received food pantry items and gift card. |
| March: | Two families received rental assistance and food. |
| April: | Three individuals received monetary assistance. |
| May: | One family received rental assistance Two families received food pantry items and gift cards. |
| June: | One individual received monetary assistance. |
| Balance on hand: | \$452.12 |

"I have held many things in my hand, and have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands that I still possess."

- Martin Luther

Did you know

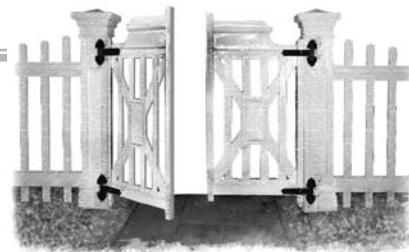


...that this year's vacation Bible school, Discovery Canyon, was a rousing success, with 53 adults and children participating!
...that 8 non-member children attended!
...that \$80 was collected to support the Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Mission!
...that the adult Bible study led by Pastor John was very well received!
...that the meals were (as usual) fantastic!

See you next summer. The goal is to double, even triple, the participants.

A parting thought

Through the Back Gate



Kevin Dove, son of Richard and Betty Dove, is currently on a six-week trip to Uganda, exploring whether missionary work is in his future. Here are some excerpts from his trip journal:

Hello from Uganda! I want to thank all of you for your support, whether it be financial, prayer or both. It has been very encouraging to me and is a reminder that God has used you to make this trip possible.

It took 3 flights — over 24 hours of travel — before I finally arrived. Beau, my friend and host, picked me up at Entebbe Airport and we headed to Kampala. The next day I went to the Owino market. I had seen markets in Latin American towns before, but this market in downtown Kampala was a whole new ball-game. There were more people and tighter spaces over a much larger area. It would be easy to get lost there if you were not paying attention to where you were going.

Since that day I have met several of Beau's friends and learned that there is a small but great community of people from the states that would sustain a missionary pretty well. In my first week I have met people from a wide array of professions: a pastor, an architect, a youth pastor, a water well driller, the director of AIDS Sudan, a soldier with the US Embassy, a Belgian SWAT team member and a soccer trainer. I have been encouraged by the fact that a long-term missionary would not be out on his own in this environment.

As I set out to arrange several meetings and meet more people, I found out what the term TIA means ("This Is Africa"). I came down with a 101 plus fever, stomach cramps, light-headedness and couldn't hold down food. It put me down for two days, but I am now recovering and yesterday I was back out in the city.

I've been riding *bodas* (motorcycle taxis) to get around town. Just know that you'd never see this in the states because the driver would be arrested and thrown in jail.

These guys have allowed me to get back and forth from the house to downtown very quickly.

I have been able to meet with several people in the last two days that have brought about many possibilities for the next 4 weeks. I met Ronny, a Ugandan who is starting a soccer team that will be playing at a prison outside Kampala. Before the game they will have the opportunity to minister to the prisoners. I'll be getting together with them to play and fellowship. I may be able to play in the prison game.

I've also been able to meet the Director of Ggaba Bible College and the pastor of Calvary Chapel. With both of them the subject of the "prosperity gospel" was broached, as understanding the impact of this corrupt gospel is becoming a passion of mine. They both said that this gospel has a tremendous influence on many of the people in Uganda and talked about how to refute this message.

I'll also be attending a Benny Hinn leadership conference in Kampala. I've never been to one and I thought what better way to do research on the prosperity gospel than to attend a conference of one of the main prosperity preachers. I will be able to listen to exactly what is being taught to many African leaders.

I also will be setting appointments with professors or directors of a couple of Bible colleges. Hopefully I'll have the chance to attend a couple classes, interact with students and view the curriculum.

There's much more that will happen that I don't even know about yet, and that is very exciting. I ask for your prayers, specifically for health, safety and a willingness to be stretched and learn as much as possible while I am here.

God bless you,
Kevin



Owino market in Kampala