

Rolling Stone

ministries

"An angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it... And the angel...said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who as been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen just as He said.'" Matthew 28:2, 5-6

Newsletter September 2009

Summer Update

Dear Friends of Rolling Stone Ministries:

As the summer has ended for us in Iowa, and Laurie and I have packed our bags and returned to California, it is time to reflect on what an eventful summer we had.



First, Laurie made great progress on her book, and I am confident that when it is finally published it will have a significant impact, especially on women in America. She is at the point where she can shop for a publisher. Perhaps it's teasing a bit to not tell you the title and subject matter, but suffice to say that the working title is very provocative, and the book deals quite a bit with her transformation from a feminist to a Bible-believing Christian.

I also made progress on my book, which is an anthology of true stories about ordinary people whom the Lord uses in extraordinary circumstances.

When not writing, I was blessed to teach the adult Sunday Bible class at Faith Bible Church in Panora, Iowa. I also preached one Sunday when the pastor was away. Laurie led a weekly women's Bible study about the life of David.

Laurie and I attended a pastor's luncheon hosted by the Alliance Defense Fund in West Des Moines, Iowa. The local organization that co-hosted the meeting was the Iowa Family Policy Center, an organization associated with James Dobson's Focus on the Family.

A few weeks ago Pastor Trevor Nunn from Faith Bible Church asked Laurie and me to do a "townhall" meeting on the marriage issue in Iowa. Back on April 3, 2009, the Iowa Supreme Court decided to strike down the 1998 law passed by the Iowa Legislature that defined marriage as between a male and female. The rise of same-sex marriage in the Heartland of America has caused a lot of discussion about how it could happen in Iowa. Those in California reading this have already been through the marriage battle (Proposition 22 and last year's Proposition 8, the successful constitutional amendment that restored the definition of marriage in California) and can likely remember what an emotional issue it was. (Those who want to redefine marriage in California have not given up--there are court cases currently pending, and reports of a 2010 ballot initiative to amend the California state constitution to allow same-sex marriage.)



On August 23, Laurie and I did the "townhall" meeting on the marriage issue in the town of Panora, near Lake Panorama, where we stay



during the summer. We invited a representative from the Iowa Family Policy Council to inform those attending how they can get involved to put the definition of marriage issue on the ballot so the people can decide (as opposed to seven judges). In Iowa, the people cannot directly place a proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot (like we did in California). In Iowa the legislature must twice pass a resolution proposing the constitutional amendment before the people can vote on the resolution. However, presently the undemocratic legislature in Iowa is refusing to vote on the resolution, meaning the will of the people (polls show Iowans are in favor, 2-1, of defining marriage as only between a man and a woman) is being held hostage by the liberals in the legislature. Iowans can vote in 2010 for a constitutional convention. If that passes, the people can have their voices heard.



Summer Update (Cont)



I have been invited to debate the marriage issue in at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa on September 16 in front of the student body. We feel it is important to educate the young people as to the issues and consequences of redefining marriage, and we consider this a great opportunity. Please pray for strength and wisdom, as we seek to not just win the debate, but win the hearts and minds of the young people attending.

Back in California we are busy with the case of *Loya v. County of Orange*. Maureen Loya, a 20-year employee of Orangewood Children's Home (the County emergency shelter for abused, abandoned and neglected children), was suspended without pay for six weeks for "exposing children to unapproved religious activity." Her crime? Taking four teenage girls to the beach (with permission from her supervisors) where, while eating pizza, they overheard about 10 minutes of "Christian music" from a band playing near the Huntington Beach pier. It is time-consuming to attempt to right such a wrong, but we hope this case can send a message to those with anti-Christian biases in government positions, that such actions will not go unchallenged.



The weekend of October 9-11 I will be the speaker at the men's retreat for our home church, Covenant Presbyterian in Orange. My theme is "Band of Brothers." If any of you men do not attend Covenant but would like to attend the men's retreat, drop me an email, and I will send you the details.

Finally, the fall is our time to gear up for our winter and spring mission trips to India and Africa. It is a time of intense preparation, coupled with great expectations. We could not venture out without the support of our friends and partners of Rolling Stone Ministries. We do have some special projects in Africa that we are considering, and once we have all the details we will pass them along to you.

Blessings,

John

Psalm 36:9

“Where Is Our Focus?”
A word From Laurie

Where is our focus today? When we look around us and observe the culture war taking place, what do we see? When we hear about judges redefining marriage, where is our focus? When we hear about government inculcation of secular values to our children through public, where is our focus? When we see a decline in morals on television, film, and radio, where is our focus? Are we focusing on the circumstances? Or are we focusing on Jesus?

I am not suggesting we bury our heads in the sand and ignore what we see happening around us. We are supposed to be alert (Ephesians 6:18, I Peter 5:8) and as wise as serpents but harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16). We should be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). What does this *mean*?

First, we remember that our God is good, all the time. He is sovereign, which means He is in control of everything that happens. That is not to say that God *causes* everything to happen, because God cannot cause evil. However, God does *allow* bad things to happen because somehow He mysteriously is able to use it for His eternal glory and to bring about His plan. Probably because He knows what we are going to do before we ever do it. Take the story of Joseph for example. He was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers who had considered murdering him, and later was wrongly imprisoned after being falsely accused of attempted rape. Clearly bad stuff happened to Joseph. But did Joseph focus on the circumstances? He focused on God and

God's plan. After joyfully being reunited with his brothers many years later, Joseph said to them, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result [to save lives]." (Genesis 50:20)



Do we believe as Joseph did, that what others mean to do, which may seem harmful to us, God may use for good to save lives? Let's be clear, this doesn't mean God condones, approves or *causes* harmful behavior and choices. Or that we are free to engage in whatever wrongful thoughts, words and actions we want because we rely on God's ability to use bad stuff for some good eternal purpose. That's known as cheap grace. Christ didn't suffer on the cross and bear the sins of the world so that we could go on living our own way, apart from God's way. God graciously and mercifully forgives. But forgiveness requires a heart that repents. (Acts 2:38, 3:19; 8:22)

Second, knowing God is good all the time, do we trust Him? Do we *live* like we trust Him? Not merely talking about it, but actually living out God's truths and promises so that our lives are living proof that God is good and we trust Him? Sounds great, but how do we *do* that? How do we live like "salt and light" when we see the culture war taking place right in our face, in our marriages, our homes, our schools, our churches, and our government? Paul says if we have all the words, gifts, knowledge, and faith, but we don't have love, we are nothing and gain nothing. Nothing, without love. (I Corinthians 13:1-3).

So how should we respond to what we see happening in the culture war around us? Keep our eyes focused on Jesus. Know God. Know His Word. Be alert. Speak truth. But most importantly, live a life of love for God and for others. After all, isn't this what Jesus told us are the two greatest commandments? "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39) Focus on Jesus.



Passing the Mantle *By John Stewart*



This summer I was privileged to teach the Sunday morning Bible class at Faith Bible Church in Panora, Iowa. I taught on the Gospel of John.

As I considered John's gospel, there is both amazement and envy in reading the words of a man whom Jesus chose to be one of His 12 disciples, and even one of His inner three. It is amazing to consider what it would be like for a 1st Century fisherman to be summoned by the Messiah. However, I am envious that John was able to sit at Jesus' feet for some three years, hearing things we will never know this side of eternity. (John admits that Jesus said and did many things that he did not write down in his gospel, because there was not room for recording everything--see John 20:30, 21: 25; plus, the purpose of John writing was so the reader would believe in Jesus--see John 20:31.)

John was in a unique position, being present with Jesus. He wrote his gospel so that we might read for ourselves about the words and deeds of Jesus. But John did not merely write his gospel account in isolation. Many of John's activities are recorded in the book of Acts, where he is seen evangelizing his fellow-countrymen. He is recognized by St. Paul as one of the pillars of the early church. See

Galatians 2:9. Beyond what is recorded in Scripture, we know from early church history that John himself discipled certain men, among whom were Polycarp and Papius.

Polycarp, born around A.D. 69, became a bishop in Smyrna, which is modern Izmir, Turkey. One of his pupils was Irenaeus, who reports that Polycarp was converted to Christianity by apostles, and communicated with many who had seen Jesus, including the Apostle John. Polycarp is among the earliest believers whose writings have survived (he wrote an Epistle to the Philippians).

Irenaeus, writing toward the middle of the 2nd Century (about A.D. 150) names Papius as a "hearer of John" and a "companion of Polycarp." Presuming that this "John" is John the Evangelist, the disciple who wrote the 4th Gospel, then Papius also was discipled by a direct disciple of Jesus. Papius wrote a five-volume work on "Interpretations of the Sayings of the Lord." These volumes are lost, and are only known through fragments cited by later writers.

Jesus passed the mantle on to His disciples, mentoring and teaching them in order to prepare them for their commission (Matthew

28:19, "disciple all nations"). His disciples, like John, discipled the next generation of Christian leaders, including Polycarp and Papius. Polycarp, in turn, mentored Irenaeus, and so on down the line.

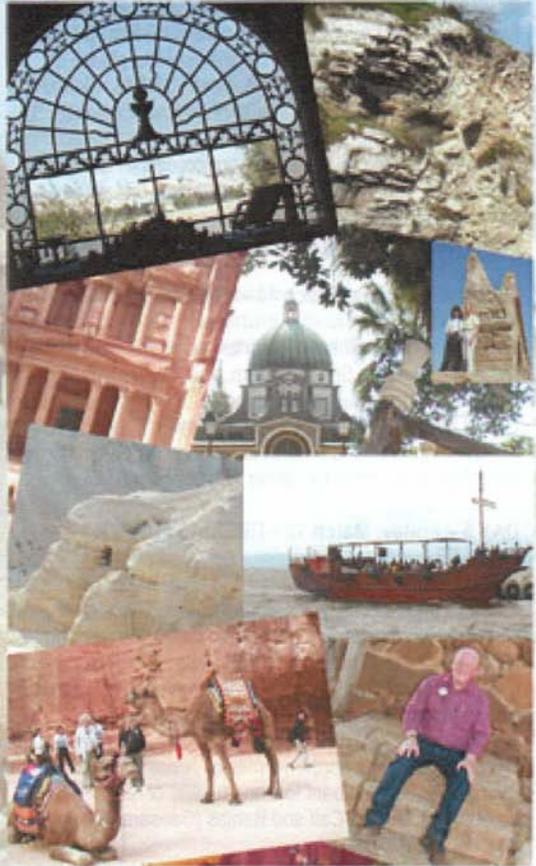
We, today, are called upon not only to believe, but also to serve. Part of that service is mentoring others, especially the next generation of Christian leaders. There is a wealth of precedent, based on the command of Jesus (Matthew 28:19), that our primary purpose on earth is to teach ("disciple") people from every nation, passing to the next generation the mantle of leadership. John, Polycarp, Irenaeus, all the way to us, today. Someone (perhaps many) discipled you, and continue to discipled you. We thank God for those who have influenced our faith. Are there believers who thank God because *we* discipled *them*? There is a question that helps us soberly pause to consider whether we are, indeed, fulfilling our calling and purpose on this earth. Now is the time to consider if there is someone, or perhaps many, whom we are called to mentor and discipled. We are the ones not only entrusted with leadership, but also entrusted with finding faithful believers who need to be groomed as tomorrow's leaders.

Are you working on passing the mantle?

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I request a single room @ \$55 per hotel night.

March 8, 2010 Camp Berachah

Dear Traveling Friends,

This trip has been a dream for many years, a Berachah to the Holy Land, with a visit to Camp Gilead [a sister camp] in Jordan, tour the area near the Biblical Valley of Berachah, and spend nine days in Israel; the place that has been God's special center of the world from the beginning of time. Master's Tours has years of experience in providing a lifetime quality experience you will never forget. This current tour includes new discoveries as well as the traditional biblical sites that Christians, throughout the ages, have longed to see. Our goal is that your understanding of the Bible and your relationship to the Author of the Bible may grow by leaps and bounds. Enrollment is limited so register soon. Kathy and I hope you will join the Stewarts and us for this wonderful trip.

Steve Altick

Camp Berachah Ministries

Events 2009

January-June ~ John teaches "The Cutting Edge" adult class Sundays 10:30 am at Covenant Pres. Church (CPC) in Orange, CA.

January 9-28 ~ John & Laurie travel to India for teaching mission.

February 5 ~ Laurie speaks on Freedom of Choice Act (abortion) at Whittier Law School, Costa Mesa, CA.

February 19 ~ John & Laurie speak to CPC Women's Fellowship about India.

February 23-25 ~ John & Laurie speak at CCCA in Auburn, Washington. (Apologetics and Legal Issues for Christian Camps).

March 13 ~ John & Laurie speak at CPC about their mission to India.

March 22 & 29 ~ John speaks as a Guest Pastor at Northpoint Evangelical Free Church in Corona, CA.

April 1-22 ~ John & Laurie travel to Kenya for their 3rd annual teaching mission.

May 6 ~ John & Laurie speak at CPC about their mission trip to Kenya.

July 1-August 5 ~ Laurie leads women's Bible Study, Panora, Iowa.

July 5 ~ John preaches at Faith Bible Church, Panora, Iowa.

August 23 ~ John & Laurie speak at "The Battle for Marriage: Why It Matters to You" at Panora, Iowa.

September 16 ~ John debate the marriage issue at Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa.

October 23 ~ John & Laurie speak at Rolling Hills Covenant Church in Palos Verdes, CA on international issues affecting religious liberty.

November 19 ~ John & Laurie speak at CPC His Men and Women's Fellowship.

November 30 ~ John & Laurie speak at HIGH-DEF National Conference (CCCA) in Colorado Springs, Colorado.



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We invite you to prayerfully consider partnering with RSM today. When you offer support, you partner with RSM in the mission field and share in building the Kingdom. Becoming a Treasure Builder (a monthly partner with RSM) will go a long way to provide for basic needs to help minister more effectively to fulfill the Great Commission: *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Matt. 28:19-20*



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Purpose of RSM

TEACH biblical truth; *TRAIN* Christian leaders, church planters and evangelists; *DEFEND* the Christian faith intelligently; *STRENGTHEN* the faith of believers; *CONFRONT* secular attacks on the Christian faith; *ENGAGE* the culture with the truth of Scripture; *ADVOCATE* for religious freedom.

RSM is involved with universities, Bible institutes, churches and conferences, providing leadership training, strategic planning, prayer and support. Also, RSM provides scholarship to key pastors and church leaders in their continuing training and education.



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