

Fall Banquet.....Oct 4, 2014

Good evening. So glad you all came. Hope you are enjoying yourselves. I hope everything we do here tonight will lift up and magnify the Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't want to steal any thunder from our singing group, but I think I'd like to hear you sing. Join me please... "Isn't He Wonderful".

Brothers and sisters, tonight this ministry is not about me or us—it is first and foremost about our Lord Jesus Christ.

He, along with the Holy Spirit, give the direction and power to all that we do. It is not too much to say that without Him this ministry would be nothing.

As we look back over the past year we see God's hand arranging the divine appointments with drivers and employees who needed Him. We see Him then giving the wisdom and power to say and do the things that needed done and said.

We estimate that at least 3,000 persons are directly touched by this ministry every year. This includes persons who need food, bus tickets, gas or personal supplies.

It includes people who need transportation or help with directions or instructions. There are people who are lonely, tempted, tired, frightened or frustrated.

We, with God's help, can help them with prayer, counsel, support, listening or supplying those physical / material needs.

Those are all exciting areas of service, but what really gets us fired up is when we can present the gospel and see someone taking the step of accepting Christ as savior.

David Gibbs tells how he was traveling late at night with a dear black soul winner. They

pulled into a gas mart at 2am. the preacher said, "David, maybe the soul we are going to talk to is in the gas mart." David was eager to see him work. The evangelist walked up to the lady at the counter and said, "Young lady, you don't know it, but you and I may have an appointment tonight. If you were to die tonight do you know where you'd be tomorrow?"

She reached under the counter. David thought, "Oh, no, she's going for a gun!" She pulled out a bible and laid it on the counter. She said, "I'm saved; I know where I'd be if I died tonight. I've been waiting for years for someone to ask me that question! Thanks." David thought, "Oh, shucks! She's saved!" Before they left that dear black brother had led 5 precious souls to the savior.

Often I meet drivers or travelers who are believers. We fellowship and pray together. These are times of encouragement for many of them. Approx. 8-10 times a year God gives us the incredible privilege of leading someone to salvation.

Brothers and sisters, just one of those souls coming to salvation makes it all worthwhile. My bible tells me that one soul is worth more than the whole world.

It is an incredible privilege to be allowed by God to minister in this way.

you all are incredibly important to the ministry as you stand behind us with your prayers and financial giving.

Allow me to share several stories to illustrate how God is touching lives in Carlisle.

Recently I was listening to a CD in my car. I became aware that a driver was standing by the window. I took him into the trailer, and he told me he was very disturbed about a recent job change. He had changed jobs and now was not home as much as before.

He was afraid his wife would get discouraged or even be unfaithful because of his absence.

He was willing to take a job with less pay and more home time if that was God's will.

He said his wife wasn't a believer.

I love what Arron Chambers writes in his great book *Eats With Sinners*. He says, "I hope many of my friends are lost but not for long." I like that.

We talked about him praying together with his wife for God to give them a clear feeling of peace when they had arrived at God's will. We discussed that if they were feeling good about a decision then feeling bad they had probably not found God's will. I suggested that this might be a great opportunity to evangelize his wife.

After about 20 minutes we prayed, hugged, and he started to leave. As he was leaving he said, "I'm so glad you were here. I feel so much better now. You will never know what this has meant to me."

Frank left a note in the donation box at the trailer. "My life is a mess. My marriage is a shambles. God help me. -Frank"

A Frank from S. Carolina had signed the guest book and left a phone number.

Thinking it might be the Frank who wrote the note I called.

I told him I was the chaplain. Did he leave the note? And how was he? He said, "Yes, I picked up a bible in your chapel. I started reading it and feel much better now." We prayed, and I went back to work. A couple of hours later a man came in and said, "Hi, I'm Frank." It went right over my head. I had just talked to Frank in S. Carolina.

He said, "When you called I was sitting in my truck next door at Love's. During the 20 minute conversation that followed I was able to lead Frank to Christ.

Frank was ready like low-hanging fruit. He was just waiting for someone to introduce him to Christ.

Pardon me, but I'm going to preach.

Brothers and sisters, people like Frank are waiting all around us. Each of us should know a simple presentation of the gospel. We should ask God the Holy Spirit to give us divine appointment with the lost. Then we should take those appointments and share the gospel with them.

You may think, "You're the chaplain. I don't have any opportunities to witness."

I read recently of a dear lady who was convicted to witness. She thought she had no opportunities to witness then. She realized that every morning the milkman came to her door. She got up early and met the milkman with a question about his spiritual condition. He said, "I've been waiting for someone to ask me about that." She led him to the Lord. During that year the lady who never had anyone to witness to led 8 people to salvation!

So let me challenge you to ask God to lead you to folks who need salvation.

John came into the office, sat down and announced, "I've been driving for 3 years. I've seen lots of bad things. I think it's time for me to get right with God." Well, 15 minutes later John was a believer.

A wonderful divine appointment happened recently. I was talking with a homeless man at the Flying J truck stop when my phone rang. It was the fuel driver at Love's. He is a believer and a good friend. He told me a traveler had car trouble and could I take him to the auto parts store?

When I got there the traveler said, "Lehigh. Do you know Robert Lehigh?" I told him he is my cousin. He told me he was a Dunkard Brethren minister.

His name was Jason Reed. Frank Reed was for many years a teacher at Brethren Bible

Institute where I also teach. Jason was Frank's brother! Can you believe it? God arranged for Jason to break down at the Love's where the fuel driver just happened to be delivering fuel, and I was at Flying J where I could come to help. What a divine appointment! The fact that he was Frank's brother and Robert's friend was a bonus! What an incredible God we serve!

Death is fact of life at the truck stops. Approx. 2 years ago 4 men robbed the Hess station near the Flying J truck stop. During the commission of the crime a 55-year-old grandmother who was a counter clerk was killed.

The 4 men were arrested 2 days later, but they remained in jail till several weeks ago.

The morning after the murder I was able to pray with a group of the employees.

A year after the shooting the manager asked me to go take part in a balloon release commemorating the event. Over the two years I had numerous occasions to speak with the employees.

Several weeks ago the trial was conducted. The day the jury declared 2 of the men guilty of 2nd degree manslaughter I stopped in to speak with them.

I spent approx. 20 minutes with the manager. She had spent the entire week with the family at the trial. She was drained and open to prayer and listening. We didn't talk about any spiritual issues, but I guarantee that if she has any spiritual issues calling for a pastor it will be my phone that will ring. It is an incredible privilege to be allowed into people's lives for ministry like that.

Recently I went to the Flying J. After visiting the repair shop I walked to the front store. There was a man holding two soda cups. I commented on him being a "two-fisted drinker."

He told me he and his wife (who joined us) were traveling home to Connecticut. They had been visiting their son who is a CoB pastor close to Altoona. They had engine and tire

trouble. They were all ready to hit the road.

They began to tell me that their son had been a teacher at the Kulp school in Nigeria where the rebels are attacking the CoB people. The school has been closed, and many of his friends have been displaced.

While we talked he got a phone call. As I talked with his wife a driver walked up. We talked about the driver's Thermos bottle. It was very beat up. It went through Desert Storm and through 6 countries.

The man came back. I told the driver I would like to pray for the couple, would he like to join us? He said sure, and I prayed for the three of them.

Amazing how God keeps arranging those divine appointments.

Ministry happens 24/7. Recently my good friend Pastor Ed Weaver asked me to fill the pulpit while he was on vacation. Before SS I went to the restroom. I realized my phone was vibrating. It was a message from one of the volunteers doing the worship service at the trailer chapel. I called back and talked with a lady who had left her truck driver friend because of an altercation in the truck. She was stranded in Carlisle and needed to go back home to Miami. I told her I wasn't going to be in Carlisle till Tuesday. I told her she could hang out in the movie theater at the truck stop, and she could call me at 7:30 Tues. morning. Tuesday morning she called and came to the trailer. She had no ID, so she could not go to the shelter. She said she wasn't hungry. I drove her to Harrisburg and purchased a bus ticket for 5:45 that afternoon. I was getting in my car to leave when she called me to tell me that they closed the bus terminal at 10pm.

I went back in and talked to the clerk. She was very helpful. It seems like many of those clerks think it is their mission in life to be nasty to customers! Well, thank God she was nice and helpful. Maybe it had something to do with the compliment I gave her the first time around.

Anyway, she said, "I can put her on the 5:45 tonight, but she may be stranded in Baltimore

or Atlanta." She told us both terminals were open 24/7. the girl agreed to take that option. She called me at approx. 7pm Thursday to let me know she made it. She was on the bus or in terminals for over 48 hours.

Ministry happens when people meet. People are our worst problem and our best blessing. I used to tell my boss at the rescue mission, "This job would be so easy if you could do it without people." Seriously, no one should be in ministry if they don't love people. The joy of leading a soul to salvation is unmatched by any other earthly joy.

I often stuff several NTs, gospel of Johns and 4 Spiritual Laws tracts into my pockets and walk the truck plazas and parking lots. Recently I walked up to a young lady sitting in her truck. I offered her a gospel of John. She was so excited and thanked me enthusiastically. A little further down the lot a driver was standing by his cab. I offered him a NT. He said, "Oh, I have a half dozen of them. Thanks." I asked if he wanted me to pray. He said sure. We prayed. When the prayer was finished he hugged me and said, "Thank you, Jesus. I needed that."

I saw one of the tire mechanics putting a pack of cupcakes back on the shelf. I commented that he can't eat them like that. He said, "The line at the register is too long. I can't wait for them." 10 min. later the line was gone. I bought the cupcakes and took them down to the shop for him. Several days later I stopped by and gave him a gospel. We had a conversation which I hope will lead to the gospel message later. All because of cupcakes!

Since we last met we have made several capital improvements to our trailer.

- We installed new carpets in the office and chapel. It was a major miracle to move all the stuff out for that!
- We installed steel steps. They were fabricated for us by Nester Industries at Churchtown. If you need wrought iron steps or railing they do great work. Call us for their phone number. The steps are an open mesh design, so the snow falls right through.

- We recently bought an almost new copier. Our old one was a very big pain. It only worked when it felt like it. Often it didn't do many of the things we needed it to do. God provided an almost new one with a new warranty for approx. half the normal price.
- We bought some lumber and constructed a large bookshelf in the end of our chapel. This got the many boxes off the floor. It is much more efficient and better-looking.
- We had the exterior of the entire trailer powerwashed. It looks much cleaner now!
- We have installed large letters on three sides of the trailer announcing the chapel is open 24/7, and services are Sunday at 8am.

These projects and this ministry are made possible because of your and God's faithfulness. Thank you very much.

God has supplied our needs in a miraculous way. We are trusting Him to continue to supply the financial and spiritual needs of the ministry as we go into another year. Please continue to pray for a literature rack at the Petro. Several years ago a corporate decision was made to allow only Petro literature and advertising there. We had a small book, bible and literature rack that was very popular with the drivers. Since then the CB shop owner has asked us to supply him with bible / literature to place on his counter. It's not as much as the previous rack was distributing, but it is something.

Pray with us about the future leadership of the ministry. I'm not getting any younger.

We are exploring the possibility of a part-time chaplain to fill in some of the hours that I'm not at the truck stop. I'm not eager to retire. I'm having so much fun now. But we all need to be open to God's leading as we transition into new leadership when that time comes.

I come from a family tradition of preachers. Both my Pap and my father probably served beyond the point when they should have retired. I don't want to damage the ministry by serving beyond the point of usefulness.

Please pray with us about these issues, and please keep praying and giving to support this important ministry. Remember "It's not about us. It's about Him."

Thank you so much for your support, your faithfulness and your love.

May our great God and savior richly bless you and yours.