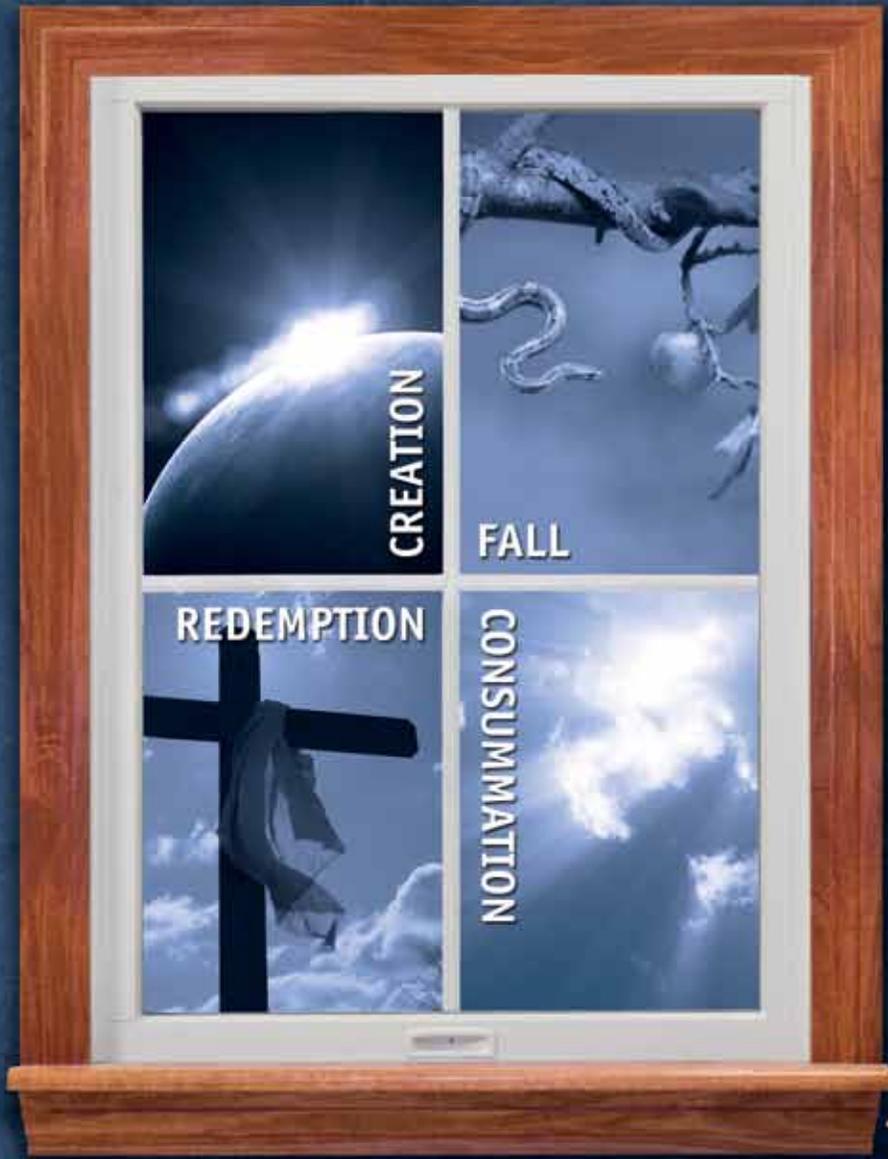


Chapters

A Journal of God's Reign at Calvary Baptist Church



Where Stories Intersect



WHERE STORIES INTERSECT...

by Pastor Jeff Halsted

I enjoy a good book. I relish a provocative plot that causes me to think deeply about myself while feeling deeply about the characters within the story. I delight in an author who allows us to see the inner struggles and continued development with those characters in the story. I marvel at how the author moves us from one chapter to the next with such skill that we delight in understanding more and more what the context is and for the actions taking place as we also wonder what the end result will be. Not one chapter is the whole of the story. A good story is always made up of many chapters, many contours, textures, and characters that we would not be introduced to if not invited to read.

These contours, textures and characters of God's Story lived out in the life story of Calvary Baptist Church is precisely what we hope will cause you to delight as you read these "Chapters." We are certainly in a new chapter of CBC's story. This chapter is connected to all of the chapters that precede it while it looks forward to what the next chapters have in store. Our collective story is being crafted under the guiding hand of our God Whose grand and true Story we are to fully embrace with joyful obedience. His Story has become our story and our chapters, a part of His continuing life story here on earth.

This chapter in the life of Calvary is made up of a multitude of life stories and many chapters within those stories.

By God's grace, your life story has connected with mine in this place at this time for a purpose. Each life story has connected with so many other life stories at Calvary and each is filled with chapters that shape our character and life. Each of these stories that have been connected with God's Story of creation-fall-redemption-consummation has been uniquely designed by God to fulfill a special purpose in His overall plan for this chapter in Calvary's life.

"We desire to see what the next chapter holds as we remain faithful to Him."

I reflect on the importance of chapters in the making of a story as I remember a conversation with my son a few months ago. After a Sunday morning worship gathering here at Calvary, my son made a quiet comment not really directed toward me or anyone else for that matter. It was more of a settled proclamation for himself. He said, "I think I like it here. I think we're going to be OK." He then said, "I'm glad we're here." Robin and I held hands and cried one of those silent cries that parents sometimes share. We understood the weight and significance of this statement from our son. We had prayed that as God had graciously hitched Jeffrey's story with His Own redemptive Story,

He would also be pleased to hitch Jeffrey's life story with the ongoing story of Calvary Baptist Church. This was the proclamation that our son was making. He was now willing to share his story with the other stories that make up CBC. He desired to be a part of this new chapter in the life of Calvary. He wanted to know how God would use him and all of his gifts and abilities as a part of this new chapter. He wondered how his personal story would mesh with the stories of his brothers and sisters. At the core, he was willing to be whoever God wanted him to be in His character formation as He continued to write the next chapter of our communal story.

It is our desire that the whole Body would be able to make that same settled proclamation as my son. Together, we are glad that God called us to this place where our stories could connect within the larger context of God's Story. Together, we are thankful for a new chapter that God is writing. Together, we are committed to play our God-given roles within this chapter of our shared life story. We are committed to God and to one another. We desire to see what the next chapter holds as we remain faithful to Him. For now, may these "Chapters" give a reflection of this shared commitment and desire to represent God's reign as community, servant, and messenger. This is our story, this is our song, praising our Savior all the day long!

KIDS SUMMER EXCITEMENT!

by Shannon Popkin

SUMMER PREVIEW OF
'THE JUNGLE BOOK'
GOD'S STORY IS OUR
GUIDE THROUGH THE
JUNGLE OF LIFE!



Please don't tell my kids' teachers, but I am terribly delinquent over summer break about reviewing material from the school year with my kids. That's why my eyes lit up when I learned that this summer, our children will spend Sunday mornings reviewing what they have learned about God's story! But not with workbooks and fill-in-the-blanks... Calvary Baptist kids are going on an "Amazon Expedition!"

When Pastor Blocher learned of this brand new VBS curriculum, released by Answers in Genesis, he became excited about how clearly it mirrors what our children, and the larger Body at Calvary, have been learning about God. On their Amazon Expedition, our kids will be tracking the seven C's of History:
Creation
Corruption - *The Fall of All*
Catastrophy - *Water, Water, Everywhere*
Confusion - *The Babel Rabble*
Christ, Cross, Consummation - *Sad Turns to Glad*

Mark Heagle, our Children's Ministries Coordinator said, "I think this curriculum will enhance conversations that take place among families because what the kids are learning connects to what the parents are learning—and that's exciting!"

Lots of Calvary folks are grabbing binoculars and mosquito nets to prepare a jungle trek that our kids won't soon forget. "We're coordinating teams of volunteers to work on decorations,

crafts, games, worship, and special refreshments," said Miriam Taylor, Director of K-2nd Grade.

Miriam has found the curriculum's guide for teachers especially engaging. She said, "It provides teacher skits, lots of illustrations, and for the younger kids, weekly hands-on learning centers." Each week, the children will find themselves stranded with a 'guide', who will lead them not only in exploring the rainforest, but God's Story as well!

Every Amazon hiker needs a map of the jungle, and each child needs God's 'story map' to navigate life! Today's youth face a 'jungle' of beliefs, and need the history book of the universe (the Bible!) to light up the path of truth. Answers in Genesis has a passion to partner with our church, offering our children guidance through solid material written by trustworthy teachers. While Answers in Genesis is primarily best known for their Creation Science ministry, this curriculum is more broadly focused, with such discussions as a 'young earth' and 'intelligent design' being lightly interwoven, but not the main emphasis.

Over the past school year, our children have spent Sunday mornings with a 'magnifying glass' in hand, exploring the details of God's character with our Children Desiring God curriculum. This summer, they'll swap for some 'binoculars', and enhance their

understanding with a big picture overview of who God is and His view of history. "The Amazon Expedition is going to fit really well with what we've been learning this year," said 4's and 5's Director, Norma Heagle. "We've been working chronologically through the OT, starting with Creation last September. Each week we ask, 'What does this story teach us about God?' and this summer curriculum has a similar emphasis."

Since the Amazon Expedition is a five day VBS program, our directors are working diligently to adapt it. But each lesson is packed with enough meaningful content (no fluff in the jungle!) that our kids will benefit from two full hikes through the material, along with a week of introduction and wrap-up. This program, which will run June 15 through August 31, will offer our children a 'double recap' of God's Story. The kids will also be making a (spoiler warning!) color-coded lanyard to help them retell the Story, using the seven C's!

I'm so excited about what my children have learned at Calvary this year. And though Sunday mornings this summer will give them a thorough review of God's Story, I'm not off the hook! I anticipate that as they unlace their hiking boots following each Amazon Expedition, my kids just might be the ones to initiate our review!





Putt-putting with Sarah Teesdale, Sarah Tilburt, Katie King, and Elise King



Original "Octoball" Champion T.J. Sheets

BETTER THAN EVER

by Katie King
Class of 2008

AS I LOOK BACK ON THIS PAST SCHOOL YEAR AT CBC, I HAVE MANY FOND MEMORIES. WHERE DO I EVEN BEGIN?

Many changes have taken place here over the last few years and a lot of the changes at Calvary have really made me enjoy my time here better than I ever have before. (I've seen the senior class go from about 10 students, 6 years ago, to about 4 or 5 students this year.) Not having a huge number of students in senior high has not been all bad though. It's actually helped make this year a ton of fun.

It has allowed me to get to know students in the other grades a lot better and has really helped make my senior year amazing! School has never been my favorite thing, but coming to church every Sunday and Wednesday this past year always seemed to make things better and make school a little easier to get through. I always knew (and still do know) that I would have people around me who genuinely care about me. And whenever I saw Pastor Doug in the hall,

he always said hi and acted like he was happy to see me. I love Calvary: I feel safe here, I love the people, I love learning about God and His word and I love the pastors and how they take time to get to know the students in Senior High.

During the past year many events have taken place, and yes, some were better than others, but they were all fun in their own way. We putt-putted through September with our first CBC Putt-Putt Pro-Am. It was so much fun! We got in groups of four. Two Senior Highers were each paired with a Middle Schooler and they putted their way to victory. I am probably the worst putter in the world, but it was fun to spend time with my friends and laugh at my bad putt-putt skills.

Then, for the second year in a row, a group of juniors and seniors retreated

to Kalkaska, Michigan, for a weekend. I was not able to go this year, but I went the year before and it was a great time of growing in my walk with God and growing closer to my friends and those I didn't know as well. It was an awesome weekend! In December, the Senior Highers sacrificed their sleep for a night, which is a precious thing to give up, and we joined other local church groups at Craig's Cruisers for an all-nighter. The Senior Highers have a guy's all-nighter and then a girl's all-nighter, but it was fun to all be together and just hang out and get to know each other better.

"I need to hide God's word in my heart to keep from sinning and, when I do, God's Word will start to develop how I live my life."

And, of course, what would the school year at CBC be if we didn't have Share 'n Cares? Those have definitely been something I enjoyed and I always looked forward to them. We went to a different house every month, ate good food, and just spent time together as a group. It was a time to cherish. I'm not a huge fan of winter; in fact, I wish it were summer all year long. (Maybe I need to move to Florida.) But High School snow camp this past February was amazing! Snow camp is always a great time to get away for the weekend during the school year, and everyone needs a break from school once in a while!

We left for camp on a Friday night and came back Sunday morning. Sessions were always my favorite part of camp because I knew that God was always going to teach me something. At snow camp, our theme for the weekend was H.A.B.I.T.S: - Honoring God with Giving, Accountability with Christian Friends, Bible Memorization, Involvement in Church, Time with God, and Servant's Heart. One thing that Pastor Doug said sticks out in my mind, even now: a relationship with God takes work. It doesn't just come right away. I need to hide God's word in my heart to keep

from sinning and, when I do, God's Word will start to develop how I live my life.

While at camp, I had the chance to play in the snow, have snowball fights, eat great food, learn a lot from Pastor Doug's teachings and make some new friends. I have never enjoyed snow camp as much as I did this year, and I will never forget how amazing it was! Honestly, I cannot pick one thing I enjoyed most this year. It really was the people and the things I learned that made this school year so awesome. I look forward to this coming summer as some of us will go to TLC and Cedar Point, both of which made my summer better than ever last year.

On a more serious note, this year, from September 2007 through May 2008, Pastor Doug has been teaching about the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). It's been a long series of lessons, but I have really enjoyed it. He split up the text into small sections every week. It was amazing to see how much he could get out of just a couple of verses! We learned a lot of cool Greek words during our study and one I remember is teleios, which is the Greek word for perfect.

Well, I will never be able to tell you in such a short article how much Senior High and student ministries here at Calvary have meant to me. I have made so many wonderful friends and have learned so much more about who God is and what His word says. Attending CBC has been one of the biggest blessings in my life and I continue to thank God for all He's done and will continue to do in my life and the lives of others at our church.

Kelsey VanderMolen, Michaela Beerens, Lynnea Fasset, Alicia Boward



Volunteer Receptionist

We are looking for friendly and energetic people to help answer phones along with light office work (sending postcards and helping with mailings).

Building and Grounds Volunteers

Do you have a passion to help keep our building and grounds looking clean and well-kept? Jobs varying from washing windows to weeding flower beds. Contact the church office for more information.

Childcare

There are times when a particular ministry may need some short-term help with childcare during a meeting or rehearsal. If you are interested in being part of a team of volunteers whom we can call, please contact Sarah Blocher in the church office.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Assistant Teacher:

You'll help the lead teacher with the lesson as well as encouraging, edifying and getting to know the children in the class while showing them the love of Christ.

Helper:

A wonderful time to get to know the children in our church and show them the love of Christ through your presence.

Nursery Worker:

A great opportunity to love on the little children in our church just by being present and caring for their basic needs so their parents can enjoy adult fellowship.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities please contact Deb Grandmason at the church.

HELP WANTED

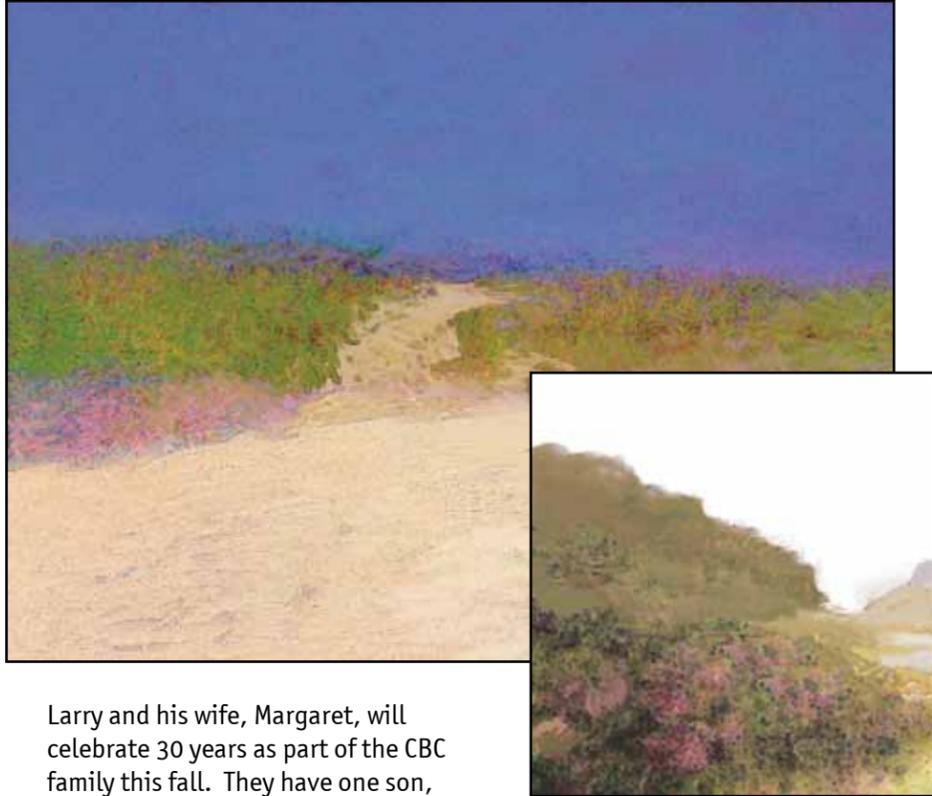
ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: AN INTERVIEW WITH LARRY STRAWN

by Sara Sisco

“When I was a kid, I loved the outdoors. Now that love is showing up, blended with my career, which is computers.” This issue’s featured artist, Larry Strawn, is amazed at how God blends our experiences and gifts in unusual ways. He paints digital images of landscapes using a program which has tools that mimic natural media—from paints to pencil to charcoal.

“In the 1990s, I worked for a software company that was involved with graphics, particularly for the fashion industry,” Larry says. “As a quality assurance person, I had to make sure that the programs worked correctly before we released them. In testing the software, I found I had a knack for creating digital effects.”

Although his digital images may look like paint on canvas, all of Larry’s work is done with a stylus and an electronic tablet. “In creating an image, I use layers of color to create different effects, similar to the technique that a traditional artist uses — but there are advantages to using the computer. I get the benefit of being able to rearrange the layers and I don’t have to worry about scraping off the paint I don’t want to keep,” says the artist. Larry compares digital art to writing with a word processor. “I can undo and re-do, combine and re-combine, choose not save the changes I made or create a new painting by combining two existing paintings. I can create an infinite variety of effects. . . it gives me the freedom to explore.”



Larry and his wife, Margaret, will celebrate 30 years as part of the CBC family this fall. They have one son, Matthew, who is 25. Loving Individuals Through Fearful Times (LIFT) is this artist’s primary ministry at CBC. He serves with Jenny Comegys as one of LIFT’s co-directors, and is on a team that is implementing these care-giving principles in the SHOP/Orchard ABF.

Another way in which God has blended Larry’s computer skills with his passions is theology. Larry has a BA from Cedarville University and an MA from Western Kentucky University in Philosophy and Religion. This spring the Strawns were commissioned to serve a two-year missionary term with Horizon International Schools (HIS). His primary job there is in Curriculum Development, shepherding courses through production — from the author to HIS website. As such, he has “many irons in the fire,” he says, striving to keep Horizon’s courses moving through the development process in a timely fashion.

After using the computer to research and edit or troubleshoot technical issues, Larry enjoys using the computer for a very different kind of work. “It’s very relaxing. After working with the computer doing analytical stuff, it’s nice to draw using the other side of the brain. I enjoy expressing the wonder of God’s creation in digital form.”

With stylus in hand, Larry creates landscapes that serve as a unique form of worship. “Part of worship is stewardship. I feel I’ve been given a gift that I have a responsibility to use. But mostly, in expressing what I’ve seen and experienced, I am trying to faithfully interpret God’s creation. When we see a particularly beautiful part of God’s creation depicted in art, whether a stunning sunset or mist over a lake, it often draws us into worship.” Never was there a better way to use a computer.

CSI: MIDDLE SCHOOL

by Scott Teesdale

Who wrote the book of Ruth? What is Ecclesiastes about? Where do the events in Daniel take place? When was Mark written? Why is the book of Leviticus important? How does the message of Titus apply today?

Answering questions like these was the focus of Contextual Scripture Investigation (C.S.I.), the Wednesday evening Middle School curriculum for the year. Pastor Doug, Jared Jones, Andrew McClain, and I developed and wrote the lessons. We introduced each book of the Bible to the students, asking and answering the interrogative questions — who, what, where, when, why, and how. Our goal was to give the Middle School students an understanding of all of scripture, including how it fits into God’s story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation.

“Praise God for young people who are taking the time to read his word!”

A typical Wednesday meeting saw us gathering in Bengert Hall (or outside if the weather permitted) for a game. Army – Navy was a favorite, and the leaders really showed their age when they tried to be a “bomb” or a “missile.” After the game we sang 3 or 4 songs, led by Pastor Doug and Andrew on guitar. This time of worship made a nice transition to teaching, since the music gave us time to settle down and focus on God.

The teaching time was spent covering one to four books of the Bible, giving a background of style, language, placement, and what the title means. We then covered the 5 w’s, filling in those questions with brief answers, usually one or two sentences. We also picked a

key verse and placed some verses into the Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation storyline. This is important because we want our teens to see the whole Bible as the whole story, and to appreciate each part as an important piece of that narrative. We also challenged the students to become “truth sleuths,” giving them a chance to dig deeper into God’s word. Many of them worked hard to find the answers to the digging deeper challenge, and they were rewarded with donuts or candy the following week.

Maybe some of you saw four detectives in long coats and fedoras making their way to and from Bengert Hall. We learned these four are Ko, Bo, Jo, and Tim, the original Truth Sleuths. They made numerous appearances during the year, always looking for clues as to what the Bible is about. By year’s end, Tim



Ko, Bo, Jo, and Tim

seemed to have a good grasp of biblical truth, while sadly, Ko, Bo, and Jo seemed as clueless as ever. Pastor Doug, Jared, Andrew, and I never really had a chance to meet the four, but we’re sure they’ll be back in the future.

Racing through 66 books in the Bible in one school year is a daunting task. We’re planning to make this into a 2-year program: Old Testament one year and New Testament the next. Each middle school student will go through the C.S.I. program before moving on to High School. This will give us more time to spend on each book, and to build a strong foundation of biblical knowledge. Please pray for us as we gather all our notes and ideas for developing and honing this curriculum for future use.

As many of you know, Pastor Doug meets with Senior High students during the ABF hour on Sundays. We are so thankful he is using Wednesday nights to be with the Middle School students. This gives him a great opportunity to build relationships with them and for them to get to know him better. We appreciate Amber Lucas and Randy Wright, our other Wednesday night leaders. Amber shows what it means to be a godly woman, and the girls love to be with her. Randy Wright is another leader who is great fun and reaches out to teens with humor and compassion.

In January, Pastor Doug challenged Middle School students to read through the Bible in one year or less. They chose accountability partners to encourage them along the way. Several students

completed reading the entire Bible in less than 90 days! Exciting! We encourage those on the one-year plan, keep reading and learning! Praise God for young people who are taking the time to read His word!

It was our prayer that the middle school year would be a successful one, and that the teens would learn and grow in their faith. We appreciate your prayers and welcome you to join us next fall to see what we’re doing, and maybe even to become a part of the team. Some fun summer events are coming up, including a trip to Michigan’s Adventure and Dive Ins. Please continue to pray for our Middle School students and leaders, that God will be glorified in all we do.

THE CANDY MAN

by Margaret Strawn

Do you have a sweet tooth for candy? There are several ways to obtain candy—at a store, by trick or treating, or raiding a secretary's candy dish. However, if you want to have candy wrapped with eternal values, you go to Grandpa Ben Fogle.

Grandpa Ben can be found sitting outside of the 2's and 3's room in the children's wing on Sunday mornings and evenings, sack of candy in hand, passing out treats to eager children. You can also find him Tuesday mornings caring for the children of the Sisters in Spirit group. In addition, he's also there on Wednesday evenings.

His ministry to children is to show Christ's love. As children come to class, they can run and get a hug from Grandpa Ben. Many enjoy his warm embrace. One little girl got so excited, she flew into his arms, knocking his head against the wall!

He also assists the teachers in the 2's and 3's class. Ben is very careful to not usurp their authority, but quietly helps to direct the children to activities, calms those who are afraid and has a band-aid handy for any minor injury. While sitting on his lap, a child may be asked, "Who made these toys? A man did. Who made the wood the toy is made from? That's right, God did!" By pointing children's attention to God, Grandpa Ben helps them focus on eternal things.

Ben Fogle was born in Isenberg, Germany. His father was a U.S. soldier; his mother, German born. He was two-and-a-half years old when his family settled in South Bend, Indiana. A "troublemaker" growing up, he liked to stir up fights among his siblings. At the age of twelve, Ben went to a camp meeting where his uncle preached and Ben accepted Christ. The next day his mother was stunned. "Who is this boy?" The change in him was so dramatic she hardly recognized him.

Ben got a glimpse of his future ministry at age 19 when children seemed to be drawn to him. First he was drawn into the military, which eventually became a career as chief master sergeant. On a blind date set up by his brother, he met Arbie Glover. They married and traveled in the military, then settled in Traverse City, and later in Owosso, Michigan.

In Owosso, Ben was very active in church. He drove groups of children in his van to Lake Ann Baptist Youth Camp. On the way home, they often stopped for a picnic lunch of Kool-Aid and sandwiches. Besides working with children, Ben helped with the upkeep of the church building.

It was in Owosso that Ben started his candy ministry. He and Arbie had been picking up an elderly woman, Mrs. Willy, on Sundays, giving her a ride to church. She sat in the last row. At the end of the service she handed out candy to children. One day she gave Ben two pieces of candy to thank him for driving her. Four eagle-eyed children ran up to him wanting his treats. "How do you divide two hard candies between four?" he wondered. Ben was going to have to get some candy of his own to hand out!

Mrs. Willy wasn't the only senior who influenced Ben. In another church, several elderly women faithfully came each Sunday and painfully climbed the twelve concrete steps that led into the

"Grandpa Ben" handing out candy



Drawing of "Grandpa Ben" by Cameron Gavette church. Their example of determination gave Ben a goal for his later years. He wanted to show to those younger than himself a love for the Lord and a commitment to press on.

His ministry with children expanded at Owosso. He gave ADC children rides to church. Starting with just two children, the number grew to 42! Some people asked why he was bringing "those children." He replied, "Can you tell me a better place for them to be?"

Ben retired in 1987 from Corunna Intermediate School District where he delivered audio visual aids to teachers. Three years later, wanting to be near two of their children, Ben and Arbie moved to Grand Rapids. They jumped right into volunteering at Calvary Baptist Church, working in the tape ministry. And, yes, they handed out candy through the receptionist's window to eagerly waiting children.

It wasn't long before Grandpa Ben was seen sitting at a little table in the children's wing — smiling, hugging and passing out his treats. His impact doesn't stop there. He prays that each child will be safe, no accidents and, most of all, that each will see Jesus in him.

CBC WOMEN PUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO WORK FOR GOD

by Alma Gilleo

What is my spiritual gift? How can I use it for God's glory?

These are two questions women pondered in the fall-to-spring sessions of Sisters in Spirit. A few of the women were not very enthusiastic about the study at first. CBC had offered classes on this subject before. So, they wondered, what can we learn that we don't already know? Frankly, some women admitted that they came mainly for fellowship with other Christian women. Formerly, young mothers and older women had met separately. Now the two groups were combined. Young mothers were especially pleased that they would be able to discuss Bible truths with women who had been Christians for many years excited about what could they learn from the older women.

Jillian Boukma said she had not had older Christian women in her life to encourage her and give advice. "Sharing with women of all ages helped me grow in my understanding of God's Word," she says. "I appreciated the prayer times when we shared our concerns and prayed for each other's needs." Jillian confides that she "struggled to find time for Bible study. I didn't always complete the lessons, but our group leader, Judie Berry, did not criticize me. She encouraged me."

Heidi Vriesman, mother of three young children, believes her spiritual gift is teaching. "Through the discussions," she says, "I saw more clearly how I can use my gift in practical ways to encourage children to trust God and to put His truth to work in their young lives — sharing, helping, doing good things, and praying. I am trusting God to work in me to make better use of this gift for His glory."



Ladies enjoying time together

Amy Bergwerff appreciated the spiritual support of all the women in the group. "It was encouraging to see how God worked in the lives of women who have walked with God for years." Another benefit of the sessions: "I learned to be accountable for my prayer time and devotions."

Karee Mouw, a member of the planning committee, was delighted to see how women in the group were learning about their spiritual gifts. "The group offered many opportunities to put those gifts to work—hospitality, teaching and leadership skills."

Nancy Boukma, who heads up the women's ministry at CBC, is excited to see how older and younger women encourage one another as they worship, study God's word, and pray together.

In addition to the 70-80 women who met at Sisters in Spirit on Tuesday morning, two other women's groups have been meeting on Wednesday evenings: Evening Connections and Precept Bible study. And once a month craft nights found younger women learning from older women.

Clearly, God is at work in the lives of the women of Calvary Baptist Church.

RECEIVE THE GLORY
Words and Music by Bob Kauflin

Verse One

All that we've accomplished
You have done for us.
And any fruit we harvest
is a gift from Your hand.
We are only jars of clay
that hold a priceless treasure,
And we exist to bring You pleasure,
O God.

Chorus

Not to us, but to Your name alone,
Be all the glory, the glory, forever.
For Your faithfulness
and steadfast love,
Receive the glory.
The glory belongs to You.

Verse Two

Only by Your mercy
can we come to You.
Though we deserve Your judgment,
You have called us by name.
So we glory in the cross of Christ
that made us Yours forever,
That joined our lives
together to sing:

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Bob Kauflin is the Pastor of Worship Ministries at Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, MD. His desire to write songs which draw us closer to our Great God is the heart of his ministry and song-writing. "Receive the Glory" was written for the Milestone Weekend in 2004 when former pastor C.J. Mahaney was retiring from ministry after 50 years and welcoming in their new pastor Joshua Harris who was only 29 years-old at the time. At a time when Pastor Mahaney could have drawn attention to himself and all he had built, he focused on expressing gratefulness for God's grace and encouraging everyone around him. His example inspired me to write these words based off of a verse Pastor Mahaney often referenced, Psalm 115:1, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!"

PRAYER TO WHICH GOD LOVES TO ANSWER, “YES”

by Fredric A. Carlson

“...anyone who believes in me will do what I have been doing. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. Therefore, I will do whatever you ask in my name that assists the Son to exalt the Father. You may ask any such thing in my name, and I will do it.”

John 14:12–14

Cheryl Elmer lay inert on the Intensive Care Unit gurney in 1996, her skin yellowed and drawn. She and her husband, Eric, were on furlough in Grand Rapids from missionary service in Central African Republic. In January, she had become painfully ill and weak from chronic hepatitis B, contracted from unknown sources in Africa. Now, in April, medication that was supposed to raise her blood platelet level destroyed the liver instead. Cheryl's major systems were shutting down. The Butterworth Hospital staff had done everything humanly possible to help her. Doctors were reluctant to plan a liver transplant for a patient whose hepatitis would recur.

Eric, along with hospital staff and friends, frantically tried to arrange a medical evacuation flight to the University of Michigan Medical Center for extensive evaluation. The remote hope was to keep Cheryl alive long enough to receive a liver transplant, if one could be found on such short notice. Tornadoes were approaching Grand Rapids, grounding all helicopters. Eric alerted family, friends and supporters to pray.

Dann Austin, then Pastor of Christian Education, and his wife, Sue, called a group of the Elmer's friends to their family room for an emergency prayer meeting. Before praying, one of the group asked, “What is God doing with Cheryl? What does He want us to pray for? Her healing? A donor liver? Or a peaceful passing?”

So, the group first asked, “God, what will give You most glory and pleasure? Will You get more praise by healing Cheryl, or by gathering her safely home to yourself now?”

Soon everyone agreed that God wanted to heal Cheryl so she could continue her ministry here. The group prayed that God would keep her alive. They prayed that God would provide a plane to transport her, and that He would control the weather. And they also prayed that He would provide a liver.

The phone rang. It was Eric. A U of M Survival Flight jet was in the air from Ann Arbor. It could safely fly around the dangerous storm cells and Cheryl would soon be on her way to Ann Arbor. Friends went back to prayer, thanking God for the flight, and asking more fervently for a donor liver. Shortly after Cheryl arrived in Ann Arbor, and within a day of her predicted death, a liver was found.

Eric and Cheryl are prevented from returning to Africa because needed Yellow Fever inoculations would infect Cheryl instead of protecting her from the disease. Yet the Elmers touch uncounted lives through their ministries at Bibles International, a division of Baptist Mid-Missions, and through Calvary Baptist Church. Wherever they minister—so far in more than 20 countries—Cheryl gives God credit for using His people to help prolong her life.

In some situations, God informs His friends what He is about to do, and instructs them how to pray for it. Elijah did not exercise faith by advising God that He ought to send a three-year drought to punish Ahab's wickedness, or to revive backslidden Israel. Elijah did not inform God that a mountain top fire with Baal's priests would prove His living power while it exposed the



Eric and Cheryl Elmer

lifelessness of Baal and Asherah. Elijah did not repeatedly tell God that it was time to break the drought with torrential rain. No, those interventions were God's ideas. He only asked Elijah to help Him bring them to pass through intercessory prayer and obedient actions.

How do we know that? When Elijah asked God for fire on Mt. Carmel, he said, “Let it be known today that You are God in Israel ... and that I have done all these things at your command.” Earlier God had said to him, “Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.” (1 Kings 18:1 and 36.) Elijah believed God for drought, for fire, and for rain because God had promised them. Elijah's faith fixed on what God had said He was about to do.

God may stimulate us, as He prompted Elijah, to pray for what He wants to do in a given situation. True prayer demonstrates God's power to solve human problems. It asks for actions that make it clear that God Himself solved the problem, and that He stimulated people to pray for His solution.

Think of it: working in partnership with our heroic Savior, the world's Sovereign King, to reveal the magnificent glory of the Father!

The common prayer asks God to do whatever we think will solve a problem, meet a need, or satisfy our desire. That gives rise to the popular idea that believing prayer powerfully persuades God to do what we want Him to do for us. Jesus' view of prayer was much higher. To Him, prayer is not man's means of persuading God, but Jesus' means of exalting the Father through our participation in His work. True prayer starts with God. He plants His idea in the human heart.

Jesus told His disciples that after He returned to heaven, “anyone who believes in me will do what I have been

doing. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. Therefore, I will do whatever you ask in my name that assists the Son to exalt the Father. You may ask any such thing in my name, and I will do it.” (John 14:12–14.) Breathtaking! What a partnership! Jesus offered to involve His friends in exercising His power to exalt the Father! Even though that promise particularly empowered the apostles in their spread of the Gospel, the principle is true for all Christians, if what we ask is in faith, that is, asking for the will of God. (James 1:6 and 1 John 5:14.) Think of it: working in partnership with our heroic Savior, the world's Sovereign King, to reveal the magnificent glory of the Father!

We have two basis for expecting God to answer “Yes” to our prayer: knowing that what we're asking is what God wants to do, and knowing that our desire and request help Jesus exalt the Father.

So, the first part of a prayer that really catches God's attention is an inquiry: “God, what are you doing here? Why are you allowing this to happen? What do you wish to do about this matter? How do you want this to turn out for good, as you understand it, for those who love you? How will the result exalt your reputation?” We submit our thoughts and motives to the Holy Spirit to guide us so that we can participate with Him in His solution. We begin to consider how God's name might best be exalted in the various outcomes that occur to us. Our primary intercessory interest becomes our friend's growth in faith and love for God. We help him gain victory over any sin that might have led to the problem. We look for his development of a truly Christian view of life and others. We consider his preparation for heaven. And we look for his usefulness to God to lead others to faith in Jesus Christ. Not every situation requires prayer for a drought, or for fire from heaven. Not every terminal illness needs prayer for a rare organ donation, or for a survival flight through tornado infested skies. What every need requires is the first prayer, “Hallowed be your Name.. ... May your will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.”



PRAY FOR CAMP CALVARY THIS SUMMER

Junior Camp - June 16-21

High School Camp - June 22-28

Family Camp - June 30-July 5

Middle School Camp - July 7-12

Labor Day - Aug. 29-Sept. 1

Please pray daily for our camp staff and participants this summer. Below is a general list of requests that need your prayer.

Monday:

That staff will be prepared and ready for the week ahead.

Tuesday:

Safety for all involved and for the nurses on duty.

Wednesday:

Counselors to effectively connect and communicate God's Story with campers.

Thursday:

Speakers will be effective communicators and have good repose with campers.

Friday:

Strength for cooks and kitchen help.

Saturday:

Engineers will have good attitudes and work well as a team.

Sunday:

Entire staff will get the rest needed in preparation for the week ahead.

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