

"A doorkeeper in the house of the Lord"

Rick and Trish Starns have been a great blessing to LCF. Rick carries a deep prophetic insight to the vision and helps coordinate the Bible school.

Trish has always asked Billy and Jimmy to think of ways she could be of help in hospitality for the church.

A few weeks ago, Rick was praying and the Lord brought the condition of the church meeting place to his heart. He knew that the paint was looking bad and there were some general "trim" problems.

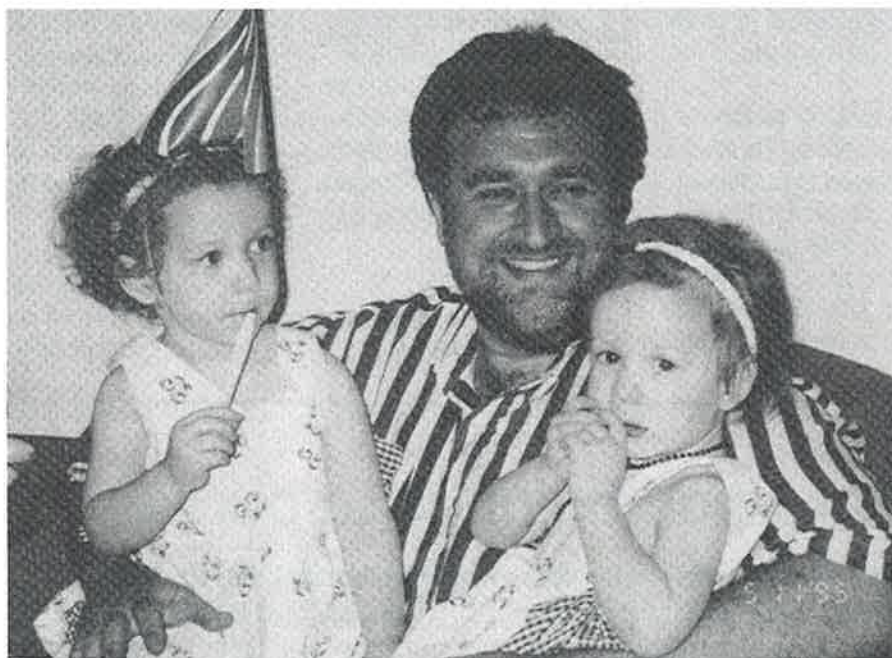
He also knew we were working on training folks to clean the building.

So, in a moment of inspiration, deep spiritual insight and Biblical revelation, Rick created the position of Building Coordinator.

Unfortunately, his selfishness has not been dealt with and he has chosen to keep this job to himself.

He is only sharing the responsibility with his wife, who now keeps the church calendar. Anyone who wants to reserve the building should check with her.

Rick is coordinating home fellowships to clean and is organizing people to work on projects. If you



Rick Starns and his twin girls, Cara and Rhea (Rick is the one in the middle).

have any questions about the building, please refer them Rick.

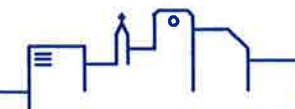
Former Vice President, Alben Barkley, left the senate to make room for younger men. When asked how he felt about "stepping down," he responded, *"I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to sit in the seat of the mighty."*

I think Rick, along with the Vice President, has come across the real spirit of servant leadership.

Few churches are blessed with a truly prophetic teacher who honestly knows how to serve and works as a team with his wife.

Praise God for Rick and Trish. □

Lexington Christian Fellowship
350 Elaine Drive
Lexington, KY 40504



January/February 1996

Fellowship Journal

...for the edification of the local church

Volume VI, Number 1

Prayer Focus:

- Church Leadership
Billy Henderson
Jimmy Leitsch
- Home Fellowships
HF Leaders
- Missions to Ayutla
- University Christian Fellowship
- City churches
- Youth home fellowship
- February Med. mission
- Winchester Covenant Church

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The Starns family

They that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits, But they that do wickedly against the covenant, shall he lead away with flatteries. Daniel 11:32

This scripture draws a line and calls Christians to stand on one side or the other. You can know God and be dispelling the darkness or you can be lost in the twilight, being overcome with darkness.

Stated another way, this verse says, "If you have ongoing relationship with God, you will be actively involved in setting the captives free. If

Knowing God

They that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits.

you are not walking in God's love and promise, then the spirit of this age will lead you around by what looks good."

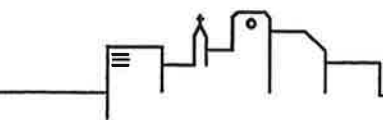
There is no middle ground. Anything less than doing exploits is part of the kingdom of darkness. Stagnation or lukewarmness is one of the enemy's favorite tricks.

It comes in the form of, "Life is so busy. Just hang on a little while. You were radical for a while. Let the church carry itself and you just attend for awhile."

Now there are times for legitimate rest and sabbaticals during the war. However, they must be in keeping with the Lord's framework of sabbath.

More than ever, Christians need to know God and be in on the adventure if they are going to flourish in the abundant life we have been promised.

(Continued on page 6)



Fellowship Journal

Fellowship Journal was originally published as Pastor's Brief during the founding years of the church. The change in name reflects a change in the nature of Lexington Christian Fellowship.

The direction is no longer souly from the founding pastor, but is emerging as a "team effort."

Fellowship, means "two people in the same ship." The greek word actually means, "a joint participation."

The "Journal" encourages the body to "build itself up in love, as each part receives it's supply from God, and then uses that supply to minister to the other parts."

It is an equipping tool to prepare each member to fulfill the purposes of God.

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From the Pastor

Looking to the coming year with thanks and anticipation

Dear Team,

Many of you have been asking for the Pastor's Brief to return. Well, here it is. As you read in the mast-head, the new name means a new phase.

It has been a joy in these years to see so many mature into vital "members" of the body of Christ. I believe these next years will see this team of ministers change the moral fiber of our community. I also think our church planting efforts in other nations will continue to grow.

From our time of seeking the Lord in 1994 we took direction to reach out to the lost. The body adjusted to that in the beginning of '95 and by June we were training for evangelism. By the end of October, we were using Sunday nights for outreach. Thank the Lord, we have begun to see fruit from this direction.

We have just begun to plant seed in evangelism. Those precious souls added to us are first fruits. Our emphasis on evangelism will not change as we enter this new year. We will continue to develop our skills and sensitivity in serving the good news to anyone who will listen.

"Seeking the Lord '95" brought us to an overarching principle of "changing our ways." The broad picture is a need to adjust our very pattern of life to be able to cooperate with God's ways which are "higher than our ways."

God is calling me to spend more time developing leaders to serve the growing membership of the church. We began the year by taking two days at Cleft Rock Retreat with the HFLs and their assistants.

Three things will continue to work together for us to grow in our knowledge of God and outreach to the lost: Evangelism, Adjusting our lives to reflect His ways, and the training of new leaders for discipling the body.

On a personal note, I want to glorify God for the sure benefits of His ways. As Brenda and I have kept our marriage focused on building His Kingdom together, we have continued to grow in our love and appreciation of each other. She and I both agree that our love for one another grows stronger and deeper as time passes. Our five children never cease to bless us and give us hope for the future.

This is going to be a great year.



Bless you,
Billy Henderson, Pastor

Recommended Books

There are some fabulous books out that would be great to study through this year.

The Beauty of God's Holiness, by Thomas L. Trevethan is published by Intervarsity Press.

It may take a little getting used to, if you are not familiar with the writer's vocabulary, but it

is worth it.

Each chapter contains a unique understanding of the Character of God. The overall truth on God's holiness is presented here more clearly than any place I have ever studied it.

If all this psychology stuff has you

confused, Lawrence Crabb's book, **Finding God**, is the stuff.

He says, "Solving problems is not the point, our deepest problem and worst sin is doubting God."

I have been waiting for this book and highly recommend it.

If you have never read a primer on prayer, a favorite of mine is

Prevailing Prayer, by D.L. Moody.

It is a short book, yet it covers the essentials of effective prayer.

Continued

Salvation belongs to our God!

of him because when he drank he would beat them. Pedro began visiting Mauro. During the visits Pedro would read from the Bible.

Mauro said that the words from the Bible were very hard to understand so Pedro would explain what they meant. This went on for quite some time, but Mauro never changed.

Then one night, Pedro and another brother came to visit. Once again, they read from the Bible, but this time Mauro's ears were opened. He could understand the truth of God! That night he prayed and turned to God.

Now, he says that his children aren't afraid of him and he is happy. God reached down in the middle of an idolatrous society, found an uneducated, drunken farmer and picked him up and called him "son." Now Mauro brings great glory to God in his attitudes and how he lives his daily life.

This is how I know God is moving. The things that are happening are beyond man's ability

to imagine, much less accomplish.

Another man that Chad and I got to know was Felix. Pedro and Felix were classmates when they were boys. Felix had worked in a factory in Mexico City for many years. His back was injured badly in an accident at the factory and Felix almost died.

His wife and grown sons took the opportunity to kick Felix out of the home. Felix was left with no money and no where to live. Eventually, he moved back to Ayutla and met up with Pedro. Pedro began visiting and sharing with Felix and his new wife. But even when his wife was healed of a serious medical condition, Felix continued to resist God.

A few months ago, when Pedro was visiting in the states, he told us that Felix had finally accepted Jesus. Apparently, a demon had manifest itself and begun to torment Felix. Felix was terrified and turned to Pedro for help. When Pedro shared the gospel this time, Felix said "yes."

Felix is no longer troubled by the tormentor and he is experienc-

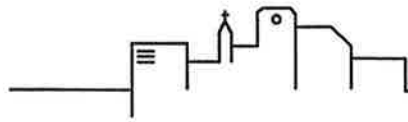
ing a new joy.

If I had more space, I could tell you a lot more stories of God moving. I could tell you about Sabina, who accepted God and who is now evangelizing her whole neighborhood, bringing the sick and the children to church.

I could tell you about Olga who works in the market. She's letting her children come to church to learn about Jesus, and soon she too will come.

I could tell you about Victoria, whose husband is in prison and whose six children often go hungry. But they don't have to go hungry for the word of the Lord because three times a week, the family walks 45 minutes to Pedro's house to learn about God.

Right now, God is preparing that great multitude of different kinds of people who will stand before him and worship him day and night shouting, "Salvation belongs to our God." Nothing could be better in life than to join him in that work. Don't miss your opportunity. □



The 'Long Trek'

About fifteen Home fellowship leaders and assistant leaders found themselves creeping up I-75 as the winter's deepest snow dumped on them at midnight.

They had just spent Friday night and all day Saturday being equipped for ministry to the church.

As the snow dumped on the guys, the fourwheel vehicles often went back to search for one of the cars that kept getting stuck at the bottom of the hill.

Home fellowship leaders not only brave treacherous highways to become better servants of the church.

They spend at least one evening a month in training and attend the Tuesday morning prayer meeting to pray for the flock.

'Hitching post'

In less than two months, Jimmy and Laura will be married here at the church on a Sunday night.



They are having a simple ceremony at the end of our regular Sunday PM service.

A few weeks later, they plan to have a reception at Spindletop for a larger group.

Their desire is to use the time at Spindletop to reach out to family, friends and co-workers. Pray for them as marriage approaches.

Chrissy and Josh are planning a June wedding.

Details are not worked out, but the date is June 15.

Please put them on your prayer list as well.

Baby Boom

This past year has been a great blessing when it comes to new births. Here is a list of the newest members of the flock:

Deborah Anne Williams

7 months old

Hannah Page Hoverman

5 months old

William Luke Henderson

(Named after his favorite uncle)

3 months old

Molly Kathleen Hammond

Born 1/16

Youth Home Fellowship

You've heard of LCF. You've experienced UCF. Now, bolder than ever, it's YCF!

After a year and a half of laying foundations for growth, Youth Christian Fellowship opened up to new members.

In one week, the group doubled and they

are planning to reproduce by the beginning of the summer.

The original core included Matthew and Keren Henderson, Ryan Schwartz, Kyle Vogel and Bekah Greer.

The group meets on Saturday nights at the Hendersons.

Ryan Korosec and Sarah Coburn serve as the adult leaders. Matthew Henderson serves as the youth assistant.

Watch for the special report on YCF in the next Fellowship Journal.

Pray for these churches

We are blessed to have good relationship with other churches in the area.

Ernie Sacra, pastor of Woodland Baptist Church has been a long standing friend to Billy and LCF. He has carried us in his heart and prayers.

Being a just a few years older than our leadership, he has been able to share his wisdom and protection.

Ernie also carries prophetic insight to Lexington and our church.

David Redish, John Meadows, Kim Carroll,

Jim Miller, and Jim Laymon continue to pray together for our churches and our cities.

Steve Humble, from Winchester who has been unable to come and pray with us until recently will be added back in next month.

Put these guys on your prayer list, along with their churches:

☐Woodland Baptist
☐Lexington Covenant
☐Cornerstone
☐Winchester
Covenant
☐Door of Hope
☐Southside
Community

It's not too late!

How to study the Bible

The ten week class on how to study the Bible begins **Monday, February 5th at 7:30 PM.**

This video class, taught by Kevin Conners, will cover all areas of Bible study and will equip you to take the next step to deeper study.

Evangelism to continue, personal growth enjoined

There are four events over the last months which have been prophetically significant to LCF: 1) the 1994 time of prayer and fasting 2) the prophetic ministry of Lattie McDonough, 3) the 1995 time of prayer and fasting, 4) The recent Home Fellowship Leaders retreat.

FAST 1994

Coming into 1995, LCF was gearing for outreach as the result of prayerful direction received in the 1994 time of prayer and fasting. Going into the fast God spoke specifically, **"This time of fasting is to be different than last year. It is not a time to focus inwardly, but outwardly. It is a time to focus on reaching the lost."**

By the beginning of the summer, we were using Sunday for instruction on evangelism. By the end of summer, we were using Sunday night meetings to actually bring friends to church and the Gospel was preached.

Two people actually committed their lives to the Lord during that time: Julie Oliver and John Hoverman.

That period of time established the heart of evangelism in the church and we believe that anointing will continue through 1996.

LATTIE McDONOUGH

It was a Monday night and Lattie shared on five points of devotion.

The overall theme was devotion to God. He spoke of devotion in five areas: 1) **Devotion is to a person, Jesus,** 2) **doctrine,** 3) **fellowship,** 4) **breaking of bread,** and 5) **prayer.**

The emphasis that we came away with was that God would give **grace for our men to rise up and be strong husbands, fathers and leaders.**

FAST 1995

The 1995 time of prayer and fasting gave the theme of, **Changing our ways.**

"Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord,...For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord."

Isaiah 55:6-8

Scripture from Prayer and Fasting 1995

We believe that God will be dealing with deep issues in our lives, helping us overcome deep inbedded patterns that hold us back.

LEADERS RETREAT

Then, at the recent Home Fellowship Leaders training session the most powerful words came:

This is going to be a year of genuine change. We have seen what we can do and are dissatisfied, now we will see what God can do.

-Jimmy Leitsch

Take up your cross and lose your life, if you are hungry or thirsty, come and drink. If you are longing for that city, you will see it in your life and in the corporate life of the church. Let love be extended through you.

-Chad Grissom

LCF is committed to Biblical integrity and sets the Holy Cannon as the final authority.

From that foundation, the leadership of the church seeks to find current application, direction and emphasis by the Holy Spirit.

We often hear direction through our times of prayer and fasting together as a body.

Sometimes, when we gather in corporate worship, God gives a prophetic word to someone in the congregation.

Periodically, men who move translocally in the prophetic ministry speak into our situation.

This page is dedicated to recording words of inspiration, direction or rebuke.

They have been judged by the leadership and are worthy of your attention.

The Spirit says...

"Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

LCF is committed to the church planting model. In addition to planting churches in the United States, we have been commissioned to work with Pedro Basilio, an indigenous church planter from Ayutla, GRO., Mexico.

Pedro began planting churches in his home area in 1986.

We now have three Mixtec congregations, one Spanish congregation, and indigenous peoples from three different tribes: Mixtec, Totonac, and Azteca.

Pedro and his family are a vital part of our church and serves us by leading the churches in Ayutla and allowing us to participate through short term and intermediate missions.

We are honored to co-labor with Pedro.



Letter from Pedro

Ya'll come back now, Ya hear

I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank the Lord for his blessings in our lives.

It is a great privilege to serve Him in this area, and allow me to be part of you and you part of us, which means we are ONE body in Him, because of that all things we do we are not doing it with our own strength, but with His strength because He is the HEAD of the body. Thank the Lord for that.

I thank you for your willingness to continue to serve this area by bringing Medical teams. Thanks to our church (Lexington Christian Fellowship) for supporting these sister churches, both Mixtec and Spanish.

I am expecting your group to be down in February for the trip to the villages. On March 22-24 we will hold 2 or 3 meetings to evangelize people. We are not going to preach outside, but we will work with people individually in the daytime and invite them to the meeting in the evening. For this reason I am extending an invitation to you and those who can come. We will enjoy having you here to help others again. Let us know how many are coming so we can make plans.

In Him,
Pedro Basilio

Building a Spanish congregation

The highlight of the work this past year in Ayutla was the birthing of the Spanish speaking church.

For seven years, Pedro has labored among his people in the mountains while living in the Spanish speaking market town. Slowly, the Lord has given him credibility with the Spanish speakers and used this door to present the gospel.

There are nearly thirty believers gathering three times a week for worship and Bible study in Pedro's home.

Ayutla Christian Fellowship is emphasizing outreach this year. Billy Henderson will be joining pastors from around Mexico to help the church conduct an outreach March 22-24.

Pedro has asked LCF to pray for the church during this time. The U.S. leadership will be planning three days of fasting and prayer to coincide with the outreach. □

Medical team - February 9-10

Please pray for Dr. Coburn, Billy Henderson and his son Stephen. This will be a small team hitting five villages.

Outreach team - March 19-26

Please pray for the Spanish church. LCF will have prayer and fasting March 22-24.



On Sunday, January 14, the Henderson's home fellowship commissioned a new HF plant. The four adults (seated left to right) who make up the plant are: Laura Feeney, Jimmy Leitsch, Susan and Tom Vogel. Those remaining (standing left to right) are Kyra Fossett, Melissa and Paul Ponder, Billy and Brenda Henderson, and Shayne and Doug Watts (Debbie McManis and Julie Oliver not shown).

Parting is such sweet sorrow

Multiplying a home fellowship

by Jimmy Leitsch

As the Vogels, Laura and I get ready to start another home fellowship, I ask myself the question, "Why would anyone want to leave a comfortable, secure home fellowship?"

"Only for the love of Lexington," I finish my conversation with myself.

We will be leaving the safe confines of a home group rich with maturity. On January 9, Tom and I had our first meeting.

We want to spend a little time developing our team, and then jump right into adding new people.

We already have several on our list that we are praying for and believing God to add to the Kingdom.

At whatever rate God adds, our time together will be well spent in being known and edified in this

smaller group.

As home fellowships becomes larger we are unable to maintain the level of reality that is synonymous with genuine relationship.

It is difficult to divide, but joyous at the same time.

In our first few meetings, we all had "withdrawal symptoms," as we missed those people we had met with before.

However, we know that our friendships with them are secure because of our love for one another. They go beyond the structure of a home fellowship and will last for the rest of our journey as we serve the Kingdom together.

Don't forget to keep this team on your heart, and believe God to reach this city through our home fellowships. □

Life Cycle of a Home Fellowship

Birthing

A home fellowship is birthed after a man has served faithfully as an Assistant Home Fellowship Leader.

He is sent out with his wife, if married, and at least one other man.

Team Building

At first a period of time is spent learning how to minister to one another and work together.

Building honest relationship based in trust is an important part of this phase.

Out reach

This period of time is marked by working as a team to bring others into the Kingdom.

After people are saved, they are added into the group.

Follow-up

This is the second phase of outreach. Members of the group personally go through foundations with the new believers.

Discipleship

The next months are spent deepening all the members in Christian growth.

Evangelism continues and new men are added as interns.

Leadership development

The last phase is releasing the interns to care for the meeting. This period of time lasts as long as it takes for the interns to feel comfortable.

Life cycle repeats

The AHFL is sent out with one of the interns to start over. □



"And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart."

Authentic Christianity spills over into everyday life. Here at LCF we hope to replicate this "sincerity of heart" by allowing the Holy Spirit to make us of "one mind" as we share life together in our homes. Meeting in home fellowships is the structural foundation for pastoral care, body ministry and outreach. Members are trained to work as teams to meet one another's spiritual and practical needs. Evangelism is a natural outgrowth of these groups as they are built up in Christ. All members are added to a home fellowship with hopes of helping plant a new home fellowship in the following months.

AWOL from home fellowship

A great tragedy in the Kingdom of God is the number of eligible warriors who are AWOL (Absent Without Leave).

The present atmosphere in the church is similar to the 1960's around the Viet Nam War. There were a lot of people who benefited from the American way but weren't willing to go fight to preserve it.

Some decided that the war was not theirs and dodged the draft.

Thirty years later, the nation questions a president who would send troops to a war ever so similar to the one he skipped.

The parallels in the church are striking. Here we are engaged in the greatest battle of our lives.

Lexington awaits liberation by the forces of the Kingdom of God. The call has gone out from our Commander in Chief, "Join yourself to the army. Submit yourself for training. The battle is upon us."

Yet, comes the reply from the cowardly heart and the rebellious in spirit, "I am not sure that this is the way. I am afraid that I cannot do it. Let me enjoy the safety of the church, while another fights the battle."

The Commander cries out, "Find your place, listen to your sergeant. There is a hill only your platoon can take. There is one POW that only you can set free."

And still the reluctant reply, "My platoon leader is ill equipped. Our schedule does not fit my life. Let me enjoy the safety of the church, while another fights the battle."

"Don't you understand," declares the Commander, "This Kingdom was established by those with more to lose than gain! The First

gave up Heaven for nothing but a broken world. Another gave up the gain of death to stay and fight, while others have forsaken all this Kingdom has to offer that they may offer the Kingdom to others!"

Yet, the sniveling bunch, sipping on the wine of the Kingdom, robed in the linen of the King questions whether this is their battle. "Not now," they say. "We have households to maintain, jobs to secure, friendships to enjoy."

"Well, then," comes the reply, "party on, you have said it, this is not your battle. But the day will come when the battle will beat at your door. Darkness will call for your children. Time will call for your home. And then, having dodged your duty and learned the way of the excuse, how will you fight?"

"In that day call on the Kingdom of God, and the faithful will be sent. They will be your liberators. In that day, both joy and sadness will fill your heart. Joy at your deliverance, but sadness at those fallen by your side that you could have helped. Sadness at the days spent in self indulgence.

Sorrow that you don't stand as a liberator, but one in need."

Lexington Christian Fellowship, your orders are simple:

- Join yourself to a home fellowship.

- Lay your life down to serve those in your group.

- Plan with your leader how you can reach one lost person for the Gospel of Jesus.

- Prepare to turn your life and home into a beachhead for the next home fellowship.

Otherwise, give a call when trouble knocks on your door. ☐

Salvation belongs to our God!

by Shannon Grissom

Before I arrived in Ayutla on May 8, 1995, I had heard that God was really moving there. I believed it was true, but I hadn't really seen it for myself. However, as Chad and I lived with Pedro and the believers in Ayutla, we were overwhelmed by the reality of God's presence and working in the city and outlying villages.

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

*"Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb."*

Revelations 7: 9&10

How did I know that God is moving there? Because salvation belongs to our God, and everywhere I looked, I saw His salvation being poured out.

To fully understand the greatness of what is going on, consider the backdrop. Culturally and historically, Guerrero, Mexico (the state where Ayutla and the mountain villages are) stands strongly against the good news. The people for many generations have not known the truth of God or his love for them.

In fact, I could almost smell the stench of spiritual death as I walked through the streets.

I noticed two types of people. One group, mainly the young people were pretty hedonistic, living for any pleasure they could get ahold of. The



Chad and Shannon Grissom spent the summer of 1995 in Ayutla, Gro. Mexico. Chad served Pedro in leading worship and teaching. Shannon worked with the young kids in the church and cared for a child which was ultimately adopted by an American family.

second group, were steeped in a false religion, trying to manipulate Jesus through his mother Mary.

In the midst of all of this, God broke through! He saved Pedro and sent him into the darkness.

You all know Pedro's testimony. Who could ever imagine that a pagan Indian from the mountains of Guerrero, Mexico would have the opportunity to hear the Gospel, and on top of that, receive it!

Let me share with you a few more glimpses of God's hand at work.

This summer, I taught the children during church services. Anywhere from 15 to 35 kids came to the meetings, many of whom were not from Christian homes. Every time I shared with them about Jesus, I was gripped with a sense of awe. God was speaking his word to the coming generation.

One little girl named Flor was

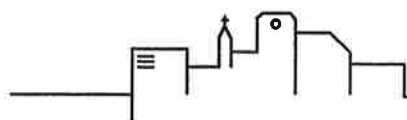
nine years old. She's very poor and has to work in the market instead of going to school. Fermin is a little eight year old boy. (He was the best artist in my class.) He can't afford to go to school and he often goes without food.

The other children had similar stories. Lot's of nights my heart would go out in pity to these little children. But at the same time I could hear Jesus say, *"I know your afflictions and your poverty — yet you are rich."* (Rev. 2:9) These kids are rich because God has decided to pour out his salvation on them.

One Friday night as the believers gathered at Pedro's house to worship, Mauro, a Tlapanec Indian brother, began to share his story of how God had saved him.

Mauro was an alcoholic. His wife and seven boys were very afraid

(Continued on page 11)



How can God speak to us?

As we seek to know God we must understand how He communicates to us. Here are some ways He spoke in the Bible:

- Vision-Acts 9:10
- The Spirit-Acts 16:6
- Acts 8:26-34
 - Angels
 - Word
 - Minister
- The Word -Acts 17:10-15
- Prophetic-Acts 13:1-2
- Leadership-Acts 15:22-
- Circumstances-I Cor. 7
- Mistakes-Galatians 3:11-12
- Personal History-Acts 16:13
- Relations-Acts 15:36-40

In addition to these single events in the New Testament, we see God leading the Old Testament Fathers in a myriad of daily providences and specific interventions.

We should expect no less from God today than the early church experienced as it was being birthed.

Expect God to reveal Himself to you!!!

They that know their God...

(Continued from page 1)

The Context

This scripture comes from the book of Daniel. The account begins with many of the royal and educated children of Israel being deported to work in the service of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.

The story focuses on the lives of four young men. From the very beginning, they know God's will and pursue it at the risk of their own lives.

The battle for them is to resist the Babylonish culture. There are fine foods to eat, security to be gained by nosing up to the King, and positions to be had by simply hiding their prayer lives.

As a result of their allegiance to Yahweh, they are thrown into fires and cast to the lions.

Most Christians are familiar with the story. The only things that burned when they were thrown into the fire were the guys who threw them in and the ropes that bound them. The scripture says that the clothes they wore didn't even smell like smoke.

As for Daniel in the lion's den, he slept with the lions and the lions had Daniel's foe for breakfast.

As the story continues in the book of Daniel, these boys are not only spared, but they are given privileged status in relationship to serving the nation.

At one point the nation itself falls and Daniel continues on in the new rulers court.

It all goes back to specifically knowing God and walking with

Him. We never hear of the other kids from Israel again. They enjoyed the food of the king's table, but that is all we know.

As Daniel gets older, he sees into the future. It is a time when God's people are back in Israel. Again, a foreign ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, comes to possess their land.

Having lived his life under three different foreign kings and having seen the result of both walking with God and walking in compromise, he prophesies of that coming day..."Those who falter from God's covenant and trust in the new king will be led away. Those who know God in that day will once again walk through fires and not be burned and sleep with lions."

How about us

The time in which we live is so similar. We are the people of God in a country with a different king. The forbidden pleasures of the world's table, allegiance to current values and the pressure to face life in our own strength rather than prayer surround us like fog in the spring.

The only way to avoid the pitfalls is to set our hearts on Jesus, not looking back. Like Paul, we must disinterest ourselves from anything but Knowing Christ.

There is a tendency in American Christianity to see our religion as a way to bring blessing on our own lives. Any "religious" act or activity that diminishes our own enjoyment is seen as legalism or dead religion.

The reality is that God's will generally costs us something of this world. If it isn't money, it's popularity or position.

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

The Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul had originally worked to have Christians killed. He was educated, of prestigious heritage, had influence with the leaders of the day and had the privilege of Roman citizenship.

One day he met Jesus. From that day forward, he pressed ahead to meet with God daily in the battle for men's souls.

The Bible tells us that Paul was beaten on five occasions with 39 lashes. Three times, he was beaten with rods and once he was stoned and left for dead. He

was in three different shipwrecks, spending one whole night and day in the ocean. He logged thousands of miles, was robbed, chased by the Jews and the heathen. False brethren tried to get him. He labored in weariness and pain. He often stayed up all night, went hungry and thirsty in addition to fastings. He suffered both cold and exposure.

But in Phillipians we hear his own comparison of the two ways of life, "I count everything but dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. ☐"

One high school student I knew was continually skipped for popular parties, dances, etc. She was known for being a straight laced Christian.

In the end, she was selected as the most respected senior by both students and teachers. She went on to become influential in the lives of many of her classmates who had sold out to the world's system.

The culture continually promotes values that are contrary to God. Leisure,

freedom, personal gratification and wealth are constantly bombarding the Christian. Magazines, billboards, commercials, neighbors, junk mail and flyers on the door are just a few of the "preachers of this world."

The average housewife thinks she is supposed to receive roses every day, dress like a model, drive a Cadillac, have two children that never drudge, own a country home and eat out every meal.

It is very easy for a woman to get caught in just a little desire for one of this life's pleasures. Before long, she is in bondage to dissatisfaction and not experiencing the abundant life of Knowing Him.

You get so focused on getting that thing, that you lose focus of Him. Before long, you are owned by that desire.

The only remedy is to set your affection on knowing Him. As you are captured in following Him, all of life's needs are met and you find pleasure beyond what this worldly kingdom could offer.

How do we do it?

Life in Christ is very simple.

After He comes to us, we simply determine to follow Him and Him alone.

Our daily desire is to know Him, His will, His purpose and His ways.

We are committed to prayer and study of His Word to be transformed from our old culture to His.

Through daily acknowledgment of His will and desire we are drawn to follow Him. Along the way it costs some of the old values.

In time, we begin to see the result of His ways in our lives. Then, we look ahead to a new generation and can say with confidence, "Those who find God and walk with Him will do miraculous things." ☐