

THE
HARVEST
GENERATION

THE HARVEST GENERATION

A Story of Twentieth Century Revival

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Introduction

“How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle!” 1 Samuel 1:25

My brother, Mike D. Neville went home to be with the Lord January 26, 1996. Today, I can feel the pain David felt as he wrote “The Song of the Bow” in First Samuel chapter one. Expressing his grief over the loss of Jonathan his beloved friend David said,

“I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me; Your love to me was wonderful, Surpassing the love of women”
(1 Samuel 1:26 NIV).

David and Jonathan experienced a friendship very few men get to enjoy in life. I had the privilege of that kind of friendship with my brother Mike. There was only the two of us, we grew up together, started in the ministry together, partnered together and were best friends.

There have been few precious moments in my lifetime when God moved deeply within me to such an extent that the course of my destiny was affected. Standing at the head of my brother’s casket as thousands of men and women passed by to show their love and respect was one of those moments. I can’t fully explain it, but

I saw the true value of ministry. I understood what the call of God is really all about. It's not about buildings, numbers, goals, achievements or monuments. My brother did not leave behind much of the world's wealth or possessions. He did leave behind precious souls. More precious than gold. More beautiful than anything man can build. This book is about some of those men and women, I believe their stories here can touch your life just as they did mine as many passed by that January evening.

At some point in life most men will wonder about the legacy they are going to leave behind, "Will it be a fortune? A company? A good name?" This book is now a part of the story of Mike Neville's legacy. The testimonies of lives who were touched by the grace of God operating through his surrendered life and ministry. This book is only the tip of the iceberg, a few of the thousands of testimonies that could fill the pages of many more books. You see, Mike believed in men. He put trust along with investment into the lives of men. Many whom the world would have overlooked, Mike committed his life to seeing their destiny fulfilled. This book is the story of a few of those men.

Just as David lamented the loss of Jonathan, we grieve over the loss of Mike Neville. Yet, like David and his Mighty Men we are carrying on the vision passed to us. My heart's desire is that the ministry this book is about, "Praise Chapel Christian Fellowship" will con-

tinue to reach more men and women just like the ones
in this book, "The Harvest Generation."

Larry Neville

May 1996

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Small

Beginnings

Praise Chapel is a ray of hope for those aching to see more out of their spiritual life. These churches are growing when much of Christianity is stalled or losing ground. In conferences, hundreds of young men and women respond to the call to preach. All of this is happening among people with very little church background.

The first Praise Chapel, started in Maywood, California in 1976. It later moved to Huntington Park, California. Growing from a handful, Praise Chapel is still a vibrant congregation. As exciting as that is, it is only the tip of the iceberg. Like the ripple created by a rock thrown into a lake, out of Huntington Park is going a spreading influence through church planting. At first only a few churches existed, but as they partnered

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together the synergy increased. Today, there have been over 200 churches birthed in the United States and hundreds more established in other countries. On any given Sunday, tens of thousands of people are lifting their hearts and hands in worship through the outreach of Praise Chapel.

The most exciting part of the story is that it's the story of regular people and even some that most churches would reject being used greatly. Mike Neville never saw himself as some super star, just someone that God has used. Mike did not stand out for either beauty or defects. His greatest assets were his optimism, his love for people, and his love of preaching. He could light up a stage with his smile, but he could also fill the altars with the challenge to repent and change. Linked to Mike are a host of others that represent every race and personality imaginable.

Born to Minister

Serious ministry started for Mike when his dad was pastoring in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Mike was sixteen and the older of two sons. Optimistic and a good kid with a gift for music, the story starts in earnest with him sitting on the church platform with his guitar at 16. He had been helping for about a year in the song service. While waiting for the service to begin, God broke in. More than an impression or a feeling, God spoke, "Mike, you are sitting on the same platform,

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playing the same guitar you were playing a year before, and you're not doing anything else."

His mother had been leading songs, and he went up to her and asked if he could take the song service. She never led songs again. He had taken the first step into the ministry.

A Heritage of Ministry

Mike was born on December 30, 1946 to Jack and Clariesa Neville. His dad had met his mom after returning from World War II. Raised in a preacher's home in Tulsa, Oklahoma Mike's dad, Jack Neville, had drifted away from God for a while as a young man. He settled in California after getting out of the service and met and married Clariesa Tryon. Mike was the first born and Larry followed a couple of years later. Jack and Clariesa gave their lives to Christ when Mike was four years old. The church that they joined was experiencing a real move of God, and they had life-changing conversions that today would get you on Christian Television.

Jack threw himself totally into the church. The services might last all night as wave after wave of the Spirit moved through that body of believers. Called to preach, it was not long until Jack and Clariesa were beginning to minister. At first they just took services on the weekends in other churches, but quickly the ministry became their life.

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Mike's earliest memories revolve around church. His parents were soon traveling all over the country. Mike's schooling was important but had to fit between setting up the tent and playing in the services in the evening. While Jack did pastor and pioneer some churches, he was mostly a Midwestern tent evangelist, traveling from meeting to meeting. This was a special time in the history of revival. There were a few big name evangelists like Oral Roberts who caught the media's attention, but the real action was on a smaller scale. In cities all across the South and Midwest people wanted to see miracles and were looking for the life and excitement that a tent naturally generated. The Neville family gave them what they needed.

Mike came from a great background. His grandfather was a preacher and so was his father. You could not have asked for a better home. His dad patterned a life of character and faith. He trusted God and often intentionally chose a direction that was good for the kingdom, but not as financially rewarding for the family.

The Neville's roots were not in denominations or organizations. They came from the independent camp. Jack set his tent up where he wanted, and took it down when he felt God dealing with him to move on. It was not uncommon to spend every nickel they had just getting to a spot and setting up the tent. This to them was the definition of faith. It was not until you had a need that you saw God work a miracle. For the Nevilles it was just part of the ministry for people that

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they had never met before, to come by bringing money or bags of groceries. What people brought, would be exactly what they needed at just the right time.

A Life of Faith

They were in Yuma, Arizona when God spoke to Jack to go to Fort Smith, Arkansas and put the tent up. The family loaded up their truck, trailer and car and set off toward the East. As the sun set, they topped a mountain in New Mexico. It was as far as they could go. Out of money and gas, they coasted off the mountain into a place in the middle of nowhere. Late at night someone knocked on the door. A man said, *"I see by the sign on the side of the truck you're one of those traveling preachers."*

Jack said, *"Yes, I am."*

He blurted out, *"Well, I've got some tithes I'd like to give you, and I'd just as soon give them to you as anybody."* He gave them a check and walked off. It was enough to get them to Fort Smith.

When they arrived in Fort Smith someone donated a lot and the family started the process of opening a tent revival. Jack was broke again, and went to find out what it would take to get the power turned on. He came back with the discouraging news that it would take \$30, money that the family did not have. A woman driving by, pulled over and asked what they were doing? Explaining who they were, and the need

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for the lights, she said, "*Hop in and let's go turn the lights on.*"

This is how Larry and Mike Neville grew up. Faith was something that got you from day to day. It was a life filled with good memories and great experiences that would lead both brothers into the ministry. Mike still remembers when he was 14 and a blind man came up for prayer. After being prayed for he was asked if he could see the picture on the front of the pulpit, without hesitation the man said, "*Sure, it is Jesus, the one that healed my eyes.*" In a generation raised thinking God was dead, the Neville boys knew he was alive and well.

Jack and Clariesa played an important part in the Cucamonga church well into their late seventies mentoring and helping pastors all over the fellowship. When Jack went on to be with the Lord the service was filled with stories of his encouragement and inspiration to young pastors to believe God.

A critical time for Mike was at 18 in Phoenix when he met Dr. Little a retired preacher in his 90's who lived near them. He took Mike under his wing. This man had a rich heritage in the ministry, and he did all he could to share both the dangers and the opportunities. One word of advice would become foundational in Mike's idea of the ministry. Dr. Little told him, "*Invest your life, like Jesus did, in 12 men. Do not invest your life in just a bunch of people, invest it in a few that can carry on what you do after you're gone.*"

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At 19 Mike left home for Bible school. After two years of classes, he knew that what he needed was less of the classroom and more practical experience. The following summer he set off as an evangelist with his brother Larry and never looked back. These two single boys would pay some of their dues in the next few years. Billing themselves as *The Neville" brothers"* they preached and sang anywhere they could. Treated like royalty in one revival they might find themselves in the next sleeping in the church attic with the bugs and rats.

Married

At 23 a major change came when Mike married Donna McCamish. A minister's wife had decided these two young people would make a great team and she introduced them. Mike agreed with her, and knew this was a young woman he wanted to know better. He and Larry preached a revival at the church she attended, and a relationship started that would grow over the next couple of years. Raised in a preacher's home herself, Donna came ready made to help in the ministry. An attractive and accomplished musician she had a voice that sends chills up your back and life into your heart. She would be one of Mike's biggest assets, and a real partner in the ministry.

When his brother Larry married Janet six months later, they were forced to separate by the eco-

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conomic pressure of two growing families. Both helped each other by advertising the other's strengths, and finding places to preach was never a real problem.

Initially, Mike and Donna were not linked to a particular denomination but ministered in denominational churches and independent ones. In his last year as an evangelist Mike spoke in 32 different churches. Size was never a major factor, some churches were small and others were significant ministries in their areas.

Evangelists live like gamblers. It was impossible to know what you might make any given week. Other couples would have developed ulcers, but raised in the ministry they did not see the tough times the way others might have. They knew that faith was part of the ministry and focused on the good. If one church gave you \$50 for a week meeting you just figured that God would use the next one to make up for it.

Mike and Donna traveled for seven years, only stopping once, to hold down a church for six months in Portland, Oregon. They would sing and then Mike would preach. Donna would often do one of her "*children's crusades*" with her puppet, "*Huey the dummy*" before the service.

A Hunger for More

Fundamental to Mike is a love of preaching and a gift to stir people up. In the pulpit he's like a fish in the water. This is not a duty or an obligation. This is

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what he obviously loves and you couldn't help but catch his enthusiasm. Some of the best advice he ever got was from an older minister who told him, "*When you go out to preach, go out there like it might be the last service you ever will preach.*"

He became frustrated as he began to face the fact that he could not change the thinking of a church in a week, or even in several weeks of revival. You would leave a church excited and step into another dead one. Life would start to flow in that church and the place would be more exciting than the local carnival, but too often, when they returned a year later nothing was left. The converts had been lost and the spirit was as dead as the year before.

There was one church in California that Mike preached in five years in a row. Each time the people would come and say, "*These are the only services where we feel God.*" It was like pouring water into a leaky bucket. Worse, some pastors were not as honest or as moral as Mike had been raised to be. As an evangelist you were dependent on those men who had somewhere taken a wrong turn. While God never let them down, he knew that the ministry did not have to be this way. Slowly the pressure was building to pastor. A longing was growing irresistibly to build a church based on the moving of the Spirit, integrity and faith.

2

Southern California Harvest

Both brothers began to feel that evangelism had been a great experience but it was time to build something lasting. They wanted a church where God showed up for revivals more than two weeks a year. A church where revival was every week. Mike was sick of churches and pastors that were just going through the motions. Those kinds of churches may have been good enough for many people but not for Mike. He hungered for a place like David's tabernacle in Jerusalem, a place where God would be worshipped daily.

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Him and Donna wanted to throw out the clock and useless traditions.

They almost planted a church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. But God made it clear He was going to send them west. In Maywood, California was a small struggling church associated with the Pentecostal Church of God.

The Maywood church had already tried to get him to come as assistant pastor, but he had turned them down. The church was unable to shake the feeling that Mike was the man for the job. The board now offered him the pastorate. Two years after the original offer, Mike and Donna felt the release to come. An evangelist called him out and gave him a word about the move, "*You're going to climb up on a ski lift and climb up, and climb up, and never come down.*" This was extra encouragement to both him and the church. They would need the encouragement.

Mike had preached in the church and knew it had some problems. Now that he was there, he began to discover they were a little deeper and more serious than he had expected. It was too late to pull back; he was committed.

That first year was critical and full of problems. Some of the members tried to run them off and if it had not been for the strong assurance that this was where God had put them, they would have left.

Church planting, discipleship and even effective evangelistic techniques were still in the future. The

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biggest battle he faced then was just to get God back in the center of a hurting church. The first few months were tough sledding and it was not until the end of the first year that he was really happy with the spirit of the church.

Leadership

The crucial question for Mike was, would he be the leader of his church? He decided he wanted to be a prophet not a puppet. All of this starts in the small. Mustard seeds grow into trees and faithfulness in little things opens the doors to large. There in that small group in Maywood was the seed of future revival. Here, where the loss of anyone was a tragedy, he was not going to let a few people do their thing, to the hurt of the whole. A couple of ladies were famous for prophesying every service; the only problem was that it edified no one. It was when he graciously asked them to stop, so that others could speak out too, that several key people in the church got excited about the future. They finally had a pastor that would lead.

The Neville's most critical choice was to just stay where they were. Mike was having some culture shock. Out of a Christian home and a Midwestern mind set, Mike figured he did not have to put up with the hassles of these Californians. What added to the pressure was that the church was in a rough area. On the surface California seems like a vacation paradise filled with beautiful people and homes, but its inner

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cities are as dirty as the smog filled sky. Summer is hot and depressing with crime out in the open. There was not the outward Midwestern hospitality that the Nevilles loved; in fact it seemed like no one treated you kindly. He told his wife, *"We're going to get out of here. This is the 'asphalt jungle.' We're going to go back to Oklahoma, or at least move the church to a better area and get out of here. "*

A part of the problem was that he was pastoring a white church in a Hispanic neighborhood. It was out of place. Mike could sense that something would have to change; the logical choice was to relocate. He was looking at Downey.

It was here that God spoke audibly to him the second time. The message was clear, *"I did not send you out here to move the church, I sent you out to preach to 'this' community."* He was not to leave, but to reach those that lived there. He stood up on a Sunday morning and preached how God had called them to reach all peoples. He told them, *"Churches should reflect the community they're in, and our's doesn't. We are going to have drug addicts, and prostitutes, as well as lawyers,"* he promised. *"This church is going to be filled with Hispanics."* Some in the church were not excited by the vision, but he was. This launched a real struggle for control. Twenty of the main people walked out that morning and never came back. During the next year many others would leave, but more would come in. A powerful force for revival in the inner city and

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among Hispanics came out of this transformation in thinking.

Turning Point

The switch started when the Blooms came in almost exactly one year from Mike's arrival there. Robert had been a Nazarene but when he got filled with the Holy Spirit while watching Christian television on channel 40, he and his wife got the "*left foot*" of fellowship. He had led a Bible study for years and those seven Hispanic adults from his Bible study came to Praise Chapel with him.

If this wasn't enough to shake up people things came to a head over an offering Mike took up for India. He had not asked permission and the board questioned his right to do this. The real issue was who was going to call the shots; unspoken was the controversy of these "*new people*."

Not willing to back down, he went right to the heart of the issue. He challenged the way they were set up. Voting on everything was a road block to revival and efficient church management. He did not plan on getting permission to buy a bottle warmer for the nursery. They backed down. The church has both a council and a board, but they would be there to support and advise the pastor, not to dominate him.

Healthy Changes

Jed Smock came for a revival at this vital time. Jed was a man with a unique testimony and call. He was a college professor caught up in the hippie movement. He left his professorship and followed a wild odyssey of experiences in drugs and loose living, ending in a commune in North Africa. It was there on a beach, naked that he saw a Christian carrying a cross and knew he needed to come back to America and get his life right. A friend led him to the Lord sitting in a Burger King restaurant. Jed started his preaching career by grabbing a microphone at a rock concert, and had left there to travel across the US preaching on college campuses. His style was rough, confrontational, and straight shooting.

It was 1978 and the church was starting to see a real solid presence of God. God planned on using Jed in a dramatic way. He preached on living right and on the third night he cried out, "*There is sin in the camp, sin in the camp.*" Then he set up a microphone and asked the people in the church to come up and confess their sins. Astoundingly, the people did. It's not the kind of thing you can make a doctrine out of but it was God's timing that night. People came up and were broken before God. Out of their honesty a seriousness and a desire to exalt God settled into people and turned them from attenders into disciples. On the next night

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people brought their drugs, pornography, sleazy clothes and off color rock albums to destroy.

They stepped out of the role of church and just putting in time on Sundays, and began to see their lives as important and God as real. This had been what Mike had been looking for and now it was all fitting together.

Celebration

Every service was great at Praise Chapel but Sunday nights were special. They were "*100% Holy Ghost.*" No one followed any set agenda; they were there to meet with God. Mike might preach, but there was just as good a chance that they never got past the worship service.

The greatest nights were when the choir sang and Mike joined in. He had a couple of classic songs that were his. When he walked up to the microphone and the music started for "*Packing up, getting ready to Go*" the place would come apart. Another song was "*That I could still go free*" Its style was a little country, which fit Mike perfectly, and the song talked of Jesus coming out of heaven and setting people free.

They danced, shouted and marched the aisles. Pam Stephens was the one who usually got excited first and Sammy Apodaca would be right behind. Sister Neville herself ran or danced up the aisle on occasion if the spirit was really moving.

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Another great meeting was when Mike invited in Larry Reed. Larry got saved under Sonny Argonzonie's ministry in Los Angeles. Arrested for heroin, Larry had spent years in San Quintan. When he came out of jail he wanted desperately to change, and he was even willing to give Jesus a chance. He moved into the early Teen Challenge center. Delivered and called to preach around drug addicts and criminals, his call was not traditional. Most of his sermons were on the streets and beaches of Southern California, so when he came for Mike they just naturally went out into the neighborhoods. He had an old pickup with speakers on the roof. On any corner they could let fly with an impromptu gospel message. It was the first time they had gone into the neighborhoods and none of the women and men that were with him would be the same. From then on they were always reaching outside the church walls.

The church was starting to fill with Hispanics. There was one Catholic church that was losing so many people that they brought in a missionary to attract the people back. The priest went around to all the people and talked about getting saved and speaking in tongues. He did draw some back, but nothing was going to slow down what was happening.

The back of the church filled, not with the religious but raw converts. Lined along the back wall were guys "*kicking back*". They had their hair nets and khakis on with white shirts that hung past their knees.

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Mike was not sure what a vato loco was but he knew they could get saved, and they were. These men and women were going to make some of the finest Christians in the history of the church.

As the church grew, they drained whole gangs. The Florencia gang would have 40 members in church and the 18th street gang had almost as many. On the streets they had tried to kill each other but now in church they sang together and gave testimonies back to back. The main tensions that were developing were the differences of culture between those people that had been there before Mike came and those that were new Christians. Some could fit in like Johnny and Patti Dorris. They got passed the cultural barriers. Johnny wasn't offended when they made fun of his skin tight leisure suits, and could laugh along with his mockers about the time he told these gang members to sing "*yes I love you with the love of the Lord,*" while holding their neighbors hands and looking into their eyes. Johnny and a few others could relate, but for many others this was not possible.

Those that stayed became a strong foundation for the church, but the goal was to fit into the neighborhood.

Enlarging Vision

Larry and Janet Neville had the same roots in evangelism as Mike and Donna. They were also about to cut their teeth on pastoring. The main difference between these two brothers was where Mike was a pastor with a burden for missions, Larry was a missionary that often pastored. Larry felt himself drawn toward a group of Foursquare pastors with a vision both for church planting and world evangelism. This involvement would be critical in both of the brother's futures.

The Jesus People movement was raging across America and young people were getting saved in droves. On the West Coast something new was happening in the church. Churches were springing up that were experimenting with creative new directions toward ministry and evangelism. Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel was one of the first churches to tap this youth explosion, and from his example other ministries began to spring up. Larry Neville started preaching in some of these churches in Arizona that were making a growing impact in their Foursquare denomination. He told Mike that he needed to come out and see what was happening.

There had been real revival in the small town of Prescott, Arizona. These young converts were blank pallets on which the Bible could work its power. Not coming from a religious background, they had no concept of church as either boring or dead. Finding more

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life in Jesus than they had in drugs or sin they knew they could win the world. Bucking the denominational trend, these converts were not sent away to a Bible school, but were home grown in the practical environment of the church. They later learned that across America, churches were rediscovering this Biblical hands on method. Pastors were frustrated with an educational system that seemed to kill life rather than create it, and many started "*in-church*" discipling programs.

The emphasis was on "*doing*". Teams went out to influence areas all over the South-west; the next obvious step had been the planting of churches. It was this that would most strongly influence Praise Chapel.

A Fateful Journey

It was through the choir that they got their first opportunity to see what God was doing. Donna had brought life back to the choir and they decided to get a buss and go on tour. Traveling through the Southwest, they stopped in a little cracker box building, housing a pioneer church in Tucson, Arizona. Harold Warner was the pastor there, and the church was like nothing any of them had ever seen. Young people packed in one on top of the other. The people loved the choir, but more important for Mike, his people loved the praise and the excitement displayed in that church. It was young, militant and unique. This church excited them. It confirmed what Mike had been feeling, God was go-

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ing to move in young people. Maybe more important was the realization he was not alone. Other pastors and churches were out there to partner with and learn from. Returning to California, they talked about what had happened.

Mike and Johnny decided to attend a Bible conference on church planting and discipleship that January of 1978. They caught the end of the meetings. This was raw "*new wine*" revival. The men were young and aggressive. Some of what was happening was questionable but much of it was God. The simplest solution was to take the good and spit out the bones. Over the next few years Mike was stimulated both by Larry's direct contact and his own sporadic involvement and growing friendships. There was nothing completely new happening but there was a focus and intensity that let Mike know that what he had always felt was possible, could be done. It was at this conference that Mike felt a confirmation and the beginning of a plan for enlarging the revival he dreamed of.

The Maywood church had started to grow between Mike's personality and Johnny Dorris's promotional schemes. They used every gimmick, including giving away a TV to the person that brought the most new people out. It was on the return from Arizona that they saw God could do it without the gimmicks. Johnny stood up on a Sunday and said this will be the year of no contests. Dumping the gimmicks, a new reliance on God arose.

Revivalist to Pastor

Mike was pouring himself into the church in Maywood and the payoff was worth it. His vision began to form. He wanted to build something that would last a long time and to build men that would go on after him. In the past he and Donna had rolled into towns, to stay for just a short time and move on. That stage in their life was over, they came to Maywood to stay, and set down roots. Mike could have kept preaching meetings to help meet the very real financial needs, (Maywood was small and broke) but he decided to take some part time jobs to pay the bills, while being home to train and disciple.

Mike sees the moving of God like the breaking of waves in the ocean. There would be a building momentum and force of revival that would break across the church scene and then recede. As the next wave came in it would have a part of the last in it. His dad had come out of the revival in the 50's. A move of God founded in prayer for the sick and evangelistic services. Much of the best of that move would become a part of the church of the seventies, but God was doing something new and fresh in Mike's generation with a stronger emphasis on the local church and discipleship.

Too many churches put a cap on those men who feel a call to the ministry. A churches traditions, habits and patterns put obstacles in the way of real ministry. The best they offer is to go off to Bible school and

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then maybe preach in the distant future. Only the most determined young men and women find their way into a pulpit. He was ready to change the system. In the future he foresaw it would often seem easier to go into the ministry than to stay out of it. The most exciting thing that happened in those early days was when men started to rise up and say, "*I want to preach, I want to be like you.*" This was indescribable to Mike.

He knew that these men needed training, and real opportunities for expression. To accomplish this, three great ministries developed. One was tied to radical evangelism and the other two, to the developing of both preachers and great Christians.

Three Simple Keys

First he created a local forum for these men to preach and witness in. They were not always traditional in their approach, but they got the word out. Many churches are afraid of offending someone and so reach no one. The New Testament church put its priority on evangelism even if it meant a few beatings and jail sentences. In doing this they caused many waves but they reached a lot of people. Praise Chapel set its goal to **get the message out**. Mike told them, "*Go find a street corner to preach on,*" and they did. Soon groups of men and women headed out to the streets, anywhere sinners gathered was a target. One group decided to put gospel tracks in the local porno store. The Bible

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study leader told the guys, *"Now while I distract the owner, you guys go put tracts in all the magazines, but do not look at the pictures."* Using hundreds of creative ideas from plays to concerts, the result would be many many people getting saved.

Second they began to **develop these men**. Monday nights became a time for training. The training was rooted in practical education. Evolving as it has gone along it still exists today.

The third force in the church would be the **establishing of home groups**. This would give men a chance to develop practical experience. This growing leadership base would also allow the church to absorb all those new people about to come in through revival.

The culmination of this would be in church planting. In 1978 the Kingman, Arizona church started. It had gone out more by accident than by choice, when Allen Cates went there to pastor. In 1980 they sent out their first church that was part of a plan. Johnny and Patti Dorris headed to Ontario, California. From that time things just kept accelerating, and the mother church while aggressively planting churches, was still growing. Radiating out from the Maywood church has gone a continuous explosion of revival. Every six months a new group of churches would go out first in Southern California and then across the United States and then into the world.

Revival to Mike was first, a move of God. Programs and plans are all important but the reality is that if God moves great things happen, if God's not in it,

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it's just flesh, and will collapse. Mike knew what had happened to him was not his creation; the key to the future was to see what God was doing and follow that lead. The second key ingredient to him is men. Buildings and property and even money is meaningless without men to lead. Praise Chapel is the story of the men and women God has brought together.

3

And God Added

In the early days of the Maywood church there were two competing ministries on Friday night. One group in the church started a rock music scene. Simultaneously Robert Bloom taught a Bible study. It was the Bible study that would last. It met needs for fellowship and learning about God while developing ministry skills.

Robert and Esther Bloom were both raised in East Los Angeles, a primarily Mexican community. Robert was Italian and Esther, while Mexican, was not the typical chollo. Raised and schooled in Catholicism, Robert's family had come to LA to escape their Sicilian roots. Esther's family was not Catholic like most in that area, but came from the early Pentecostal revival at Azusa Street. Although she was a backslider when she met Robert, she never got into the drugs that were controlling the neighborhoods around them. They met and got married in 1964. Robert went to college, and graduated with a degree in micro biology. He was soon

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working in medical technology. Compared to the craziness around them, they both added up to fairly boring people. Many would think of them as Christians because of their life style, but they were still lost.

Esther was the first to get right. She got saved and started going to a Nazarene church right after their marriage. For years she prayed for her husband and her sister. She could get them to give her a ride to church but they always had an excuse to just drop her off without going in. It was at a revival in 1973 that Robert and her sister Linda and husband Danny Mancha got saved.

Esther soon had them as excited as she was. They started praying for the community. There was a hunger in them to do more for God, but they had no idea how to express it. They went door to door but their Nazarene church was not geared to outreach or evangelism. Their church, like others in that city, was dying as the whites moved out to the suburbs.

Filled With the Holy Spirit

Esther was serious about seeing God move. Fasting, she turned on channel 40 (a local Christian television station) for the first time. She had never imagined Christianity could be so exciting. To her it was like the New Testament church had come into her living room. These were Christians that spoke in tongues and prayed for the sick. Wonderful testimonies were

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shared day after day of miracles both of salvation and healings. The only problem was that this was not happening in their Nazarene church. She started watching channel 40 as much as she could, and it was not long until she received the Holy Spirit.

Robert was not as easy to reach, but he was filled. People from the church began to come up to Robert and Esther asking, *"What has happened to you, you've changed? Whatever you have we want."* They felt they had to share with these people about the Holy Spirit. More and more were getting filled.

Everything broke loose when Esther's sister Linda Mancha got filled. Linda isn't the type to keep secrets, she bubbles over with life. At their house one night their daughters had a vision. The girls were laid out on the floor with their hands raised saying repeatedly, *"We see Jesus, we see Jesus."*

The scientist in Bloom stepped in. He did not want the two girls hearing each other's side of the story so they separated them. First asking one and then the other to tell what they had seen. The young women told of a vision of the ceiling opening up and seeing heaven filled with angels in a pastoral scene with grass and perfect flowers. Then they saw Jesus looking down into the room they were in. As he looked down on them, he started to call angels over to look at them praising and worshipping God. They knew these girls could not have made the story up.

Linda was not able to keep all this to herself. During a church service she started to praise God in

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tongues. The secret was out and the pastor had to decide what to do. The Nazarene church was having a general assembly that year, about whether to allow its churches to be open to the Spirit. The assembly sent out a letter that rejected the whole movement within the Nazarene church.

Their pastor began to check on them. It began to be obvious that it was time to go. Five families left. Robert did not feel a call to pastor these folks so he just encouraged them to find a church. While they were looking, they kept meeting for Bible study.

Maywood

Their first contact with Praise Chapel was when they came out to hear Don McCamish preach on prophesy. It was the one year celebration service of Mike Neville's taking the church. They walked into the church right at the time Mike was declaring that this church must reach it's community. Sitting there that night, the Holy Ghost hit them like a freight train. They knew this was their new church home, and told the study that they were going to be attending there. He asked them to pray and all but one couple ended up joining them. This Bible study soon filled the gap that had formed when some whites had left.

Robert told Brother Neville that they had been in another church that had split. Wanting to make the pastor comfortable he told him, *"I know that because*

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of my coming from another church, you're not going to want me to keep teaching this Bible study. I'll lay it aside and do whatever you say."

Mike and Donna prayed about the whole thing, and Donna felt God speak to her to trust this couple. Not only did the study keep going but Mike started to send others over to be part of it.

After a year the study was getting too big. It was then that they started taking other young men and releasing them in their own studies. Frank Salcido and Mike Stephens were the first men to work as assistants and then take their own studies.

Three things were starting to fit together for Praise Chapel. First, they were reaching out on the streets and new people were coming in. Second, leadership was developing and needs were being met, especially in these small groups. Third, the services left people with a faith that anything was possible. By 1979 the church was in phenomenal revival. The old crowd that could not hang with what was happening left and the church filled with Hispanics. Pendeltons replaced suits as the Sunday wear of preference.

Power Encounters

Services were like walking into heaven. More than once, the neighbors called the fire department, reporting that they saw flames. Once the firefighters came running into the service with all the gear, hoses and hatchets. *"We saw the flames"* they said. They went everywhere trying to find the fire; they should have looked in peoples hearts.

You knew you were having church if Pam Stephens would be dancing in the Spirit. Those that were not joining in, worried about her falling off the platform, as she would dance right up to the edge with her eyes closed. On a great night Pam, Sammy and Donna might take off running. It was common to just praise God all night. Prophecy was common and it was stated again and again, *"from this church the nations will be touched."*

Miracles were a big part of what was happening. The Manchas had a son, David, who while playing in Pop Warner baseball got hurt. When the emergency ward x-rayed the arm they said it was broken. The clinic could not do anything on the weekend and told them they would have to bring him in Monday to use their insurance. They put the arm in a sling and sent them home. At church Sunday they had prayer for their son.

The next day they took him to Kaiser Hospital for more x-rays. When the doctor came out he said

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"He had a break but it's been healed. It looks to me that it's been healed for about six months."

In church they celebrated. In the homes they connected as friends, asked questions, learned to pray and got their first chance at being a leader. The home groups became a fundamental part of the Praise Chapel ministry. In nearly every church they have home meetings today. Not as a ritual but because they meet needs. Many questions people would normally bring to the pastor are answered by the group's leader and it is here that people's needs are discussed and prayed for. Most of the first dozen small group leaders went out to pastor, including the Blooms themselves, who left to pioneer in Long Beach, California.

While excited about seeing a church form in that city, their hearts were never far from Maywood. They felt God deal with them to return and went back as an evangelist. Robert never lost his love of the Bible prophesy. He read every book out and developed a half dozen unique sources. Word spread as he became known as one of the best men in the fellowship on prophecies. He was soon preaching everywhere. The thing he could not shake was a desire to be involved in the small group ministry again.

Called to Partner

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In 1991 they went on staff in the mother church working with small groups. Out of this ministry a new group of leaders is rising. In the church there has been a renewed commitment to their foundations. The “*sheepfolds*,” as they call the groups, had drifted into more a place to develop ministry, than a place to meet people’s needs. The Blooms helped to bring them back to their roots. Today there is a new commitment to training these leaders for the tasks they face.

It is not an accident that Jesus started with a small group of twelve. Today’s church is finding that it needs great services and small groups to fulfill the call of God. These two combine to create excitement and stability. It’s the Blooms that are spearheading the developing of that small group ministry in Praise Chapel.

These home studies would be a vital part of all the Praise Chapels. It gave men practical experience. Here they would find out how bizarre and complicated people problems can be. They learned to deal with practical problems: what do you do with kids, how do you handle strange questions and pushy people? Do you confront or love the person? Do you just ignore the problem or do you pull out your spiritual sword? Needing to find answers they would begin to study and be drawn into a closer relationship with their pastor and the Bible.

Most of those coming into their churches were sinners. These were people filled with questions and problems that could intimidate a psychologist. If pastor

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had to hold everyone's hand the church was going to stay very small. These men became the first line of care meeting for the church, and as they developed many stepped into the role of shepherd themselves.

4

Gods Faithfulness

Privation developed in Johnny Dorris, a driving hunger to succeed. The moment he was old enough to leave home he wanted to put his past as far behind him as possible. Figuring money was the key to this, he planned on making as much as he could. He was willing to do anything for success, but God had other plans. Johnny had all the things he had dreamed of at his fingertips when God began to call him. Instead of leaving the hard places behind Johnny would learn to enter back into those places and lead others out. His testimony gives hope that the change in Johnny Dorris can happen in them.

For Johnny, nothing came easy. Raised in poverty, he learned as a kid what hard work meant. Johnny's dad might leave him with a sledge hammer and a bucket and expect him to take down a building. His father was a jack-of-all-trades, running the first second hand store in Southern California and a salvage operation. The family made good money, but it all went for

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booze. Abuse and love were all mixed up together for this young man. Growing up, he had few of the things that other children take for granted. This would have broken most kids but Johnny was always a fighter, and it just made him twice as determined to break out of his environment.

Johnny as a child was determined to win. He went out for little league baseball. Too poor to buy a new baseball mitt, his father found an old three fingered glove, which he put new strings in and gave to Johnny. The next day at practice all the other kids mocked his funny looking mitt. Johnny was so mad he could not see straight. Coming home, he threw the glove down, swearing to never play baseball again. His dad came over and told his son, "*Johnny, you don't understand. This mitt looks different because it's special. It's a 'magic mitt'.*"

Johnny believed, and went on to be an all-star player with the "*magic mitt.*" This would be a pattern for his life. Against the odds, he refused to accept defeat, but would fight to be the winner he knew he could be.

Saints and Sinners

The family was a strange blend of the ideal and the nightmare. His mother was a fine Christian, but the emotional instability and habits of his father made the home life dysfunctional. His father was only a part of the problem. The other children were scarred by the

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instability. Several of them would end up in prison. Being a younger child in a huge violent family, Johnny became the target of the other children's anger and frustration. It was a miracle he survived.

The only person in his family who believed in him was his mother. A woman of faith and character she struggled to keep the family from blowing apart. As if things were not bad enough, doctors diagnosed Johnny as having degenerative arthritis, and his life became a torture chamber. Weeping in pain at night, the only relief he could find was his mother wrapping warm moist towels around swollen joints. His mother went to every faith meeting in the United States until her son was healed.

With more kids than money, no one in the family had enough. It was out of this need that Johnny saw the power of prayer. For school, he got two T-shirts and a pair of Levis. There were no fine shirts for the son of poor parents. In Sunday school he heard that God answered prayer and he asked God to give him some real shirts like the rich kids had. That week several fine new shirts came into his parent's second hand store. Putting those shirts on he knew God was real.

He was developing into a fine Christian. His mother had known from his birth that Johnny would preach. The test would come during the meeting of a famous tent preacher. The evangelist was praying for someone he claimed had a devil. Johnny happened to be sitting where he could see the man reach under his

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coat and pull out a bottle with a frog in it. The crowd went crazy when the frog seemed to leap from the woman's mouth. The preacher claimed the frog was a demon, but Johnny knew it was a lie and that night his faith shattered. That lie seemed to make all of Christianity phony, and Johnny ran hard from God and his mother's dream of him becoming a preacher. As strong as his faith had been, anger replaced it. His mom would wait until she thought he was asleep to slip into his room to pray over him, and he would rise to curse her and her God. Following a God that allowed his mom to struggle with poverty and a bad marriage seemed like a bad idea to him. He was going to be rich and famous no matter what he had to do.

Graduating in the top of his high school class he found himself headed to Vietnam. His mother prophesied as he left that he would never hear a shot fired. He laughed at her, but her words would prove to be true. Upon arrival in Vietnam he was separated from those he came over with. Johnny alone got transferred to a communication center buried so deep underground it could withstand a nuclear bomb hit. All of those men he had trained and come to Vietnam with him would die in the next year. Johnny never even heard a shot fired.

Back on Track

He was tired of running. When he came home from Vietnam, he knew he needed to get right with God. He recommitted his life to God shortly after leaving the service and became a board member of the church in Maywood, yet his life was a roller coaster of spiritual ups and downs. Burned out and discouraged Johnny was ready to leave by the time Mike came to take the church. The former pastor had suspected this and tricked Johnny into making a one year commitment to stay. He may not have been proud of all he had done, but you could always count on his word. When the pastor got the promise, he told Johnny he was leaving. Bound by his word and unable to leave, his attitude stunk. When Mike Neville came to visit him for the first time, he left a Lenny Bruce tape playing to offend him. Johnny wanted to dislike Mike but he could not shake the fact that Mike and Donna Neville were the real thing.

A turning point in Johnny's life was when Mike decided to put men in the key public roles in the church. Until that time women did most of the major jobs. Mike had Johnny start to lead songs. He could not do anything half way. If he were going to stand in front of people, he was going to do everything he could to back Mike up and make the church a success.

At first they ran many programs at Praise Chapel (Then known as Rosewood Full Gospel Assembly),

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but more and more frequently, the church began to link into the Spirit. Soon the gimmicks were scrapped and the church began to explode as it met peoples needs.

On the way to a conference in 1980 Mike and Johnny drove through Ontario, California. Looking at all the houses, Mike made the comment, "*This would make a great place to plant a church.*" While Johnny liked the idea of starting churches, he was not planning to be the planter. While spiritually rejuvenated, he still dreamed of success and money. He mocked the idea of becoming a Pastor himself. On that Friday night of the conference, while the choir was singing, "*Go ye into all of the world,*" Johnny knew that God had called him to Ontario.

When Johnny came back, he started to hold meetings in Ontario. Thirty people were soon coming out to a small living room so he went looking for a building. He found a rundown little house on Euclid, that the owner was asking \$600 a month for. Johnny talked him down to \$300, and with a little remodeling a church was born on April 20, 1980.

The church would face some of the same struggles the mother church had. Its first ugly contact with prejudice came when Johnny brought a friend in from Mexico to preach. Services were good and some Hispanics in the area came out and got saved. This angered some whites that had been coming. Johnny made it clear that they were a church that was going to be open to all people. On a Sunday morning he drew a line, "*If you cannot accept these people and love them,*

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then you need to leave!" Four families did leave. These were the people who had the money, while those new converts seemed to just have problems. It was not an easy time, but when Johnny went into the ministry he gave up dreams of being a millionaire. It was souls that he was after and they were coming in.

The Break

Johnny attacked the problem of revival like everything else, it was all out, and if you got in the way he was going to run you over. One memorable service was on a Sunday night when he preached on *"Mad Dogs for Jesus."* Until then the church had been mainly Catholic women whose husbands stayed as uncommitted as they had when their wives went to mass. Johnny was not going to leave things that way. He preached that night like he never had before, telling them, *"This was the night they needed to believe for their husbands."* These women got so excited that several ran out of the service before it was even over. They headed home with fire in their eyes to *"nail the old man."*

Margaret Espinoza had always been very reserved. Her husband Philip was an alcoholic and she had already packed his bags to throw him out. That night she went home and woke him up, *"I'm sick of your drinking,"* she yelled at him. It so shocked him, that he got delivered and saved that same night. In

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family after family the husbands did not know what hit them, but they got saved that night. It was not long until as many men were coming as were women. Several years later Philip would go out to pastor the church in Hayward, California.

In the New Testament church, whole families got saved and baptized, and the same thing started to happen in Ontario. The first big family was the Sargosta family. They had eleven children and the majority locked into the church.

Another key family to come in was the Espinozas. It was a large influential family in the Ontario Hispanic community. Alex and Jimmy were prominent men headed for the top. Their goal was to make a million dollars, and they did not care how they got it. When word began to spread through the community about the dramatic change in these men's lives, people wanted to know more about what could do this. More and more people were coming out, first to see, and later to get involved.

The Maywood church was regularly sending out new works. While back in the Maywood church things were exploding, it was hard for the people in these small churches to feel the real force of what they were a part of. Mike decided to change this by having a conference. This became a way to fire these new converts up.

In a conference the churches would all come together. These early conferences only numbered a few hundred, but God made them feel huge. A couple

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of successful pastors would come in to challenge these churches for missions, consistent living, and church planting in the night services. During the day the pastors of the smaller churches would preach. Each church could bring out some key couples so they could catch the vision they were a part of.

Al Pimentel and his wife Loretta had been coming to the Ontario, California church sporadically. Al had a great job at the phone company and saw himself as doing the church a favor by going there. The conference shook him. He was mad at first, but sitting in an evening service God gave him a vision. He saw his brothers and him not only saved, but out preaching. In that one service he could picture how the 'whole' fit together. He could not contain himself! When they got back to the motel, he called everyone he knew, telling them how they had to get saved and join this church, the greatest church in the world. His brothers started coming in, and finally their parents. Then the cousins started getting saved. Three of the brothers would end up in the ministry. Paul drove a Datsun 710 to church with 11 people in it and his wife brought a second car with others.

On Holt Avenue

The revival in Ontario was explosive. They moved out of that first building into another building on Holt Avenue to make room for the crowds. Johnny's hard-headedness and lack of tact soon had him in trouble with the city over permits. The city inspectors red-tagged his building and refused to turn the power on. Johnny loved a fight. He rented a generator and thumbed his nose at the authorities. People did not care. You could not find a place to sit in that little southern California oven. Often they were without any power, cooling or parking but they had a great presence of God. The church was unstoppable. The only cooling was some dry ice in a swamp cooler and a few fans that blew the hot air around. Lights flickered on and off and people dripped with sweat, but few of those coming seemed to notice.

On Friday night they would head down to the strip where the low riders cruised. It was not unusual to stay until 1:00 in the morning. Ontario's strip was a wild scene. Drive-by shootings and gangs were a huge problem. In the middle of it all were the kids from Praise Chapel singing and testifying. This radicalized people. No one could deny that these Christians were changing both their lives and their city.

Just praying a prayer Friday night did not solve all their problems. As some of these came into the church they brought their problems with them. Services were not just about doctrine and the retelling of

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Bible stories. The sermons had to deal with the problems of today. The challenge to Johnny was to get people to deal with the sins in their life: the person that they were sleeping with whom they were not married to, the money they were stealing, and the need to love their family. Johnny was born for this hour. His finger pointing and "*thus saith the Lord*" common, he confronted peoples lives through preaching, dramas and discipleship classes. Emotionally charged altar services with people weeping, was and is, as common as guitar players on MTV.

Church was exciting and in touch with peoples lives and needs. Like most of the Praise Chapel churches, they seldom just sing three choruses and have a sermon. The church is ready to break with the program to meet a need. One memorable service was when Johnny decided to preach on the occult. Johnny was thoroughly covering all the bases, naming names and specifically showing books and symbols that a Christian has no business messing around with, when a young woman started screaming. Johnny called her up to the front. Her family had brought her out knowing something was horribly wrong but were unable to help her. As Johnny prayed she fell to the floor growling and yelling in a strange voice. Some disciples jumped her, but five men were not able to hold her down. Demon after demon was named and cast out, and those that left church that night, went home believing in demon possession.

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It was not all emotion. In another service Johnny traced "*the trail of blood*" through the Bible. Pointing out how our sins were paid for by the blood of sacrifice. Johnny made the teachings come alive by tying the Old Testament into the New, by showing that Christ was that sacrifice. Here were foundations for Christians. Looking out at the crowd of ex-gang members you would never think they would sit through two weeks of preaching from only two verses in Hebrews. Johnny did it; he believed in these people. Knowing they could handle even complicated truth, if it was biblical, he gave it to them.

The Core

It was there in those crowded services and wild outreaches that the core formed. So many gang members were getting saved that a tattoo shop on the corner began to feel threatened. The owner was heard mumbling about getting Johnny if he did not quit ruining his business. By then the church was not real worried by threats. In the services were some of the toughest men and women in Ontario. Johnny was their pastor and they would protect him. The church was running over 200 people and would have had more if there was anywhere to put them.

Richard and Lori Joy would be the first couple to be sent out of the Ontario Praise Chapel. In 1984, when Richard got saved it was just in time! Invited out

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by a friend to a revival service, there was little to impress you. He walked into a room where about fifteen people were listening to a wild evangelist, but Richard knew God had brought him there.

For ten years he had been involved heavily in the martial arts. He was working out at several different studios, when he got a chance to go professional as a full contact fighter. Promised money and fame, Richard knew that he needed something different.

Problems with alcohol or drugs brought many to Christ, but Richard had a bad temper. When he lost it, he lost it. He had knocked out his girlfriend several times in fights that went from yelling to physical abuse. Fear was the only reason she stayed with him. Lori knew Richard would kill her if she left.

After he got saved he stayed involved in the martial arts for a while but it began to bother him. How was it possible that the same hands that one night he lifted in praise the next night he used to beat someone up with? He left the fighting behind and threw himself completely into the gospel. Richard was not one to take instructions. The year before he got saved he had eleven jobs, but with Johnny he met someone that he could respect. Richard would work as assistant while Johnny was sick, then pioneer a church, evangelize through the fellowship and end up in Riverside, California pastoring. There today, a great church is birthing under his unique gifts and talents.

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Frank and Renate Navarro was the second church planted. They went to Haywood, California. The church was now committed to planting churches. Paul and Norma Diaz went to San Bernardino, California. Paul Diaz would move to Oregon and Al and Loretta Pimentel took the San Bernardino church. Frank and Renate Navarro would leave Haywood, California a thriving church, to go to Mainz, West Germany, as the first overseas work out of the Ontario Praise Chapel.

Crusades

One of the greatest thrills a Christian can experience is to enter a third world nation to take part in a miracle crusade. The receptivity and need in these countries make them fertile ground for the miraculous. For a few thousand dollars pastors and people can be influenced in ways undreamed of in America.

Larry Neville had always felt a draw towards missions. Working with Foursquare he had moved to the Philippines. It was a natural step for Praise Chapel to get involved in this.

Preaching a crusade in another country is always a gamble. You may make the investment in time and money and see only a small return, but there are those times when God, the needs, and the place come together in an explosive mixture. Each country and city is different. You are dependent on national pastors

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to set up meetings and advertise. Johnny had paid his dues in the Philippines.

He later went into the Dominican Republic with Danny Mancha and Joe Menchaca where they started a series of meetings that looked like a waste of time. The crowds were small and tough, but the team had come to preach and they did. The monsoons hit after a couple of nights and things worsened. As Johnny was trying to preach, pages in his Bible were washing out, even his pockets were overflowing with water. The Dominican pastors have worked with other westerners and were waiting for these men to leave but they just stuck it out with a crowd of a hundred people. That night more miracles happened than almost any crusade they would ever preach. That same night, the pastors were encouraged and for the next few nights, the place was filled with people getting healed and saved.

Johnny and Mike have committed a large part of their time to overseas. Partnering with Larry Neville in Asia, they began taking younger pastors overseas with them to help in the crusades in 1991. This would have great impact on many of these men's lives.

Called to Preach

Nothing makes these churches more unique or biblical than the fact that they raise up preachers inside their own walls. Discipleship is not just a phrase but a practice. The pastors intentionally avoid doing every-

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thing and will allow someone else to give the altar call at some of the churches biggest outreaches. The desire is to raise up others, and that cannot be done without an opportunity to develop. On outreaches, or at special services the church gets excited when some green and nervous young man stands up for the first time to preach. The miracle is that if men get a chance to minister, the Spirit can break in and turn them into tremendous preachers.

For Paul Pimentel this happened while he was teaching a home Bible study on the Holy Spirit. In a meeting with the Bible study leaders, Johnny told the men, "*Pray for people to receive the Holy Spirit.*" This scared Paul. It was one thing to teach and something else to trust God to use him. Until that point he was a skeptic. He had seen some people fall out but he figured it was the evangelist pushing them over. That night, when he prayed, the first person he laid hands on started speaking in tongues and went down under the anointing of the Spirit. The second person fell also, and laying there, began to speak in tongues. It was the greatest experience of his life, to know that God could use him.

Tested

For the church and Johnny the biggest tests would be when he got hit with a crippling disease. He was going at a pace that would have worn out two

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men. In Europe, he had picked up an infection, and while preaching a revival in Tucson, Arizona, he started to run a 105-degree temperature but said nothing. On the way home he was in a car wreck and hit his head brutally on the windshield of the car. Arriving home he collapsed. At first the doctors could not pin any disease down, although he was losing his coordination, and his general health was deteriorating badly. Johnny, who was always proud of his ability to handle anything, was becoming helpless. His brain had started to swell and he could not remember anything. For months he was forced to lie in a darkened room doing nothing. He needed help to walk or take a shower. The church would come and sing under his window and he could not even come outside to thank them.

In the church, the members rallied to carry on. For six months the church functioned without a pastor. During this time many future leaders rose up, linking to Johnny and his wife. The doctors gave no hope for recovery. When Johnny finally could get out, he was not really well. At a conference, God miraculously healed him. Called out for prayer, it was all he could do to make it to the front, but the power of God hit him and the symptoms began to recede.

From that day God began to renew Johnny's call to pray for the sick. Services often include prayer lines. Just as concerned for emotional problems as for physical there is a new emphasis on helping people break out of wrong ways of thinking from their past. Ontario

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is experiencing a new wave of revival as it prepares to reach it's communities real needs.

5

Small Cities Accomplish Big Things

The Ontario church was not technically the first church out of Maywood. It was the first planted on purpose. The first church went into Arizona in 1978. Mike was not looking to start a church, but God intervened. In Kingman there were men and women critical to the future and God reached in and exercised his Lordship option. A mark of Praise Chapel was an ability to see Gods finger prints on actions they would not have chosen. Allen Cates felt God deal with him to start a church in Arizona. The timing was not great for the Maywood church. Unable to do much more than blow a kiss and say we will pray for you, they sent Allen and Carol Cates off.

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Allen started services outside Kingman in Chlo-ride, Arizona, in a bar room. They cleaned up the spilled beer and bottles left over from Saturday nights party and held services Sunday mornings. Nothing ex-ceptional happened until 1979 when he moved his deadly dozen to a small store front in Kingman, Arizo-na.

Kingman is a great little town with a four-season climate set between mountains and desert. Tourists fill it in the summer and Las Vegas is close enough to escape to for shopping and eating. Its worst feature is a wind that blows all the time. Setting just across from California on Interstate 40, (the major east-west highway in America) it was a small town of 25,000 that was on the move. When the church opened there were not 50,000 people within fifty square miles. Today that whole section of the state is exploding with growth from gambling, tourists and people just looking for a good place to live. It was an ideal spot for a new church.

Aggressive Evangelism

In 1979 there were maybe 20 people in the church, but Gods promise to those "*faithful in small, being given much*" was about to kick in. The pastor was an awesome, walking, talking soul winning ma-chine. He antagonized some but he left in his wake a strong impression, one that forced people to make a decision. A favorite pastime of Allen was to stir up a

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devil. Not in the figurative sense either. In the Bible Jesus had this happen quite often. In modern Christianity it has become less common. It is sad that at a time when universities are looking into the occult, and movies advertise the power of Satan, the churches act like it is not real. Allen knew God was bigger and loved nothing better than to run head on into someone who began to manifest like out of a Hollywood horror movie. Allen did not wave any crosses or mumble the Lords prayer when facing a demon. He would as often as not grab hold of the person afflicted and just cast that thing out. During one service he had a man come at him with a knife. Fred Thurman was just able to grab him before the knife hit Cates. After the man was delivered, he became a member of the church. It gave the church great faith that the God they served was bigger than the devils that were getting more real every day in America.

The building stunk, sometimes literally when the old toilets ran over into the sanctuary. They did not have a thousand square feet to meet in, but God was drawing some key people together. The history of a great church is not the story of a pastor only but of a group of people that God brings together. In the New Testament we can see this in the books Paul wrote. He filled these letters with the names of the people that had made a difference in those cities and in his life. Christ himself came not to build an audience but to make disciples and release those men and women into the world.

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Praise Chapel found, that if they would pray and be obedient, that there were people ready and waiting to respond in building a church. A key factor in this church would be Lloyd Wissinger. He got saved in his trailer, and from that moment he became one of those exceptional people addicted to the gospel. Lloyd loved church and started attending every meeting he could find, and before long heard about the Kingman Praise Chapel church. After a visit, God locked him into the church. Loving people, he made everyone feel welcome, but above all he loved God and was described as a man that "*oozed*" with the love of God.

Building a Core

Art and Donna Pearls were another key link. He was a converted Jew that took over the follow-up ministry. You could not shake him or his faith.

Carl Friedrich was a local bar owner and car dealer. Cates was looking for work and got a job at his car lot, and started preaching at him. Carl went to another church and even had a drink on occasion with his pastor. Carl seemed to have it together. Headed toward becoming a millionaire, Carl at first saw this preacher as someone to have fun with. Anyone who was always talking about Jesus was weird, and Carl put the preacher through the mill. He was trying to discredit the man, but when he could not break him down he started listening to him. When Carl left his respected church to attend this small store front, it shook the

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whole city, as well as greatly helping the finances of the Kingman church.

The Kingman church was built on excitement. You never knew what was going to happen next. Praying for one woman, the pastor took a little oil and put it on her forehead. She looked at him and said, "*Doesn't the Bible say to anoint with oil?*" He looked at her and said "*you're right,*" and took the lid off the oil and splashed it in her face and poured it over her head. It was unorthodox, spontaneous and always interesting.

The worship was alive and masterful. Even traditional songs were carried in a contemporary style. Lead and bass guitar were just part of the music: saxophone, trombone, drums, key boards and vocals would drive the music home. Little towns do not have a lot going on and that church was one of the most interesting places in town. In a larger city the church is often forced to compete with other churches and a thousand secular options. Kingman was a vacuum that the church filled.

The church's goal was to get people saved and they took advantage of every opportunity to present the gospel. At Christmas, they rented flatbeds and the church rode through the neighborhoods caroling. They did not stop with just music, they shared their testimony and even once preached a sermon about hell. Allen was one of the most determined and effective soul winners alive, and his zeal fired up those around him, (sometimes to excess) but always to some effect.

Don McCamish

Revivals and music would be two of the big draws in the early days. Don McCamish (an evangelist from Southern California) was a real factor in the church. Don is Donna Neville's father and an old-time Pentecostal preacher with a gifting to fit in anywhere. He had a special gift in those early days to come into a small church and cause a spiritual earthquake. Don was the guy that could draw the best crowds and pray for the most notable miracles. A good musician, he would start a service with songs. Breaking into some of the great choruses of Pentecost he would have people lifting their hands and clapping. Shifting gears, he would pick up his Bible and set down his guitar. A gifted preacher and story teller, Don was always interesting. A favorite topic was the end times, but it was just as likely for Don to make some story of the Bible come alive. If one word were to describe him, it would be encourager, but the big attraction was when God used him in The Word of Knowledge or prophetic ministry. Then the encouragement was not just from Don but from God also.

Don would often line up everyone in the church and pray for them. If they had pain, it would go, but the most exciting thing was when Don operated in a word of knowledge ministry. This is referred to in I Corinthians. It is where God, who knows everything, speaks a word into the heart of an evangelist about the person he is praying for. It was not uncommon for Don

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to tell a young man or woman about their past and give them hope for their future. They salvaged many a new convert by a critical word at a critical time.

Tim and Teresa Masters

Teresa Masters was sitting in a revival crying. She wanted so badly to be the typical wife with the normal family. Don had no idea who she was or even that she was married. Having her stand he told her, "*Your husband will be in church and standing beside you.*" At the time they were separated and he was seeing another woman but it gave Teresa hope.

She went down to the church and put a bed in an empty room and did nothing but pray and read her Bible. Tim shortly after that got heavily convicted and went over to their old house. He and Teresa got it right and he came into the church. Knowing music was bad for him he quit playing professionally and started selling cars. All of his talent was turned toward the church.

The church had gotten the best musicians in town saved. Their band, "*New Beginnings,*" began playing every community event from chili cook-offs and parades to "*battle of the bands.*" Even the schools allowed the band in. It gave the church a high community exposure and a positive image. After church it was not unheard of to take the instruments into a restaurant and take over, with the band starting to play.

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Favor

In 1980 they grew to over one hundred people, then came a great opportunity, when a conventional church building became available. This was a town that liked the traditional and when people went to church they wanted a church building not a store front. Many Pentecostals had been going to non-Pentecostal churches and now Praise Chapel became the place to go. That year the church would leap by another hundred members.

Christianity at its best believes that anything is possible. The disciples as they followed Jesus began to see that God could and would do the impossible. Donna Pearls was backing out of her drive way and did not pay attention till it was too late. Screams filled the air. The worst nightmare of a parent was reality; she had run over her own daughter. The leg was a mess, but the mother was not going to a hospital without prayer. She ran her over to the church and the congregation prayed. When they finally got to the hospital, they discovered the girl was fine.

Prayer for the Kingman church was like white glue or salt: you used it on everything. People prayed for each other, for their dogs and chickens if your car had a problem prayer might work better than a mechanic.

One lady in the church had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Ninety percent of her liver was gone and so was all hope for her. Sue Frank worked with

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her and talked her into coming to church as a last hope. She is still healed and alive. In another service a woman in a wheel chair came out of it walking, and never went back. There were failures too, but it was the successes that kept them going.

Mustard Seed

A great legacy of Kingman and of Praise Chapel would be a willingness to believe God. Kingman had planted Fred Thurman into Phoenix, in a service he prayed for a small club footed baby. Standing back in awe, he watched as those legs untwisted and grew out before his eyes.

Praise Chapel would see churches grow to exceptional size, but the real power of what God was doing was in small churches releasing couples into ministry. The New Testament is the story of the small church. Persecuted and restricted because of the impossibility of finding buildings, the groups were small, but big in vision. In America today the majority of churches are small churches. A church that has over 50 people Sunday morning is larger than most churches in the country. Only 7% of churches in America have attendance of over 200. Most churches are small churches and Praise Chapel discovered how to harness the power of this size congregation.

While the Kingman church is one of the largest churches in the fellowship today the churches planted

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out of it outnumber those in any Sunday service by several times. Mike and Donna have built into the pastors an understanding that in multiplying they can accomplish the most for God.

What would make the Kingman church special would not be it's huge size, but the couples that would come out of it. The first church sent out was Stan and Linda Elms into Dolan Springs, Arizona, a small city about 40 miles away. Fred and Talona Thurman went to Phoenix to pioneer. Stan and Linda Elms and Art and Donna Pearls moved East to start churches in Louisiana. Fred and Talona turned the church over to Mitch Thurman and went to Long View, Texas. Carl and Bonnie Friedrich went to Buena Park, California, a church now running with churches out of it. Tim and Teresa Masters then were sent to Tyler, Texas, then moved to Santa Clara, California. Dusty and Becky Hughes went to La Puente, California. Jeff and Rosemary Adams into Las Vegas, Nevada.

The Christian life is not a call to what is easy. No church is planted without a price to the mother. To Kingman that price would on occasion be large. Sending their best hurt in finances and attendance, but the greatness of the church is that they have not faltered.

Taking the Cross

Winning the world is a costly affair. Not every church planted is a success. The best Christians are often those that have been broken. Out of the ashes of a

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life stretched to the breaking or a church shaken to its core often come the strongest people and greatest congregations. Here is where trust builds.

Some of those put out are stories of heartbreak. Insensitive people and a difficult city often force a couple to leave disillusioned and wounded. For many pastors the greatest day in their life was the night they had hands laid on them to take a city for Christ. But dreams can become nightmares, and for some couples their most humiliating experience was when they had to come home, embarrassed and confused. If anything would make this group special it would be that they cared for the wounded and the successful. Believing the promise that "*all things work together for good.*"

The tragedy of the church world is that it often can only deal with success. Ministry is more an art form than some mechanical process. Success is often a mystery. Many in Praise Chapel would be willing to take the chance of pastoring, because they knew that they would be treated with dignity in success or failure. What was expected was they do their best. In that environment, there is no failure.

Seeing the Humor

Nothing is more interesting than a gathering of church planters. It is not just miracles they have seen but every type of person imaginable. They can tell you

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stories that leave you laughing or crying. Most churches start in the cheapest building with less than ideal locations and equipment. Because of these poor beginnings, those first people can be from the bottom of the social rungs. It is only those with the greatest need that would come to a pioneer church. Virgil was a guy afraid to set in front of a window. Paranoid, he thought all the world was against him. Virgil was always ready to believe the worst. As a movie was about to run and the lights went out, Virgil yelled out, *"Oh great, now I'm blind, that's all I need."*

Stan was the type described by the statement *"the lights are on but nobody is home."* The pastor was making a point about living holy, and how that we need to be careful about what we look at. To drive the point home he said how it would be wrong if, Steve (another guy in the church) were to go to Circle K and look over the counter at the dirty pictures. That would be tempting himself. Stan stood up and yelled, *"That's all right Steve, I do that too."*

Because of their location it is not uncommon to have people come by panhandling. Most of the pastors will help a guy with food, but are not interested in paying for a drunk. It can sometimes get interesting.

One guy kept showing up in a baby church in Texas. He tried to say that his arm was bad, and would hold it out stiff from his body, but he kept forgetting he could not move it. It became a game about who would give up first. The guy always got some food but it almost made him mad because that was not what he

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wanted. He wanted money to get drunk with. He got a new idea and showed up at the church and said that his uncle had died and he needed a bus ticket to go to the funeral. They took him to the bus station and bought a one way ticket. The guy all the way there was pleading to just give him the money. They shipped him off to Miniola, Texas on a one way ticket, and he never did come back and bother the church.

Not every church would do great, but the fact was that Kingman had sent them into the harvest. Many of these couples have moved to different churches and ministries, and represent some of the best leadership in the fellowship.

Howard Pennington

Today the Kingman church is throbbing with new life through the ministry of Howard Pennington. Howard got saved in 1976 in Bullhead, Arizona. Howard had just gotten out of the Penitentiary for dealing cocaine in Alaska, and knew what it was like to have your life collapse over night. The man that he was dealing with had gotten busted and he was turning in his old contacts to get off himself. When Howard landed in Anchorage he was already under surveillance by the FBI. A federal swat team jumped him.

Howard heard the bull horns declaring that the house was surrounded and to *"come out with your hands up."* Twenty years old and scared to death, they tore up the carpet and hid the drugs the best they could. When they finally opened the door, there were police and agents everywhere. Howard found an M16 pushed into his back. Hands grabbed him. Shoved and threatened, he was drug outside to lie in a foot and half of snow for a half hour.

Howard had been heavily into the drug scene, both in selling and using them. He figured this was the way a young man could get rich. At 19 he owned his own home on the Colorado river, had a new corvette, Harley Davidson, motor home, ski boat, and \$100,000 cash put away. With all of that there was still a void.

Pam

The one thing that was different was his wife. She did not drink or do drugs. She was constantly telling Howard they needed a change. It was when he got out of jail that he started to listen. A good friend of Howard's was Bobby Burris. They had gotten loaded together in the past and Bobby had just gotten saved when Howard came back to Bullhead, Arizona. He began to hound Howard about coming to church with him. There was nothing Howard wanted to do less. Bobby was not going to give up. At the time Bobby was getting married and Howard felt like he needed to be at the wedding. The wedding was in the middle of a revival. Howard's wife Pam headed for the altar and got saved that night. Howard was shaken. He felt something there that was real. He came out the next night to the revival, and by the third night he was a Christian. When he got saved, it was a change from night to day.

A wild sinner, his Christianity would be full out also. Immediately he tried to reach others. Howard was out preaching not many days later with the bull horn. Upset at others resistance, he found himself cussing. *"I don't give a #%\$#."* A guy in the background was trying to get his attention; he yelled out, *"Howard, you can't cuss while your preaching."*

Howard gave a barber the biggest thrill ever when he walked in after getting saved. His hair came

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to his belt loops, and when he walked into the barber shop the place came to a stop. There were six men waiting for a hair cut and they all looked over. The barber asked, "*What can I do for you?*"

"I'm looking for a haircut," Howard told him.

The guy that was getting a hair cut took the apron off and said, "*Go ahead, I'll wait.*"

No Compromise

Howard's roots were in wild and straight ahead evangelism. Like some of the great evangelists of old his method was to set himself on fire and people would come to watch him burn. Only Howard might not just build a spiritual fire but a real one if it would work. One night he and a friend decided to blast a KOA camp ground with the gospel. They got up on a hill with a PA and started preaching. A man came out of a RV with a 22-caliber rifle loaded with a banana clip. "*Pack it up,*" he yelled at them.

With more zeal than wisdom they decided to stay and preach anyway. The man started to shoot at them. He fired round after round into the speaker until it would not work and then came storming up the hill. Shoving the rifle into Howard's throat he fumed, "*If you say another word I'm going to blow your brains out.*" Suddenly the man realized what he was doing. Falling to his knees, he started saying, "*You're crazy, you're crazy.*" They started to witness to him, and the man came out to church and got saved.

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Howard left Bullhead and pioneered several churches. His first was in Hemit, California and then in Las Vegas, Nevada. It was in Anchorage, Alaska that he made some of his biggest impact. Building a thriving church there, he left it after a few years to come back to the lower fifty States. With a couple stops between he landed in Kingman. Offered several opportunities to pastor, it was Kingman that he knew God had spoken to him about.

New Birth

There, God linked Howard and the congregation together. The church had fallen on some rough days. The crowds were small and the debt was high, but the core was still there and looking for a pastor to lead them. The flames of revival were not dead just banked.

In crusades, they made a positive influence on the city. It opened the door to the Jail. It was there where they saw a need that others were not filling. Starting as Chaplains in the jail, they began ministering to around 70 men a week in several services a week.

Tim Wilson was living in the park, sleeping in the bushes. He and his girl friend Patty were alcoholics. Tim ended up in jail and got saved, he told them how to get a hold of Patty. She got saved and moved in with the Pennington's.

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When he got out of jail, Tim and Patty got married, and started up a drug and alcohol treatment program called Jacob's Ladder. Later John Pool would take this over and turn it into a phenomenally effective tool for helping people and the church. There in that small town they have the favor of judges and police. They are seeing family after family come into the church "broken" and end up "restored." "*They grew in favor with God and men*" is a scripture that has meaning in Kingman.

On the fourth of July, as the gulf war was raging, they did a large drama presentation in the park. There were up to 7,000 people there. The drama portrays the freedom that we have and how that is rooted in men that have given their lives. At the end of the presentation over 7,000 were on their feet with their hands over their hearts. Several old veterans came up and said, "*pastor that was powerful.*"

The Kingman church is still today a powerful testimony of what any church with vision can do. Out of that small city has come church after church, many of these churches are larger than the mother church, but none bigger in vision. Today they are linked into the harvest. Sending their pastor overseas, stretching to plant other churches, evangelizing their part of the Western United States it is a church that many a mega church could learn from. A testimony that big town or small, God uses us all.

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6

From Cholo to Missionary

Frank's mother was a wonderful, if domineering lady. She had her reasons for wanting a little more control in the family. Frank's dad was a drunk and a drug addict; while not an evil man in the dark and sinister sense of the word, he was a good man trapped in addictions. With her world out of control, she found strength in Catholicism.

His dad was a mess and yet, Frank's best friend. The Salcidos had been drunks for generations and he was passing the curse onto his son. As a pre-teen Frank had filled his life with sports, but once he got into High school he switched to drugs and booze. When the authorities said, "*Do not take drugs,*" it just made Frank want to try them. Unlike most dads, Frank's dad encouraged him to try every kind of narcotic there was. His dad played all the games of an addict. He was

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a habitual liar who denied responsibility for any of his problems or those in the family. He was concerned with one thing, staying happy. Frank and his friends would cut class and go over to Frank's house, where his dad would be returning from work on the graveyard shift. On the way home he would buy beer for the boys and him, and by the afternoon they were all wasted.

Frank was fifteen the first time he saw his dad shooting heroin. His dad called out from the rest room, "*Son, come here.*" When he went in to the room, he saw his dad tied up and shaking. "*Son,*" His dad pled, "*Hold my arm so I can shoot up.*"

Crying, he said "*Dad, how can you do this?*" Watching his dad scared him enough to keep him from ever shooting heroin, but it did not keep him from much else.

Trouble

For a couple of years he got into the gang scene on a small scale. Running with the hoodlums, he got kicked out of school several times. He figured he was bad, and got caught at school carrying a home made hand gun. Laying in the grass with handcuffs on, and kids staring down at him was the first of many bad memories.

His dad was just another irresponsible kid. He talked to Frank about running away but got scared of

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losing his marriage and instead, tried to put the clamps down on Frank. It was as dysfunctional a home as it is possible to imagine. Frank's dad was a lot of fun but unstable; which made his mother look like a wicked domineering woman when she tried to get her family in control.

For some reason it was always Frank that was put on restriction. His brothers got into trouble too, but it was Frank that the family tried to change. To him, his mother's nagging and his dad's hypocrisy was just getting worse.

Describing himself as rebellious, hateful and independent, at 17 years of age Frank split. Figuring that having a job and graduating from the twelfth grade made him a man, he launched out with his girlfriend Valerie into the world. She was 15 and pregnant. There was not much chance for a happy ending. Fired from two other jobs (when he was caught stealing), it took a lot of faith to believe he was going to be able to hang on to this one. Their only earthly possessions were seven lids of Marijuana, but they smoked all that themselves before he could sell any of it. It was not long until they were forced to move in with Valerie's mom, who lived in Bell Gardens. Her home was on the turf of a gang that was at war with Frank's gang. If the other gang had recognized him, they would have killed him. Scared to be out on the streets, he was stuck hiding out in his mother-in-law's house.

This little lady was going to be the key to turning Frank around. She had met and got close to the

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Blooms, who led her to the Lord and their church. If her daughter was going to hang out with Frank, she was after Frank to get saved. He would hear her praying for him at night. Her prayers got stronger when she received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. He told Valerie, *"Your mom has flipped."* She invited them to church. Anything seemed better than being pinned up, so they went. The church services were boring, but at the Bible study Brother Bloom taught, things were happening.

Born Again

It took Frank a while to catch on to what Christianity was about. After getting saved, he told his brother, *"I'm saved and born again. Let's celebrate."* So, they went out and got loaded. Valerie knew this was wrong and told him, *"You can't do that."* The pastor of the Nazarene church started to hassle him and Valerie about getting married and they finally did on June 18, 1977.

By July he had gotten tired of playing games, and told God *"I want what Valerie's mother has Lord."* He promised, *"If you baptize me with the Holy Ghost I'll do anything you ask. I'll stand on street corners, preach, anything."* He got his wife to pray with him, and she got filled but Frank did not. His brother-in-law helped him when he told him, *"If you'll get on your knees' God will fill you with the Holy Ghost."* It was a

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Sunday night and he had spent all weekend at services trying to speak in tongues. Desperate, when he went home he hit his knees and immediately started speaking in tongues. Afraid that if he went to sleep, he'd wake up without the baptism, he stayed up all night praying in tongues. The night was glorious.

The problem with all of this was that the Nazarene church did not like the idea of speaking in tongues and asked all of those who did, to leave. For the first week or two they all drifted in different directions, but the Blooms settled into Praise Chapel, and most of the others would follow. Frank came to check it out, and from the first hand shake he knew he was going to like Mike Neville. There at the door he said to Valerie, "*This is where I want to go.*"

Maywood

There were about 80 people out that Sunday. Mike preached that they were going to reach the area and the people who lived around the church. Although some people left the church, the Blooms and their Bible study of about 20, filled the gap. The Blooms, the Menchacas and the Salcidos would not just take up space but they would be the leaders that would lead this church into great growth.

Mike trusted the Blooms and their Bible study never stopped meeting. At these meetings Frank always asked for special prayer for his family. Sister Baca was a member of the group, and she told Frank

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how her husband had been a heroin addict who had gotten saved. Frank began to believe that even his dad could change.

Locked into a good church and growing in Christ he told his parents, *"I am sorry for being a bad child and making your life miserable, but I really have Jesus now and he can help you."* His mother listened but his dad was unconscious on the living room floor, loaded on heroin.

"Son, look at your father," his mother told him. She had lost all hope he would ever change. Frank knew how hooked his father was. He had been to Alcoholics Anonymous, and Narcotics Anonymous with his dad a hundred times. It seemed like all of Frank's life his dad was getting busted and thrown into County Jail, mental hospitals and recovery programs.

"Mom, let me take dad to church with me," he said, *"I know the only one that can change my father is Jesus."*

"Son, we go to church," she said, *"we go to Mass."*

"No mom, I'm talking about real church; I'm talking about getting saved."

She said, *"Well, do what you want."*

So Frank took his dad to church; the problem was that he was a flirt and a drug addict. He started coming more for the women than the Spirit. If that were not bad enough, several times he slipped out of service with the excuse that he needed some air. He would come staggering back from the liquor store

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loaded, his breath stinking like a brewery and getting louder and more obnoxious by the minute. Embarrassed, Frank Jr. almost gave up. It seemed like this had been his whole life. As a kid playing baseball, he could remember the many times his dad came staggering down the street tripping over bushes and hanging onto telephone poles.

But Frank didn't give up, and it was coming to service after service, which finally got his dad saved. When he really got saved, it made Frank's mom jealous. Catholic men do not go to church several times a week, and she knew that something had to be going on. At first she thought that her husband had a woman in church, so she started coming to check this out. At a Jed Smock revival she got saved.

Called to Ministry

Sixty people were coming out to the Bible study and Robert Bloom asked Frank to help. At first he was the guy they called on to pray. Then Robert asked him to teach the study. Frank did it, and the next week he asked Frank to start his own study. There was one big problem, Frank could not read. Earlier, Frank had taken a Sunday school class where he got through the lesson by circling different paragraphs in the lesson and having the kids read it out loud. Then he would explain what they had said.

He spent hours agonizing over those studies, teaching himself to read from the Bible. The first study

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was in Bell Gardens. He saw it grow to 25 with all the old gang members and friends coming in. Over the next few years he would start four different studies in different areas of the valley. This was the foundation of his pastoral ministry.

The mistake many make today is, they think that the ministry is a white collar, intellectual, profession. Churches look for the number of degrees a preacher has and how he sounds. The ministry does not start in the pulpit but in helping people. It is getting your hands dirty ministering to lives. Praise Chapel began to take these new converts and put them to work for God.

Alive with enthusiasm and involvement, the church was the most exciting thing happening, and they loved coming together. If there was not a church service to go to, they went to each others houses. The choir, outreaches, and services involved all those that wanted to do something. It was not just fellowship that was taking place. Praise Chapel was small enough that there was constant contact with the pastor and key church leaders, which helped to spiritually develop these young lives.

The Streets

Frank was the first person to come into the church from a gang background. He would be a magnet for hundreds that followed. Nothing would bring a bigger change, than when he started leading songs. His dress and actions came from the streets. When he led songs, he wore his shirt buttoned all the way at the top with the tails sticking out and the shirt unbuttoned at the bottom. He was out of another world than most Christians. Mike finally came up and asked him why they left the shirt unbuttoned. Mike said, "*Frank, back in Oklahoma, the guys wanted to show their chest not their belly buttons!*" The toughest thing that Mike ever asked him to do was to go back into the rest room and button his shirt and tuck it in. Unhappy about it, he did it.

The sermon "*Win one build one*" stirred Frank to step out even more. It was about winning the lost and Frank decided to act on it. He got Jesse Young and said "*let's go do it.*" They decided to go down to Whittier Boulevard where the cruisers hung out. This was the beginning of impacts that would shut down the boulevard at least three times. Stretching for miles down the strip, the boulevard was where the cruisers drove the hottest cars in LA, with the party going on all night. A small group of other Christians began to join them; standing there in the middle of drugs and sex, they told them about the answer to man's needs: Jesus.

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One night, after a sermon on "*the walls of Jericho*," Jesse and Frank walked the whole length of the strip. If Joshua could take the land by walking it, these men figured they could too. They walked for miles putting their feet down on the prime turf of the enemy. On their knees in front of the Golden Gate theater, they ignored the laughter and prayed, "*God, give us this land.*" Seven years later the church would move into that theater.

These young Christians loved to stir things up. They had not been afraid of police or other gangs and the same boldness marked their Christianity. After hearing about Arthur Blessed carrying a cross they made their own. They took that cross down Hollywood Boulevard, Pacific Boulevard and Whittier Boulevard. Jerome Weymouth, Frank Salcido, Phil Hernandez, Danny Mancha, and Jesse Young were the hard core. In the neighborhood you always flew your colors, and they wanted a name for themselves and so they all got shirts that said Commandos for Christ. Then Frank saw a place that would put any name on a hat. He replaced a baseball teams name with Jesus. Those white and blue Jesus hats became another mark of a new group in town, a group linked together not by violence or drugs but by a cause.

They headed down to the boulevard after Sunday nights service, often staying until one in the morning. This lasted for years. After Maywood planted several churches, it got to where hundreds might show up on a Sunday Night.

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Their approach was always changing. They might have a march where people would make up signs that said "*repent*" or "*the wages of sin is death.*" On another night they would have a march where they sang. It could be that someone brought a bull horn and preached. It was in the conflict that people got excited, and committed.

Fearless

The cars on the boulevard would be lined up bumper to bumper, stopped at a light, when the saints laid into them. It was a trapped audience that had the added spark of danger. One night a car pulled up and Frank leaned down telling them, "*Hey homes, how's it going man? You know what, Jesus can set you free. I use to be a gang banger man, and I'll tell you, Jesus is the truth.*"

The person in the passenger seat turned back and looked at his buddy who nodded at him. He said, "*I'm still a gang banger,*" and reaching behind him, pulled out a sawed off shotgun. "*Keep on talking,*" he said. Frank thought his time was up. Drive-by's were happening then and he figured he was about to be one. All of a sudden God took over and Frank threw his hands into the air and said, "*I'm no good to God dead anyway.*" Phil Hernandez, who was bold, stepped in and said, "*Hey man, have you ever seen bullets bounce off a person?*" No one to this day knows whether they

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tried to pull the trigger as the car ran the red light and turned right with squealing tires.

It was the greatest time in Frank's life. He and his wife were never late to church. Their marriage was doing tremendously and friendships were forming that would last the rest of their lives. Frank saw himself as a great athlete and a fun person, but he would never have thought he could be a preacher. He gained tremendous dignity as he realized his life could count.

This is what happened in the New Testament. Peter was a cussing fisherman who became an Apostle. Prostitutes married deacons and demoniac's became preachers. God uses anyone that loves him. No matter how rough the beginning product is, the Holy Spirit can so change a person that you think they are lying when they share their past. Not only would Frank experience this, but he would see hundreds of others changed just like him.

It was the opportunity to preach that really set him on a different path. You never knew when Pastor Neville might call on a Tuesday night and say, "*want to preach tomorrow?*" When Frank would hesitate he'd ask, "*What is the matter, can't you handle it?*" Frank would be up all night putting something together.

El Monte

Frank and Valerie were the fourth couple sent out of Praise Chapel. Leaving for El Monte on March 1, 1982. Everything had come together for them when a family that lived in El Monte had asked for a Bible study. Mike asked Frank to leave the study he was doing and take over this one. He told him, "*Brother this thing could turn into a church, we just don't know what will happen.*" Now those words were rapidly coming true. In just a month, they were having 25 out for the study. It was obvious someone needed to start a church here.

It was tough to leave the mother church. This was where their friends were, but it was exciting also. Frank drove a truck during the day and ministered at night. They got a building after a month and the church started to grow rapidly. On their one year anniversary they had 125 out to hear Don McCamish preach.

They stayed a year and eight months in El Monte and then turned it over to Phil and Dee Dee Hernandez. When they announced the change at Bible conference, it was a shock. This was the first pastor change in any of the churches, and Louis, a member, yelled out, "*Why?*" Church changes would never be easy but they were an important part of the expansion that God had called Praise Chapel to.

San Jose

Frank saw himself preaching in the city of San Jose in a dream. He knew it was from God, so Frank and Valerie packed their few things and headed for Northern California. He was the first pastor to leave the Los Angeles area. The church was a success from the beginning. On May 24, 1984 they showed three prophetic movies and followed it with a revival. Thirty-five people came out that first service.

Frank was trying to get a sign up for the church when a man drove up in a new silver Lincoln Continental. He had a flyer in his hand and Frank asked, "*Can I help you?*"

"I'm looking for this church that is showing a movie."

Frank told him, "*I'm the pastor here and this is where the movie is at. I was on my way to look for somebody to help me put a sign up.*"

The man told him, "*If you can wait about fifteen minutes I'll come and help you.*"

He came back in a utility truck full of tools they would need. All Frank ended up doing was holding the sign up while the man bolted it to the wall. His helper would become the first man to come to the church.

Frank and Valerie would spend five great years there. Their church became an anchor for other churches planted in Northern California. Here he

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would develop and send out men while wrestling with getting a church to grow past a hundred. Praise Chapel would never be as concerned with numbers as they were with changed lives. They were not looking for an audience but disciples. While this attitude might have driven some people off, for those that stayed, there was tremendous spiritual growth in their lives.

God was bringing men and women from a variety of backgrounds. Raz Taylor was another man who came out to a movie. He had been going to a big church and was lost in the crowd. As Frank started to talk to him, something came together for him. Here was a pastor that had a vision and time for Raz personally.

He became the key outreach man and song leader. He was always out on the streets witnessing and passing out tracts. Raz met Eva at the church and married her. The two of them would later go out to Pleasant Hill, California to pioneer.

Lionel Mata

Another key player in the church would be Lionel Mata. Lionel would be a pastor of a church launched out of the San Jose church and later on an evangelist, but only God could have seen that future for him. His dad had been in the Northern branch of the Mexican Mafia pushing heroin and other drugs.

Lionel loved PCP, and was always getting into trouble by using it. One day he heard a buzzing sound

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and started running down the street screaming, *"They're coming, they're coming!"* Hallucinating, nothing could convince him that the killer Bees were not after him. The police and ambulances came and took him off.

It was a saved policeman that made the first impact on him for the gospel. There, locked up in the jail, this police officer would come by and witness to him.

He had gotten married, but his wife Cindy got sick of his drugs and left him. Cindy had gotten saved and started going to Frank's church. Lionel fell lower and lower, living in a fantasy world and burglarizing stores and gasoline stations to stay alive. At night he would go out and steal garbage cans and sell them for \$5.00 a piece. Busted while ripping off a gas station, he was facing a long term in prison. Jess was in jail also, and he recognized Lionel as Cindy's husband. Jess began to tell him, *"When we get out of here were going to serve God together. We're going to go to Bible conference together."*

Lionel was looking at a guaranteed 11 years in prison, but by a miracle they kept reducing his time. He finally ended up with a three-year prison sentence. Standing before the judge he got the court crying as he asked everyone to forgive him. *"I'm so sorry,"* he said *"For what I've done."* He told the owners of the gas station who were there to testify against him, *"I held a gun to your head but I hope you can forgive me."*

The bailiff was crying as he said, *"It's powerful what you're saying."* He went back to his cell facing

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three years in prison; after just sitting down, a guard brought him back into court. The public defender Pat Teeterman said, *"There is something that God wants to do in your life. I don't know what it is, but I believe God wants to do something with you."*

Looking at her he said, *"That's good, but I'm facing three years."*

"I know the judge," She said, *"He's a born again Christian and we feel that you're not prison material."*

Judge Taylor had him stand and told him, *"Mr. Mata we want to send you to prison for 90 days of observation."*

It was just enough time to scare him. He ran into Charles Manson one day, and he watched men stabbed for nothing. In prison he started to go to Bible study, and it was while he was there that his wife began to soften about taking Lionel back. He told God, *"You help me to get out of this one, and I'll never let you down."* God did his part and so did Lionel.

???? Three churches were launched out of that San Jose church. Frank and his wife would stay there for 5 1/2 years. While eating a burrito with Pastor Neville, he told them, *"This conference God's going to speak to you."* A little scared, he and his wife were ready to do whatever God wanted. At that conference they felt a call to the Philippines.

Philippines

Frank left for the Philippines on his thirtieth birthday, and landed in Manila where he was forced to live for a month in a hotel. For Frank this was the answer to prayer, for his wife it was a nightmare. For thirty-one days she cried every morning. His twelve year old daughter said after a few days, "*Daddy, I want to go home now.*"

"Daughter," he told her, "*we are home, this is our home.*"

The third world is different from America in many ways; the pressures of endless lines of people and cars, the pollution, the culture but the biggest difference is just the smell. For Praise Chapel it was an opportunity to touch the world. An American dollar goes a long way and people are open.

What makes it possible to go to many third world countries is that English is the second language. While everyone does not speak English there are always those who do, and can act as interpreters. Even in countries where it was technically illegal to preach, a group of pastors can come in and work with the local church and see real impact made.

Frank did not have to learn the language, and so started from the first week preaching. His first challenge was to find an assistant to help with the cultural and relational barriers. Hernan Soriano became his assistant and would later take the church.

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The church got its first member when Frank asked a taxi cab driver where he lived. It turned out that he lived in the same area Frank was looking at. So Frank witnessed to him, prayed with him, and bought the man a Bible. Frank then asked if they could have Bible studies at his house. "*My house is very small,*" the man told him.

Frank said "*That's no problem.*" He had no idea how small, small was in the Philippines. The man lived in a seven by fourteen room with five kids, but it was a start. They moved the study to a neighbor's place and the first service saw 24 people come out.

In the few months Frank and Valerie were there they saw a church started, but more than anything he saw what God can do in nationals. In the past missionaries have felt that only Americans could really run the church. Praise Chapel has broken out of that mold. Seeing the potential in these third world converts, they began to train and release them into the ministry. Frank was working under a Philippine national named Sammy Morris, who had worked with Larry Neville for several years and then had taken the leadership of the Filipino churches. Sammy and Frank helped each other and built a strong friendship. Frank would have spent his life there, but his wife got seriously ill and they had to return home to the pastorate in Sun Valley, California.

7

The "Son" in Sun Valley

Sun Valley is a great church that has faced some real struggles. It cost the church a lot just to get started. Dave Riggs and his family moved to Sun Valley with a big dream and a willingness to sacrifice. For the first couple of years they had lots of chances to make sacrifices but the dream mainly remained a dream.

Dave had been a heroin addict who had gotten saved and trained in a skid row mission. Launched from an independent ministry he was looking for a place of fellowship when he met Mike. He pulled in with them when he realized they had the same vision he did. When he went out to start the church he went after people at the bottom whom no one else cared about. Seeking to reach these people he put the church

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in a less than ideal location. The building was in a rough neighborhood, surrounded by bars, where it was common to have drunks staggering in to disrupt the services. One old drunk (Corn Flake) came by regularly. Singing drunkenly when everyone else was praying, Corn Flake yelled out questions in the middle of the sermon; he was a pest. In those first couple of years windows were shot out, and the pastor was threatened with machetes and guns. It took nerve just to park your car and walk to the door of the Sun Valley church.

The strength of the church was the boldness that developed out of those early days. During one revival they moved the services outside on the side walk. Carrying a cross through the streets, they went marching past a punk rock bar called Godzilla. Everyone at the bar looked different. Their hair was a rainbow of colors chopped into bizarre shapes. Safety pins stuck through ears and noses and their music was wild and loud. Everyone started witnessing to these punk rockers. A police helicopter came flying over the bar, and one young man who was loaded started to freak out. Wanting to help, some of the church people took him back over to their building. The other punk rockers thought these wild Christians were kidnapping their friend. A cry rang out, "*They're stealing one of our friends, let's go get them.*" The crowd emptied from the bar and ran toward the church trying to kick the doors in and threatening to blow up the building. Next to the church was the hang out for the "*Chosen Few,*"

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(a motor cycle gang) who hated punk rockers. When they saw the fight they came streaming out of their club house yelling, "*Hey, the punk rockers are beating up the Christians! Let's help them out.*" Jumping the fence, the fight got serious. A huge biker was yelling, "*those guys over there turn the other cheek, but we don't,*" as he hit the man in front of him. This was not a traditional church.

Sun Valley developed a strong group but one that was small. It seemed like the church was never going to grow. Year after year they reached out but nothing seemed to take.

Changed Lives

Jimmie Joe Lewis played a big part in the church. When he was doing well, the church did well, when he had troubles it tended to drag others down. Jimmie came from a rough background. He never knew his real dad. His mom did her best to raise him but there was a gap that only a father could have filled. He was angry and desperate for a feeling of belonging.

At twelve years old the family moved next door to a house with three teenagers who had been deserted. These kids had turned the house into a party hangout and Jimmie got his baptism into sin there. Girls, booze and drugs were the agenda. Jimmy was a kid in body, but he was developing the habits and tastes of an adult. He moved into the sixties ready to be swept up in the

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drug movement; he started sniffing glue and moved on into harder drugs. At fourteen he dropped acid and by fifteen he took his first shot of heroin. By sixteen he was part of a gang that was pulling armed robberies to get money for their habits. It was in this gang that he and David Riggs became friends and started doing drugs together. David would be the one to help Jimmie find Christ, but that was a long way in the future.

At seventeen, Jimmy got busted for check forgery and to escape jail, he joined the marine corps. He did not last a year before the drugs forced him out. A turning point in his life was when David's brother died of an overdose. That shook David and Jimmie. David got saved, and the word started to circulate about the difference in his life.

Jimmie tried to break his heroin habit by smoking PCP. Like everything he did, he did this to excess too, and traded one set of problems for another. He began to become paranoid and disoriented. Convinced that he was going to die he ran to Gooding, Idaho, where loaded on PCP, he called out to the Lord. He went the next day to a church and tried to find help, but he had no foundations and drifted to his step-father's in Northern California. Jimmy got a job and avoided the needle, but he did it by doing any other drug he could get his hands on. He thought he had his life under control until he tried some speed. It was not long until he was borrowing a needle and shooting speed. Within weeks he had lost everything he had.

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It was then that he finally got low enough to get a hold of David Riggs. Desperate he headed down to see if what David had, could help him. He showed up on David's door step and was out on the streets preaching the next day with a group from the mission. When they handed Jimmie the bullhorn something snapped. The Spirit of God was all over him and he went running up and down the street witnessing to any one that he could talk to or yell at. His conversion was real, but so was the call of drugs. For a while, Jimmie would be doing good, only to end up slipping back into the drug scene. This happened several times after the church started and did not help him or anyone else. Jimmy would aid in seeing a large group of people saved and coming to church and would overnight disappear back into the world of sin and drugs. These people couldn't help but be shaken.

A key to breaking Jimmie's cycle of failure was Marie, whom he would marry. God lead Marie and her family out of a more traditional church into the Sun Valley church. She knew God was going to put her and Jimmie together, she believed in Jimmie when he did not believe in himself. Slowly a core of people came together.

Breakthroughs

Two things marked a turning point in the church. The first was a revival by Johnny Dorris.

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Looking out at the congregation he said, *"I feel like there is a big rock on top of the Sun Valley church, and God is lifting it right now."* From that night things started to work and new people started flowing in.

The second thing was when Billy Hall came to help the pastor and his wife. Billy brought into the church a love and friendship that had been missing. Added now to vision and zeal was stability.

Churches grow for many reasons. Revivals and miracles built this church. Prophecies came regularly during the church services, people came to services to see and experience the power of God moving. Doctors told two women that they could not have children. Both received prophecies that they would have children in a year, and they did. There was a special spirit in this church to move in the gifts.

Harold was a quadriplegic who had not heard or talked in 45 years. People could not believe it when he heard sounds for the first time. Those were the services that made people think they had stepped back into the days of the Bible, when Jesus caused the deaf to hear and the blind to see.

Two ladies in the congregation were in a serious accident on their way to church. Doctors did not think the one with the skull fractures would live. The church began to pray. When the doctors came out of the operating room an hour later, they said they were both going to live. But, Sarah's hip was so bad that she would never walk normally again. At a revival service she screamed out during prayer, and people came running,

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she had thrown down the crutches and was starting to walk. Both women were healed.

The pastor and the congregation liked things jumping. A favorite evangelist was known to stand on the pulpit if things were not exciting enough. One night he told the key disciples, "*You have too much starch in your pants.*" Calling them out one by one, he made them first jump up and down in front of everyone, and then run up and down the aisles. He claimed they needed to break out of their religious habits. It might not have had any spiritual significance but it was different and even fun.

A great group of people started to come who were ready and looking for God to move. Dennis Castro, Randy Batista, Ernie Weaver, Manny Deabla made up just part of a great team. Not satisfied to just reach Sun Valley they started planting churches around California. The first couple to leave were Jimmie and Marie Lewis. As they left for Northern California the mother church began to dramatically grow. When Sun Valley launched the Castro's into San Francisco, California, revival followed again back in Sun Valley. It was obvious God was behind the releasing of these ministries. The Sun Valley church leaped to over 300 in short time.

Fruitful

The vision of the Maywood Praise Chapel was picked up in Sun Valley as they planted church after church and aided in reaching the world. Frank Donker came out of the Sun Valley church and went to Ghana, West Africa. Jimmie Joe and Marie Lewis would go to Medford, Oregon and then to Liverpool, England. They pastor today in Hesperia, California. Out of there they have seen two churches pioneered in Russia where Jimmy regularly ministers. Typical of the men and women out of Sun Valley, they have attracted some quality people. Manny Deabla was saved in the Medford church and took it when the Lewis' left for England.

Manny had been a drug addict who had dropped over 500 hits of acid and spent his life high and in trouble. A friend of his had gotten saved, and took him out to a prayer meeting, where 15 people were calling out on God. He had never seen anything like this before, and walking up to Jimmie Joe said, *"You look high."* Jimmie told him, *"I am high, do you want some of it?"* Manny prayed and found what he was looking for. Manny would take the church in Medford, Oregon when Jimmie left for England.

Randy Batista went out of Sun Valley to pastor in Eagle Rock, California, in 1990. The building was more like a closet than a church but in two and a half years it grew to over 60. Randy is a great guitar player, building a church on worship.

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Chris Madsen got saved in another fellowship out of which he pioneered a church in California. It was a difficult task, and he got little help or support from his mother church. Through a friend, he contacted the Sun Valley church who sent up ten car loads of people to reach out to the city. Impressed with their excitement and ability to witness, Chris spent the day in awe. They were preaching out on the streets when a guy passing by on a motorcycle started to curse them. Unintimidated David started prophesying, *"You're a backslider, and your dad used to abuse you . . . "* The man pulled over crying.

Chris came to a conference where the preaching was down to earth and challenging. It was during a slide show about the growth and vision of the Praise Chapel fellowship that he was most stirred. Watching it he could not shake the thought, *"These people are going to take the world."* He wanted to be a part of that so he shut down the small church he was pastoring and went into the Sun Valley church. The best experiences of his life were in working there.

When the Yuba City, California church opened in February of 1988, he became their pastor. Yuba City is a small rural town in California. Chris was from LA, and problems with culture shock were real. He ended up having to take a job in agriculture, and as he would drive through those farms he felt as isolated as he would have on the moon. The whole town shut down

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at eight o'clock, but in it is strong church planting church..

In church after church the same thing has happened, if you give God a chance He will take men and send them into the ministry.

Sun Valley was a church that would live on the edge. What they had, they gave, and it gave it's best. Praise Chapel has never been committed to playing it safe. From the beginning Mike and Donna have instilled faith rather than programs as their goal. The vision has caught deeply in the heart of the Sun Valley church and people.

8

Millionaire to Preacher

Carl and his wife Bonnie graduated from Ohio University. The economy was horrible in Ohio so the Friedrichs set out looking for better opportunities for their new family. Bonnie had been offered a teaching job in Kingman, Arizona, but what they really wanted to do was to join the Peace Corps. Idealistic and out to change the world, he was a product of his generation. Carl's dream was to go to the Ivory Coast in Africa. It did not work out, and Carl said, *"let's take the job in Arizona and I'll work with the Indians."* Like so many out of that era he started life with an idea of sacrificing to change the world. Also like many of his generation he was about to turn into a capitalist, with a membership in the country club.

Born in the Cleveland, Ohio area, his dad was a doctor who had raised him in a staunch Lutheran

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home. Though his parents were good people they had never gotten saved. His dad saw doctoring as working for God. Respected and in demand in the community, he had little time for the kids.

In High school Carl was into partying and playing in bands more than good grades. College started out even wilder, but his life had begun to straighten out after a couple of years and now they were setting out to build their own future.

Trapped in Kingman

When they drove into Kingman they wondered what they had gotten into. It was a little hole-in-the-wall town that they wanted out of the moment they got there. Locked into a teaching contract, they decided to make the best of a bad situation. Before they knew it they started to settle in. Carl saw that it was not as easy to help Indians as it was to talk about it. He got a job through a friend at a Volkswagen agency, where he soon learned he was good at selling cars. Deciding to use his degree in economics and psychology, after about nine months, he decided to go into business for himself with a used car lot called "*Autos Unlimited.*" Starting with one other guy, the two of them did it all. They bought, cleaned, waxed and sold their own cars, and within a year they were making money.

Carl got caught in a co-dependent relationship with this partner, who turned out to be an alcoholic. He

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was a mess but he looked like he had it together. A good salesperson, popular with the ladies he tied himself in tighter and tighter with Carl. Carl's idealism trapped him into thinking he had to help his friend. They negotiated a deal for some land with a liquor store on it. They moved the car lot over to that property. Forcing the liquor store owner to sell out to them, by surrounding the store with cars and making it impossible for him to do business, they soon owned a liquor license.

Since he owned the liquor store he decided to make it a bigger success. He saw, that the more liquor he bought the cheaper the booze was and so he got another liquor license and opened a night club: "*The Smoke House Cocktail Bar*." It became the "*in*" place in Kingman for the country western crowd. The bar had a basketball floor for dancing and live acts like Tim Masters and others that kept the place hopping. None of this had given him the prestige he was looking for. People looked down on used car salesmen and liquor store owners so when Carl had the chance to pick up a Volkswagen, new car dealership he jumped on it.

Carl had been running the used car and Volkswagen dealership along with the bar and the night club for about a year when he got saved. All his life he had gone to church. He had a great family and a son he loved, but his life consisted mainly of work. Probably the worse thing happening was he was starting to believe his own hype. In Kingman his face was

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on bill boards and his voice on the radio. Carl was not an alcoholic who spent his time hanging out at the bars, he was a workaholic that would hang out at the country club, and his family was suffering.

Disrupted

It was at this point that Allen Cates entered his life. Allen had bought a VW Rabbit from them, and worked for Duval mines. He was also a preacher in town. Carl came to work to find Allen sitting in the office. Carl asked his secretary, *"What does this guy want?"*

She told him, *"He wants a job."*

Not even interested in hiring a preacher, Carl said to, *"tell him, we aren't hiring."*

She came back and said, *"He's not leaving until he talks to you."*

So he sent the sales manager in to get rid of him, but Allen was not taking no for an answer. *"God spoke to me, that this is the place I'm supposed to work,"* he told them. *"I can't pastor the church and work at the mine and this is where God wants me."*

To get rid of him Carl said, *"All right, tell him he's a salesman. We're not going to put him on the pay role and he doesn't have any lot time, but if he sells a car we'll give him a commission."*

Allen started bringing people down every hour and turning them over to someone to sell them a car. Before long he sold more cars than any other sales-

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man, so they put him to work. Carl began to watch his life, and even went out of his way to make life tough for Allen. This guy was one of the boldest men Carl had ever met, and although he was a wild-eyed preacher, there was something different about him. At first the guy bothered Carl because he believed so strongly, but then it began to bother him that the guy just might be right.

Carl had gone to church all his life, and thought of himself as a good person. He avoided most the drugs that others did and worked in church groups, but no one had ever shown him how to get saved.

Carl's friends at the country club thought that Allen was a joke, but it was not long until Carl was defending him. *"You need to back off the guy,"* he told them, *"I don't understand or appreciate all he is doing, but he is trying to do something with his life."*

Volkswagen Diesel Rabbits had just come out and they were hot. When Carl's friends came in he helped them out, and he found himself delivering a car with Allen one day. Carl asked him, *"Can a rich man go to heaven?"*

Allen looked over at Carl and smiled, *"You know what - Jesus loves you and he does not care about your money."* He started to tell him about Abraham who was a rich man and went on to tell about others who served God and yet had possessions. It touched Carl. He went and bought a Living Bible and

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started reading it. Carl wanted to figure out Allen and what was different about what he believed and taught.

Reading Mark chapter 16, the words leaped out, "*These signs shall follow . . .*," and then it mentioned healing, tongues and casting out devils. It made him mad and he threw the Bible across the room. His church did not do any of the things that this scripture dealt with. It struck him that either the Bible was wrong or he was not hanging around with believers who took all the Bible seriously.

Breakthroughs

A few days later he did the unusual thing of going home for lunch. A workaholic, he always worked through lunch, but this day he jumped into his new Lincoln Continental Mark IV and went home. Sitting there alone in his living room he started thinking, "*God all my life I have believed in you, but if you are really the Son of God, I am asking you to come into my heart and change my life.*" At that second he was in heaven, and entering the throne room of God. There was a roar of praise that surrounded him and filled him. It was the most powerful experience he had ever had. He had no idea how long it lasted but when he came to himself his hands were raised and tears were streaming down his face while he screamed with all his might "*I praise you.*" It scared him that he had lost control like that. Half-embarrassed he got in his car to go back to work and there on the side of the road was a hitch-hiker. A

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voice spoke to him, "*Stop and pick him up and tell him what happened.*"

Carl obeyed. He told this hitchhiker "*a strange thing happened to me . . .*" It scared the hitchhiker, but it set Carl free, anchoring in Carl's life his own salvation experience. Before he got saved he was known as a "*little Hitler.*" At only twenty-eight years old he had seventy-five employees that he led through fear and intimidation. That day he started to change and people immediately noticed a difference in the boss.

He started spending all his time at work reading his Bible; the book had come alive for Carl. A young kid who worked there as a lot boy went to Praise Chapel and he asked Carl what had happened? When Carl told him, they began to rejoice. The boy casually asked, "*Have you ever been filled with the Holy Ghost?*"

Carl shot back, "*No, I'm not ready for that.*" Yet it started eating at him, and he made an appointment with the lot boy to find out what the Bible said about the infilling of the Holy Spirit. After work this kid would come and teach Carl. A few days later they prayed and Carl received the Holy Spirit's fullness.

Carl was 28 years old and headed toward being rich. Living in a good home and bringing in large sums of money, he should have been happy but he was not. One unfulfilled goal was to own a Ford or GM dealership, he figured that would bring fulfillment. These were the big men in the community. They ran with the

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state politicians and set at the top of the rung. A dealership came open when the previous owner got in gambling problems and Carl began negotiating to take over the Ford, Lincoln, Mercury dealership.

To pull the deal off Carl had to find some outside money. His partner was drinking up all the money he had, and some of Carl's too, but he did know a lot of people. To put it together he got a local doctor to front them some money for part of the partnership. While closing the deal, the US economy collapsed. Carl was faced with 21% interest on two million dollars worth of cars. Nothing was selling.

To make things worse he was stuck with last year's inventory and had made a mistake in ordering, and ended up with twice the inventory they needed on hand. There were cars and trucks everywhere. Everything he had was on the line and Carl was running scared. The first month they lost a fortune and the second was not much better. All Carl could do was work hard and pray that things would turn around. Things did turn, and after about five months they were over the hill and making a profit. It was then that his two partners came into his office. *"I feel like I got a bad deal,"* the doctor told him.

"What do you mean," Carl asked?

"I feel like I was misrepresented, I didn't get enough shares of stock."

Carl did not have any idea what was going on. Things were delicate and all Carl needed right now was to run into new conflicts. He called his bankers

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and said, *"I've got a problem here and I don't know what it is. I have a silent partner that is upset and I just want you to know that when I find out what is going on I'll tell you."*

Tested by Fire

He had tried to get answers from his partner, but the man kept playing dumb. When they were with the bankers his partner said, *"I know what the problem is."* Carl was shocked. Ten years he has carried this man and helped him out. Here is a friend saying, *"We think you're incapable of running this dealership. You are a religious fanatic."*

Carl had gone to church all his life but he had really gotten saved just months before, and now he faced one of his greatest tests; he was sick. It was like a punch in the stomach. God, though, spoke to him, *"Blessed are they that are persecuted for my name's sake."* At home laying before the Lord he got an answer, he was to give them the business. He was crazy for the Lord and he knew that if he fought and won the dealership he would lose his salvation in the process.

The next morning he walked into the office and told them, *"I'm going to give you this corporation, you do with it what you want to. All I ask in return is your portion of the used car lot."*

Carl went back to where he started. He turned the liquor store into a sales office and started selling

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cars. Within thirteen months the dealership he gave up was bankrupt and Carl was running the largest used car dealership in Mojave county.

Change

After Carl got saved he stayed in the Lutheran church. He was on the council and his wife was not sure about the change he had gone through. Carl started traveling all over the city looking for fellowship. He had run the youth meeting before he got saved. It was fun to take the kids to the lake or the park, but after his conversion he started to teach them. Kids started getting saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. At the Lutheran Conferences, that little city had the largest youth group in the state. The pastor finally realized something was happening and instead of getting behind it, he asked Carl to step aside.

In the final meeting there were kids everywhere. *"I've done this for three years and I'm going to have to step aside,"* he told them, *"So someone else can take over for a while."*

A young woman that had gotten saved from a life of drugs stood up and yelled, *"You're not fooling us. They're making you step down."* It broke him. He started to weep and his wife had to finish the meeting. He saw the religious hypocrisy in the church and though he and the pastor were friends, he could not believe in the man any more.

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Carl tried every church in town before going to Praise Chapel. They were just not his style of people. It was at the county fair where God changed his mind. The whole city was out to have a good time. Every preacher in town was there with their families laughing and joking around. He was going to buy tickets to get on the Ferris wheel when he looked over and saw Pastor Cates. Poorly dressed, his shoes scuffed and worn, he stood in the middle of everyone passing tracks. Carl stopped and as he looked he saw that the guy shone with the love of God. In his heart he knew that was what Christianity was about. Carl walked over and gave him a big bear hug, lifting him off the ground. He knew then, *"That was what I wanted to be like."*

At first his wife had no idea what had happened to her husband. She had been wanting something different for the family, but it was not to become a religious fanatic. She had watched with real concern while her husband got more involved with Christianity.

All of that changed over night for her. While he was wrestling with going to Praise Chapel, the first time she walked into the church she got saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. She was ready to join. It was not that easy for Carl. All he could see was the old building and the worn carpet. All he wanted was to get out of there. He was embarrassed that his Lincoln was in the parking lot. Yet he knew that was where he needed to go. He wanted the joy and the praise that

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were there. It was like an addiction, he could not shake it, he had to be there.

Mammon

He was liberal with his money but he was not giving what God wanted him to. Carl had given up everything but the used car lot for God. The new business was just taking off when God spoke to him again, *"Son I want you to tithe on the business."* Far from encouraging Carl it made him mad. He went and ran down Allen Cates and drug him into the office. He had spread sheets everywhere and he yelled at Cates, *"It is impossible to tithe from a car dealership. If I tithed from the increase on each car I'd be out of business in a year."*

Allen looked at him with those penetrating eyes and said, *"I never said anything about money,"* and turned around and walked out.

Carl threw himself down on that carpet and wept. Finally he spoke out, *"Father I'll serve you from the gutter."* Failure was his real fear. His father was a doctor and all the other kids had seemed to do better than him. Carl called his accountant, who had been a good friend for years and said, *"I want to start to tithe on the dealership."* His accountant was freaked out by the very idea. Many people had come to the conclusion that Carl had gone over the edge in his Christianity, and his accountant was starting to agree with them.

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"You cannot do that, it's illegal. A corporation isn't a person."

"I don't care, just do it. You figure a way."

From the day he started to tithe on the gross profit, God began to bless the dealership. People from New York would be driving through town and stop by to trade cars. God gave him back everything that he had given plus more.

The Friedrich's were on their way to having what others only dream about. They were holding a portfolio worth more than a million dollars, with their future set out before them. It was right there where God began to deal with them about pastoring. Carl could not shake his pre-conceived thinking of the ministry as something that required years of schooling and he did not have it. Finally, conviction won out, and as he listened to sermons all he could do was weep over the world and the call he felt.

He finally went up to his pastor and said *"I want to do something for God."*

"Good" Allen told him, and handed him a broom. *"Why don't you clean up after the kids."* Most men would have been offended, but God knew what Carl needed. He needed to start as a servant. He became a businessman in the daytime and janitor in the evening. Far from making him mad it was one of the best times he had. His next ministry effort was with young people, and he put together a youth scene. He

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called one of his old night club acts, Tim Masters and said, "*Why don't you come and help out?*"

"How much?" Tim asked.

"Free." The miracle was that Tim did come.

The first sermon that Carl preached was bad, and he had every intention of slipping out the door when they closed their eyes. As poor a job as he did, people still came up and got saved. Working hard at improving, he did. His Lutheran background kept haunting him with its emphasis on Bible College and seminary. When he was asked to be assistant pastor it set all his doubts off again. It was Stan Elms that convinced him that he had a touch of God on his life and he had to fulfill it. He was the happiest person in the world making money in the day and preaching at night.

The Voice of God

Reading the Bible in front of the fire place, with his wife already in bed, he turned to Second Timothy chapter two. "*My son therefore be strong in the Lord . . .*" As he read those words, God intervened. All the lights dimmed and the page was dark except for those first six verses that stood out from the page in golden letters. Then God spoke, "*Those same things that I taught you, you're going to teach to others.*" Amazed, Carl read them again and again. He knew that at some point, he was going to have to release the business and

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go preach. It would be three years before this happened but he knew then, to begin to prepare.

Those next few years were rich in ministry and friendships. Carl did much of the counseling and organizing around the church. The time finally came when he knew he needed to go.

Pastor Carl

At a conference he and his wife decided to pioneer in Buena Park, California. That night in his living room he knew his call was to influence other nations, so when he opened the church, he also went down to the Post Office to get a passport. The lady filling out the application asked, *"So, where are you going?"*

"I'm not going anywhere right now, but I'm going to travel the nations of the world."

"Is that right, why?"

"Well I'm a preacher and I'm going to touch the nations of the world."

"How many people are there in your church?"

"Right now there is nobody, but that doesn't matter, I'm going touch the nations of the world."

Being in Mike Neville's church for a few months while getting ready to open up was a big help. In those two months he experienced a revolution in how to approach the ministry. Mike gave him several thousand dollars to help in the opening, but more im-

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portant to Carl was that Mike opened a channel for communication and partnership.

Working on the building, he looked up to see Darren Billings come walking in. Wild eyed with a Bible under his arms, he told Carl, *"I've been praying for a church to come here. When are you opening?"*

Taking him at his word, Carl gave him the date of the opening movies. The problem was he never showed up. The crowds were sparse. On the third night a tall kid by the name of Doug Wiks got saved. Carl asked him how he heard about the church. Doug told him, *"This guy (and he described Darren Billings) told me about the church and said that I ought to come."*

Carl said, *"Why didn't he come?"*

"Oh, well, he's loaded." Carl was shocked. He thought the kid was a Christian, *"Take me to him now!"*

Doug got in the car and took him to Casa Cordova. It was the wildest apartment complex in the area, a hang out for transvestites and open devil worshipers. As they entered, they passed a woman loan-shark who was bigger than any man and people stoned on PCP laying around everywhere. Scared to death Carl knocked on the door. When the door opened, he saw Darren laying on the ground stoned out of his head with rock music blasting. His girl friend was over on the bed wearing next to nothing. The room was filthy but Carl was not leaving. Down on his knees he said, *"Hey, you prayed for a church and you're coming."*

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Today Darren is pastoring in Portland, Oregon, running around 100 people in his church. Update

Raul Barajas had come every night of the movies but he could not speak English. He was a part of the LA gang, drug and crime scene. The night before the movies God had given him a dream of the end times, it scared him to death. He fought it for three nights but he finally broke. He would end up pastoring a church in Tijuana of over one hundred.

Culture Shock

Carl did not have any clear idea what you were supposed to do to start a church, he just knew that he loved people. He went to a street corner with an acoustic guitar and sang. You could not hear him 5 feet away but he was making a stand. He would drive into the neighborhoods scared to death. Broken glass was everywhere and there was writing on the walls that he could not read. He knew that he had to conquer his fear and he did.

He was ignorant of the gangs and their unique rules. He made lots of mistakes. On one outreach he took a bunch of new converts from the neighborhoods with him to preach. When he told them to get out they said, "*We can't.*"

"*Why,*" he asked?

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"This is the turf of the opposing gang, if we get out here we'll die."

Ohio had not prepared him for LA, but he was a quick learner and God was helping him. At the end of the first year they were running a solid 60 and the second year saw the church grow to 80. Carl has never been captivated with the idea of quick growth. In fact, he fights it.

He wants those in the ministry tested and proven to be men and women of character and loyalty. *"There is no substitute for time,"* is a statement that he makes and lives by. He has been moving step by step to build a team, winning peoples confidence and making sure they are not going to miss God.

Carl has been very slow to start ministries even when they are considered vital by other churches. He held off on children's ministry for years, until the people came that would make the commitments and say this is the call of God for my life. If something is going to be done, he feels it needs to be done right.

Though a preacher, his real strength is in teaching. Nothing turns him on like taking scripture and going verse by verse through the Bible, making it come alive. When he started the church he wanted it built on the word, not emotion.

Mission

For years he felt that pastoring was just preparation for going overseas. As he wrestled through his

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call, he came to realize God had placed him in the United States. That does not mean his church just sends money to missionaries. He goes several times a year overseas and helps in other countries.

In Ghana at a Liberian refuge camp thousands came to hear and receive salvation. A man came for prayer that could not walk. Carl was scared that nothing would happen when he prayed, so he tried to get everyone involved. He told everybody to pray, even then his faith was not very large. He turned away to talk to someone and spontaneously a path opened through the crowd and this man started to walk through. The crowd broke into praise and then started to sing a song before the Lord. As goose bumps ran up and down his spine he knew that he had been part of a supernatural move of God.

Carl is not just being used in other countries. Preaching in Portland recently, Carl saw God break loose and heal every person that was present. One woman was facing surgery for cervix cancer, but when she went back to the doctors they found no trace. Another lady whose back was hurting so that she could hardly move, was healed. Another girl had a fractured knee cap healed, that would not support her weight when she came to church. You could see the lumps of cartilage in her knee cap but as she was prayed for, she began to scream. Her knee started to come together, the lumps disappeared and the skin was smooth. Carpel tunnel syndrome had crippled a hair dresser and

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caused her to quit work; she went back to work the next day and made \$600.

update

They have planted seven churches in their first seven years of existence in Anaheim. Sunday Morning they run about 250 people, and have a vision to duplicate what happened with Mike Neville. The church is stepping out into new areas, especially in worship. Some services can get wild, as people make personal breakthroughs in worship. With a solid foundation of the word, they are moving into an intimacy of the Spirit that is exciting.

As part of the team linked to Mike Neville, Carl believes their church also has its own unique vision and calling, that does not conflict with the mother church. It's this liberty that causes them to look toward the future with such excitement.

9

Conversion of a Drunk

Mike Stephens was born October 15, 1952, a poor white boy. His mother died when he was a child and his dad was an alcoholic. It did not surprise anyone when Mike grew up strung out on drugs and alcohol. The only time he was straight was when he spent time in jail, which happened weekly in the neighborhood. When he lost his drivers license for drinking and driving, he decided to join the navy. Vietnam was winding down and it seemed like the best thing he could do. His record was so bad for drug and alcohol abuse that he had to get a special waiver.

For Mike the service was just a change of bars. Instead of the neighborhood now he got loaded in every nation in the world. He sampled every sin he could find: Smoking exotic marijuana in Singapore, and Af-

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rica, doing anything and everything in the Philippines, and opium in Hong Kong. Mike came out of the service in worse shape than he went in.

He was a success at one thing: being a drunk. He got a job as the night manager of a liquor store, and his dad owned a bar. The two of them drank up a lot of booze. Mike pulled back from the drugs because they were affecting his thinking, but he just filled the gap up with alcohol.

Mike's sister had started going to the Maywood church. She wanted her brother to come out to a service; she knew it could help him. Using the only thing he liked, she offered to give him a six pack of beer and a pack of cigarettes for every time he went to church. When he was really desperate, he showed up. Mike would be drunk when he came to the church and the men in the church would try to get him saved. It was comic and predictable, as he would always get mad and walk out.

One Step Forward - Two Back

His sister brought her friend Pam by the liquor store. She was a good Christian girl that sang in the choir; at least she looked that way to Mike's sister. Like many Christians she had backslid several times and her life was in and out of the church. Mike's sister was trying to use her to get Mike into church, instead Mike ripped her off and took her into his world. They would lock themselves in the liquor store with some

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friends and party all night. They were living together before long, but Pam dumped him when she got convicted and started going back to church.

When Pam left him, he quit his job and spent full time at being a wino. Pam was dating another man, but she kept trying to get Mike to come out to church. She would put Chick tracks under his door. It made him mad, and he said to himself *"I'll show her, I'll read these."* When he read them he got convicted.

His whole life was burning out. Back on drugs he was hallucinating all the time. The alcohol and drugs were ruining his body as well. He had no money and no home, and knew that he was at the end of his rope. His nerves and body shot, he decided to go to church with his sister. She was talking at a little holiness church and Mike went with her. Just before he left home his best friend showed up with a case of beer. Mike refused to go with him, and in fact made him come to church with them. That night Mike gave his heart to God. On the following Wednesday night he went to Praise Chapel and stayed there from then on.

He did not fit in well. He was one of the first people to come in after Mike Neville became the pastor. Unimpressed on previous visits to the church, he still disliked many of the old members, but he liked Mike a lot.

The church had both those who knew the talk and the walk of Christianity, and those who did not have a clue of what traditional Christianity was like. Mike Stephens was as white as any of these religious

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types, but except for race, he had nothing in common with those raised in church. He did not wear a cardigan sweater, (and still finds it hard to act like the stereotype of a Christian). The two groups had trouble communicating with each other. One group wore the then popular polyester suit and huge ties. The other was more noticeable by their tattoos than their jewelry. For a while the folks raised in church were the ones that called the shots, gave the altar calls, and taught the classes, but that was about to change. Those with the heart and willingness to work were these new converts.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

For Mike Stephens, the biggest battles he fought were with cigarettes. The church had its roots in holiness and there were some people that would probably rather see them on heroin than smoking. One night he and Pam were home sharing a cigarette when there was a knock at the door; it was pastor Neville. They threw the cigarette out of the window and started spraying air freshener. They were more afraid of having the pastor catch them smoking than they were of the police.

Mike Neville sat down and said, "*Oh, you guys were smoking huh?*" Mike Stephens went on fasts but nothing seemed to work and he just kept smoking. Feeling worse and worse, they would drive out of town to have a smoke and hide it like a joint. It would be a long hard struggle to break the hold cigarettes had on

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them. It would probably be this that gave Mike an extra grace in working with those who had trouble with bad habits.

In those early days everybody did a little of everything. Mike started as an usher. Never one to be too traditional, he would sit in a folding chair and hand out bulletins as people came in. On the fourth of July they all ran a fireworks stand with a banner out front that said "*don't buy from the devil buy from Mike Neville.*"

The main thing Mike became known for was drama. He loved turning the message of Jesus into something contemporary and convicting. These started with short skits and take offs from TV, but over the years these dramas would develop into full-blown productions that drew thousands. One of his most memorable skits was at a Bible conference for the Pentecostal Church of God. They were doing a skit and Mike was to end it with an altar call. He was afraid to go out there. Men that had preached for years were sitting in the congregation. Robert Bloom came and prayed for him, and when he stepped out he went from shy to wild. He started screaming that they were devils who needed to repent and get committed like Steven in the New Testament. "*What is the matter with you bunch of fat lazy preachers . . .*" The only thing that saved him was that they were old Pentecostals. Instead of being offended, when Mike started screaming, they started crying and came streaming to the altars.

Purpose

Friday nights became the service that Mike found his place in. Sundays and Wednesdays were the more traditional services, with singing and preaching. Fridays were where the bands played and young men got their first chance to preach. In the middle of it all was Mike, organizing and acting in humorous and serious skits. One big problem was the neighbors. They hated the noise and would call the police most weeks. Mike's job was to run out into the parking lot when the cops came, to keep them busy long enough to do the altar call.

Mike and his wife Pam became two of the hardest workers in the church. Mike was the king of fellowship. His house was always open. Mike had hurt his back when he fell off the back of a pick up truck and so he was not working. He related to those God was bringing in and Mike Neville made him head of follow up. In the early days it meant he got a little gas money and a lot of work. He drove a Pinto that was a death trap, and dropped in on new converts and backsliders and ate most their food. It was a fair exchange since most who got saved ended up at Mike's house, eating bologna sandwiches, potato chips and drinking koolaid. It was rumored that he carried two calendars, one for revivals and the other for the barbecues. Those that were out on the streets thought of him as carnal, but it was Mike that was getting these new converts to tie into the church.

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Mike was also the enforcer. He would come by the house on fast days and check for cheese burger breath, or make an inspection run to make sure the saints were not watching soap operas. As the church's "snitch," it was his job to make sure everyone was there.

In 1979 they started doing the big plays that Praise Chapel would be famous for. Mike was the energy and organization behind many of these. On Easter at Bell High School they drew 1,000 people. This was a dramatization of the Bible for today, something close to a modern parable. The most popular plays would be about gangs and drugs. It was not uncommon for people to be killed by the dozens. In the play they wanted it made clear, that sin did not pay. At the end of the play their was always a dramatic conversion and when the altar call was given hard core sinners and gang members were weeping at the altars.

The people in these plays weren't professional actors but most had lived the lives they were acting. Many were out of prison and drugs addiction. They knew what it was like to be trapped and also to be free.

Mike went on to become the first staff member at Praise Chapel. He created a ministry out of follow-up. It was his friendliness and always being there harassing them to be in church that kept many of the early converts around. For Mike this was the top of the line. He never had a desire to go anywhere else, but God had been dealing with him about Hawaii.

A Difficult Paradise

Through a series of incidents, Mike Stephens left for Honolulu, Hawaii in August of 1982. Pastor Neville had met with the four other pastors that were out pastoring then, and told them how, *"This is going to be the biggest thing we have ever done. One of our guys is headed over seas."* Everyone was on the edge of their seats. When they found out it was Mike Stephens, and he was going to Hawaii, it was hard for them to see Mike as sacrificing. It might have been beautiful, but it was a church that was as foreign as any they planted. Hawaii was a foreign country that was made a state and the church reflected that, with a mix of Japanese, Hawaiian, Filipino, and Samoan.

Mike had been to Hawaii in the navy and every time he heard that name something leaped in him. Mike Neville had a friend whose church had pioneered a work in Hawaii. At a pastor's fellowship he and Mike attended, he asked this man how it was going? His friend had nothing good to say, he ranted about the money and effort being wasted. Mike Stephens did not hear the negative, it was that day when it became clear to him that Hawaii was where he was headed.

During this time the church took an offering and sent Pastor Neville and his wife to Hawaii for their anniversary. While they were there, they felt the need to send someone over. At the last conference ever held in the Maywood building, Mike and Pam took the 3,000 miles journey to Hawaii.

Hawaii

Buildings were so expensive they were not an option. Unable to find a room to rent Sunday mornings, the church started meeting in the park. The chairs tended to fall on his three kids and their altar was a few grass mats lined up for people to kneel on. The tour buses would come by and point out the church in the park.

As the church grew it met wherever it could. On Wednesdays they met in the YMCA chapel and at a high school on Sunday nights across town. The church grew to 40 people the first year. It was a time of stretching. Friday and Saturday nights they "street preached" in the roughest parts of town. People were killed in front of them and prostitutes were on the make. There were projects filled with desperate people who came in huge crowds to see the movies from the "movie church" with "Father Mike." The culture is more Asian than Western and Mike was as green as a preacher could be. It was a miracle that people joined this congregation.

Mike was not a traditional pastor. He did not wear a tie. Thongs and a Hawaiian shirt were his clergy garb. He learned to flow with the culture. They had big luaus for outreach and preached at the beach. He adopted a laid back attitude and started reaching out.

Not everything was easy. As they came to Hawaii they found out their baby, Jeremie, was severely

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retarded with Autism. They had come to do something for God and it was crushing to arrive and find your child disabled. They blamed themselves and then God. The child made it hard to minister. He would start screaming and people would think that Mike and Pam were abusing him. Mike came close to a nervous breakdown when he developed an allergic reaction that affected his thinking. Months went by filled with despair and fear. At the lowest point God said get up and preach and when he obeyed, God healed him.

Before he left the island he was on five radio stations. Their program was called "*Heart Fire*." Mike started the program by saying, "*Howwwwwwwzit? Don't touch that dial. We've got a great program for you tonight . . .*" One night a man was getting ready to kill himself. He turned on the radio station Mike was on, and called in and got saved. The church was growing and had planted another church in Hawaii before Mike and Pam returned to the States.

San Fernando

Mike came back to the Mainland and took over the San Fernando church. Jesse Young had founded it and left a good core of over 100. When he got there, the musical talent was scarce. They might not be good, but they were willing, and Mike started to coach them. Trying with his talents, to make up for what they lacked. Figuring that the purpose of the church is to use those that are there, he let them develop. Today the

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worship team and bands are some of the best in the area.

As Mike came back to the Mainland, all the churches moved into a period of rapid expansion. Not only was Maywood planting churches but the other churches were planting churches causing a multiplication of impact. A pastor today is not just ministering to his congregation, but his church and ministry are linked to all the churches in the area. Larger churches send out groups of people to help the smaller ones around them. Churches often rent vans and travel for hours to hold a concert or work the streets in another city. Some of the biggest impact is in large joint rallies held on New Years, the fourth of July, or Memorial day. Thousands come together to worship. These big celebrations attracted many that would never step in a regular church service.

A favorite play was *"backslider's cafe."* It is a serious drama about what happens to people who leave church. In one scene a young woman comes dancing in with a blue sequined dress singing *"Devil with a blue dress on."* Her happiness soon ends when by the end of the scene she has been beat up. No punches are pulled in depicting the cost of backsliding.

Guiding Light

Mike describes his own ministry as, *"Strongest at being subject to the Spirit. Whatever God wants us to do, we will do it. If he does not want us to preach we*

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won't do it. We have massive altar calls during our song service. Sometimes, I don't have to say anything; they just come pouring out of their chairs, crying. Not just fake, or routine, but the real thing.

I cannot stand two services exactly alike. It is boring. I want people to come to church and not know what is going to happen. It is a little bit of the essence of what happened years ago on Sunday night. You never knew if Brother Neville was going to call someone out and call them devils, or maybe he would prophesy, or the choir would take off and that would be it. I have tried to recapture that. Most churches are exactly the same every service. Our services are like finger prints, you're not going to find two the same."

A decision has been made in the Praise Chapel fellowship to not build just a few huge churches, but to do whatever reaches the most people for Christ. The San Fernando church has been a key to helping other churches. On the surface this can seem to drain the mother church but God is glorified by the developing of new works and leadership.

San Fernando has put out eight churches and adopted another one. The mother church has moved into a theater that can hold 850, and every weekend groups are heading out to do outreaches, skits and music. On Easter Sunday of 1993 they did a drama that drew a thousand with 40 people saved. Mike is about to go back on the radio in the Los Angeles area and has began to produce one of the most original Christian television shows on public access TV.

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Mike typifies well Paul's challenge to not be drunk on wine, which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. The drunk is still getting high but now it's on life and the purposes of God.

10

Vanilla Ice Cream Can be Best

In September of 1983 Manuel and Vickie Mancha started meeting with 12 people in a car port in San Gabriel, California. At the end of the first year the attendance had grown to 30 people. This isn't explosive growth but like the tortoise that ends up defeating the hare he just kept moving forward.

Praise Chapel has many colorful characters with testimonies that are hard to believe, but it has its solid types too. Men and women who see a job and do it, even when the job offers little more than responsibility. Manuel (called by his friends "Manny") would be one of many that was the glue behind the scenes. Leaders that make life enjoyable and produce organizations of quality as well as excitement.

The San Gabriel church is today alive and well. They planted their first church in 1989 in San Diego,

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and it is self supporting today. In 1990 they started a Spanish church that is on it's own and thriving. A church went into Montebello, California, in 1990. With churches planted into Escondido and Chino, California, in 1991.

Manny's nickname is Felix Unger. Whatever he does he does right. Sitting with a group of pastors, Manny sticks out. Praise Chapel takes the Bible very seriously but it has never taken religion seriously. Most of the men have the laid back California look. None of them would ever be spotted as clergy. Manny does not have the religious look, but more the “upward mobil.” His casual pants have creases. His shoes are polished and his hair in place. Those that travel with him are shocked when they see him folding his T-shirts.

Manny was always the quiet type. At thirteen his father passed away and his older brother ran off to avoid the pressures of the family. Growing up without a father hurt him.

He stumbled along trying to be a good guy, but the pressures inside him were ready to blow him apart. Manny's brother Danny got saved and lived clean for three years. Danny and Linda attended the same Nazarene church the Blooms were attending, and left the church along with the Blooms when they were caught speaking in tongues. He and his wife Linda started attending Praise Chapel.

At the time, Manuel was going to college studying electronics. He worked during the day and went to

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college at night. He did not have time to get in trouble during the week, but on the weekend he drank. Though he appeared to be a nice guy the reality was that his home was in bad shape, and had no idea how to treat his wife and family. Not outgoing by temperament he avoided the issues and withdrew further into himself. Workaholism became his lifestyle, since he was unable to understand his wife's need for attention and love. When she spoke up, he would throw a temper tantrum; their communication was nothing. Vickie was miserable and confused. He would one day be raging in a fit of jealousy or the next playing games with her mind. His wife started to pull away from him, filling her time with her family.

The Explosion

One night the pressures came to a head and Manny lost it. He was screaming and knocking holes in the wall when his brother came running in from his apartment across the hall. Danny separated the two of them and started witnessing to Manny. He prayed with Manny that night and planted a seed.

Beginning to see his need for something more in his life he began to evaluate his past. He had been a good Catholic, which to him meant he got drunk at the carnivals and went to church on holidays and weddings. For the first time he started thinking about heaven and hell.

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Manny and Vickie were at the market on a Friday night when he saw the book Late Great Planet Earth, by Hal Lindsay. He told his wife, "*I'm going to take this.*" It was a book he could not put down, reading the whole thing that night. Jesus was coming back and hell was real, he told his wife, "*We have got to go to church.*" Sunday night, April 1, 1979, they nervously showed up at Praise Chapel. He was a quiet guy that liked to stay back in the shadows, confronted by people clapping and singing he was far from comfortable. When the altar call came he lifted his hand, forgetting that there was anyone else there, all he knew was that he needed to get saved. Weeping and crying, the moment he said, "*Forgive me of my sins,*" a heavy burden lifted off his shoulders. It was not until later that he noticed his wife was up at the front with him. From that first service he loved the church. He got filled with the Holy Ghost on Tuesday night at the Bible Study and did not miss a service after that.

Change

The greatest change was in his family. Manny had not been saved long when he had another fight with his wife. He knew he loved his wife, but he had no idea how to express it, and instead found himself yelling at her. Manny tried to leave and she slammed the door in his face. Mad and out of control, she threatened to leave him and stormed into the next room. Then it hit him "*I'm tired of this,*" falling to his

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knees he said, *"God I cannot handle this, it's not right. I want my family. I love my wife, help me!"*

God spoke to him to go and apologize to his wife. Manny felt it was her fault, and started to make excuses, but conviction was so strong he could not stop weeping. He gave in and went to his wife, who was calling her mom, and said, *"I'm sorry and I love you, forgive me."* Something special happened from that moment that made him start to love his family and those around him.

Watching Mike Neville was a tremendous help as he sought to change his ideas of a husband. He saw the man's sensitivity to others and started to imitate it. While others were drawn toward the wild and exciting side of the gospel, Manny would be drawn toward relationship. He could not get enough of the fellowship. He and Vickie would be the last to leave the church, taking time to reach out to those that were there.

Manny had been an introvert all his life. The kind of guy that said, *"I'll take care of my business and you take care of yours."* It was impossible in that crowd at the church to stay inside your shell. Building friendships, he was still in terror of the idea of being asked to stand and talk in front of people. Three weeks after getting saved he went out to the boulevard. He ran into his cousin and she asked what he was doing? The moment he started to tell her how he had gotten saved, something broke inside him, and he spent the rest of the night going up and down the street sharing.

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Danny and Manny would become two of the key men in the church and the fellowship. Danny was the guy that kept the church clean, and the Barnabas of Praise Chapel. He became the older brother to all the younger men. While Manny was the support many of these troubled converts needed, these two men always had time for people.

Love thy Neighbor

Out on the Boulevard the crowd was not responding. The young preachers were laying it on rough and hard. Hell was the favorite sermon topic, and the more the cruisers rejected them, the greater they railed on the crowd. Danny slipped up behind Frank while he was preaching and said, *"Why don't you love them? Tell them about the love of Jesus, give them the other side."* As they started to tell the kids how Jesus loved them the whole atmosphere changed and people started to stop and listen.

The first time they asked Manny to preach was hard on him. He could talk all night to one or two people but many more than that got his palms sweating and heart beating. Nervous and emotionally shaken he almost pulled out. Teaching 11 year olds in Sunday school had been his first ministry. Once he learned to feel good with 11 year olds, he became Mike Stephen's assistant in a Bible study. Mike helped him greatly to develop confidence. They are opposites. Mike is *"mis-*

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ter outgoing," Manny is withdrawn. When Manny did his first study, Mike started to question him. Manny was sweating under the barrage of questions but it was just the thing to force him out of his shell. Facing his fear he preached and found he loved it. In those days it was assumed that everyone was going to be a preacher. Manny never heard voices or had an angelic visitation, what he said was, *"Whatever God wants I'll do it."*

San Gabriel

Manny was involved in Bible Studies, new converts, Sunday school and a dozen smaller things. Mike Neville called him and his wife in to talk to them. *"We want to plant a church in the San Gabriel Valley,"* he said, *"We want to let you know about that."*

Manny says, *"That's great, it's exciting."*

Mike looked them in the eyes and said, *"Well, were looking for a couple to plant that church."*

"That's great, fantastic," Manny said. It still was not connecting that Mike is talking about him.

"Well I want you and your wife to go."

He was floored! As he prayed about the opportunity there was a growing realization that if he did not go, someone else would. When they did well, it would torment him, because he would know that it should have been him. He told Mike yes, and he went with confidence knowing that God was going to do something.

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The first couple to come in were Frank and Cruz Fierro, who now function as the assistants in the San Gabriel church. Frank had always wanted to be in the ministry but in previous churches they made you go to Bible school, which was impossible for him. Though Praise Chapel is not opposed to school, they do not see Bible college as a biblical requirement for ministry. Frank and Cruz love people and are qualified to minister by that trait alone.

A lot of miracles have happened in the San Gabriel church, but the greatest miracle for Manny was the first. They were getting ready to move into their second building. They had a small group of people, but God had dealt with Manny to quit his job. Now he faced trying to raise \$5,000 to remodel the new church. To Manny, it might as well have been a million dollars. Until then, he and his wife had carried much of the financial weight of the church, but as they challenged the church all the money came in. One woman came up and gave the money she had been saving to go to Hawaii with. It would be a revolution in understanding what God and the people in the church could do. They would grow in that building to the point that the firemen and the police came regularly, because of the number of people being crammed in.

Families

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The San Gabriel church's people and vision are not geared toward shaking the world in a week, but in building solid families and consistent lives. Many of the people have come in from other churches, where they have been hurt and needed to find someone to just love them. For Manny this is as important as making converts.

At first Manny worried about his church not being filled with gang members and drug addicts, but then God spoke to him that you reach who you are. There are many different kinds of people that need God. Many are hurting and there is no one they can share with. He has made an effort to get the church to listen to people, to make them feel wanted.

Mark and Lucy felt a need that life was not filling. Mark was a sports nut. All week he lived to play sports and on the weekend he snorted coke. He came to the church as a last ditch effort to see something change in his family. He was planning on walking out if something did not happen, but in that service he was changed. Love came for his wife and family, and he began to learn how to care. They would become leaders in the church.

Mario and Sylvia Mareno are Spanish pastors today. He was a professional who worked in abnormal psychology as a counselor at the hospital. His wife got saved and brought him to church with her, where he sat in the back, full of pride, a man that knew everything. He was trying to play the intellectual, but when

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Manny started talking to him the front dropped quickly, and he got saved that day.

One of Manny's biggest assets is his wife. Going from two people that never communicated, they have become a team. She is his biggest supporter and often a source of inspiration. When he gets stuck working on a sermon, she can come along and trigger just the right thought or idea he needs. The fact that she enjoys the church and its work helps. Vickie directs the choir, works as secretary and puts together the Sunday school program. She has helped form both the bands and the drama outreach. Her biggest asset is to be far more expressive and outgoing than Manny. Fun and excitable, she brings a lot of life into the ministry. They create a great team.

In the church there are always the stars. Peter in the New Testament would get head line billing, but it was Andrew that brought him to the Lord. Only when we get to heaven will we find out the key part that the other disciples played, men whom we read little about. They were chosen by God. Though the famous dominate the news and magazines, the reality is that life is really made up of average people doing their best.

Manny and Vickie make average people into Saints. It's partly because that is how they started. Only time will show what an average person becomes when they trust God.

11

From Hate to Love

You cannot miss Joe Menchaca. Intimidating as a Mexican Sumo wrestler, Joe is big in size and heart. Everything he does is big from his cowboy hats, to his mustache, to his vision.

At the Spanish Bible conference in 1992 they had 700 plus out a night, with pastors from North and South America. All of this from a church that has only existed for five years. Today they are reaching into all of Mexico, a healthy section of Central America and their eyes are glued on South America.

The Maywood Spanish church has in only five years seen; sixteen churches sent out of one small congregation. Consumed with a vision for Mexicans, several of those baby churches are now planting churches themselves.

There are 45 Spanish speaking churches in the fellowship, with 24 of them in Mexico and El Salvador. In Nicaragua 36 churches have asked to work with Praise Chapel and conferences have been held there. In

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addition crusades and conferences are being held in every place that Spanish is spoken, touching hundreds of pastors and churches.

The Maywood Spanish church is a United Nations of Spanish speaking people. In the church are families from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Columbia, Panama, Argentina, Mexico and everywhere in between.

It's not astounding that some huge church, running thousands and taking in millions of dollars can touch the world. This revival has come from a church running between two and three hundred people. The miracle is when a small church steps out and believes God to do as much through them, as through the giants.

The Cost

Revival does not come without a cost. The Hispanic culture is loyal. Families are close and friendships run deep. This is wonderful when things run smoothly, but it becomes a nightmare when a pastor has to step in and bring some Biblical based discipline. Families fight for each other, right or wrong. Emotions are strong and are set off at a moment's notice. It makes for great excitement and creativity but it can be an explosive combination when you're their pastor.

Joe Menchaca sits in the middle of this powder keg. As emotional and excited as any in his congregation, he sees this not as a handicap but life. The re-

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wards are great and the burdens are often heavy. One thing Joe never has to worry about is something to worry about. Stretched to breaking, there is always a need to pray and the pressures keep you close to God.

The people are poorer than many other Americans, and it drives them to a very practical faith. They often do not have the money to go to doctors, and tired of going to the "*Cunandaroes*" (Mexican witch doctors), they come to church expecting God to help.

Home

Anyone that knew Joe Menchaca when he was younger would have never thought of him as the type that God would pick for such a responsibility. Joe was born in Maywood, California in 1953. His folks had come out from Texas to California and his dad had gotten a job working for the General Motors plant in South Gate.

The problem was that his dad was an alcoholic and a drug addict for 35 long years. This always kept the family from being as well off as their dad's work should have made them. Joe and his seven brothers lived in a neighborhood that was tough, and it made them tough, even mean. He was forced to start working at five years old. The moment he could get out of the house he did, leaving home at 15. Family up until then held few good memories.

He had no respect for his father Joe Senior. At age eight, Joe's dad took "*little Joe*" down town to bor-

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row a relative's car. They stopped in at a bar and a prostitute came over and started putting the moves on his father. When they left, she came with them. When they had started to get into the car, she tried to get Joe to sit in the front seat. He told her, *"No way; you're not even my mother."* Joe was confused when this strange woman had her hands all over his dad.

In the back seat of the car he was crying and getting madder and madder at the same time. A block from the house they pulled over, and his dad said, *"Get out! Here,"* and he handed him two dollars. *"You didn't see nothing, and you don't say nothing,"* he told Joe.

Walking home, he ran into his mother. *"Where's dad at? What's the matter with you?"*

He was not sure whether he should lie or tell the truth. He compromised and told his mom, *"He had to go do something, and he'll be back later."* He was only eight years old and could not handle the confusion and pressure that were building inside him.

That night in his room he was madder than he had ever been. When his dad came back three days later Joe came into the room while his father was hugging his mom. His dad looked over at Joe with a look that said *"You better not say anything."*

Life is Unfair

At eleven years old, Joe found drugs in his dad's pockets. His mother asked what it was. *"That's marijuana and pills,"* Joe told her.

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"What should I do with it?" his mom asked.

"Flush it down the toilet," was Joe's answer.

The next day his dad came up to him while he was playing with his friends and beat him. *"Don't you ever touch anything that is mine again," he raged!*

Joe said to himself repeatedly, *"I do not want this kind of life."* At about this time things took a turn for the worse, when his dad was busted for drugs and his mother had a nervous breakdown. Joe as the oldest had to hold the family together. He was a hurting kid that had no one to talk to.

When his dad got out of jail things got worse, not better in the family. More than once he came home loaded and threw the boys into the shower, wetting them down and then beating them until the skin opened up. Joe said, *"When I get older I'm going to kill my dad and live a better life than this."*

Work

When he moved out at 15, he found someone that would teach him to survive. *"You stick with me,"* this man told him, *"And you'll be somebody."* Starting out in the furniture business, at first all they did was move people's furniture, but the man had a vision for greater things and he believed in Joe.

Joe started at \$1.35 an hour, but it was not long until the money started to come in. Over time, the business grew into a couple of stores. Everything depended on Joe, the only problem with this was that Joe

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cared about nothing but himself. He started to plot the man's downfall, maneuvering him into involvement with other women and destroying his marriage. He used the man's trust in him to steal money from the company. Under Joe's pressure this guy went from a straight arrow to a man that was out of control, gambling and drinking. Finally, broken, the man turned everything over to Joe. That was what he had been scheming for all the time.

A Changed Family

It was right then that his family started getting saved. It started with his parents. They had gone to a Billy Graham crusade in Los Angeles, California, and knowing they needed something, they walked the aisle and gave their lives to Jesus. They stayed saved by watching channel 40, the local Christian station. It was not long after their conversion that Joe's dad came by to see him. It was two o'clock in the morning when he knocked on the door. *"Son, I want you to forgive me,"* he pleaded.

Joe could not believe it. *"What's wrong with this man, he must be drunk."*

"Joe, I've had an experience with Jesus and I want you to forgive me for the things that I did as a sinner. I've been changed and forgiven."

When Joe came by his parent's house a couple days later there was Christian music playing. The TV's were on the Christian channel and his dad was saying,

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"Praise the Lord." There was a glow on his dad's face, but Joe refused to accept it. Over the next few months his brothers also started to get saved.

Far from making Joe glad - it angered him. Joe had been the hero in the family. The guy that had it together, and now the family was finding new answers that left him out. Joe found himself losing the control that he had over all of them, as the older brother and the one that had the money.

Visiting his mother's house, Joe snapped and started to cuss his mother out. *"Forget that I'm your son. You will never see me again. I do not need you."* Yelling in her face he pulled out a wad of money and said, *"This is my God."* Cursing God and his family he started to storm out.

His mother fell to her knees in tears. *"Mijo, the devil is speaking that."*

"I am the devil," Joe told her, *"and where is your God now."*

She lifted her hands toward heaven with tears streaming down her face and cried out, *"Father forgive him, he does not know what he saying."*

"I know exactly what I'm saying."

"No God he does not know what he's saying," she prayed. *"And Lord I claim his soul to be saved, and not only saved, but that he becomes a preacher of the gospel."*

Joe began to cuss. He was screaming and out of control while his mother kept praying. Jumping into his brand new Cadillac Seville he got out of there as

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fast as he could. As he started to calm down it hit him, *"What have you done? You just hurt the person that loves you the most."* But his pride would not let him go back. Wanting to cry, he could not.

He told his wife, *"I'm never going over there again."*

Confused

His dad showed up at his business in El Moroto the next day. *"This is it,"* he tells himself, *"This is the night I'm going to waste my dad. If he tries to tell me one thing, I'm going to fire him up. He's not going to talk to me the way he used too. If he thinks he is going to come in and hurt me he is wrong."*

His dad came into the store with a Bible. Right then all the hatred for his father came back. Joe envisioned that prostitute, and his dad beating on him. He relived the time his father was drunk and tried to cut his mother's hands. Joe got ready to deck his dad. One foot back and his fists balled up, he asked, *"What's the matter?"*

"Nothing son, I've got a hamburger and some French fries I brought you," was all his dad said.

"You didn't drive thirty minutes to bring me a hamburger. What do you want?"

"I just want to tell you, I love you."

"Is that right," Joe said, *"Is that all you hallelujahs do is just tell people you love them? Love, love, love, I don't think you know what loves all about."*

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His dad tried to change the subject and asked, "*How's business?*"

"It stinks; what do you want me to tell you?"
Joe's thinking "*what does this guy want? I've just railed on his wife and he's never even mentioned it.*"

Walking outside his dad said, "*I want to tell you something son, I'm not saved for your mother. I'm not saved because of your brothers. I'm saved because of me. I needed to get saved. I never felt better in my life. I know I hurt you. I've done a lot of bad things, but you know, one day you're going to get saved. Do not get saved because of me or your mother or your brothers, but get saved because of you.*" That touched Joe.

God Intervenes

That night a long haired hippie came walking into the store. He looked at Joe and said, "*Hey homes, have you heard what's going on?*"

"What?" Joe asked.

"The world is going to end, homes. There are going to be some earthquakes, the ground is going to open up, the gas lines are going to blow up. You better do something, because you know what's happening homes? Jesus is coming back. I ain't no hallelujah but that's what they say."

Angry, Joe said, "*You know what, you're loaded.*"

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"Yea man" he came back with, "I'm on acid, but you know what, it's going to happen," and then he left.

It put a fear into Joe. The store he owned was in the back of an old Safeway, and he had to go back there in the dark to turn the power off. Big old Joe Menchaca was shaking in his boots, afraid to go back there in the dark. *"What if the world comes to an end when I shut the power off," he thought.*

When he got home his wife could see something was wrong, but he would not talk to her. In his mind he was working out schemes to get out of California before it fell into the ocean. He began to plan to burn the business to get the insurance and head to Texas to hide out.

It seemed that everywhere he went he saw *"Jesus loves you,"* and *"Jesus is coming."* His brother drove a truck for the store and intentionally left tracks laying around everywhere. One day Joe saw the Chick magazine King of kings. He looked around to make sure that no one was looking, and flipped it open and saw drawings of Christ on the throne. He could not stop thinking about Jesus. The next day his brother came by and asked him, *"When are you going to get saved?"*

"I don't need to get saved," Joe told him.

His brother kept at him, *"When are you going to get saved?"*

"I can't get saved this week," he told him, *"It's my wife's birthday, and were going to have a party, maybe next week."*

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"You never should have said that" his brother told him.

"Why?"

"Gods going to hold you to that."

Pressures Mount

They had the party that weekend, and the next Monday he was sitting there in the office frustrated. Joe had been skirting the law, and had gotten a threat that day from some people he owed money to. He goes back over to that little Christian magazine and reads some more of it. It really inspired him, so he picked up the TV guide and looked for channel 40, the religious channel. He turned on the TV and told himself, *"I'm going to see what all these Hallelujahs are all about."*

Dwight Thompson was preaching. *"You're out there, and you're wondering what salvation is all about?"*

Joe is sitting there, smoking a cigar and drinking a beer; saying, *"Yea, that's right, I am wondering what it's all about."*

"You have said in your heart," Dwight said, *"That you've mocked God, that you've done this and done that."*

"That's me."

"You've said in your heart, when is this going to end? You've said I do not need God. Haven't you?"

"Yea, I have," Joe thought.

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"You want to know how to be saved and I'm going to tell you."

It was like he was in the room with him. *"I want you to go to the telephone, and I want you to call me, and I'll talk to you and pray with you."*

Joe got up and headed for the phone. At the last moment he realized what he was doing. *"Wait a minute, who does this guy think he is?"* The devil still had him.

Going home, he could not get it out of his mind. He told his wife, *"I'm thinking about getting saved?"*

"Saved," she yelled, *"Don't tell me you want to get religion like your family!"*

"Just think about it," he told her.

"If you get saved I'll leave you!" she yelled.

One thing Joe cannot stand is for someone to tell him what is going to happen. She said the wrong thing and it pushed him over the edge. Joe found himself telling Bernie, *"You're going to leave me? Who gave you the clothes you're wearing, who gave you that couch your sitting on and the car outside? If I get saved you're going to get saved with me!"*

Laying in bed at two in the morning Bernie asked, *"Are you asleep?"*

"No."

"I've been thinking about what you said. We do need some help. We're having a tough time."

"Yea," Joe said, *"I'm ready to divorce you."*

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Bernie said, *"I know we're having problems and we can't communicate, but I don't want to talk to your brothers about religion."*

"Be open" he said. Then he told her, *"I watched channel 40 today."* This guy answered every question I had. Joe went over and turned on the TV and Levern Tripp was on the television. Joe and Bernie were into country western music and here was a country gospel singer. He said, *"Look, look at this guy, even cowboys serve God."*

She said, *"I don't know, this is too much for me, turn the TV off and we'll talk about it tomorrow."*

A New Life

God was all over Joe. At work he was hiding from creditors and thinking, what is happening? His brother pulled him aside and told him, *"I need to talk to you."*

"I'm too busy," Joe said, *"I've got too many problems."*

Joe went out to the car and was just sitting there with his mind spinning, when his brother rapped on the window, *"I just want to tell you something. I don't want you to think I'm some kind of Homo or something, but I just love you."*

The statement broke Joe's heart. He wanted to cry but could not. As he started to drive off he heard a voice from heaven say, *"My son I've given you everything and you've given me nothing. I want your life."*

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"God I don't know how to pray, I don't even know you, but all right." He drove on home and grabbed his wife and told her, *"You need to get saved. We've got to get saved!"* That night his wife prayed with him. As they prayed it was like a dam broke and Joe started to weep for the first time in his life. Joe's brother Rudy came by and prayed with Joe and Bernie, *"God make him a preacher of the gospel, make him a radical person, make him a fanatic."* He took Joe out to his truck and showed him two Bibles. *"I knew you were going to get saved today and I went and bought these."*

"Teach me," Joe said to his brother, and for the next two months he paid his brother to teach him the Bible.

That Friday night he went out to church at Praise Chapel. He was not sure how they would receive him. As he came in a lady started running at him. *"Joe"* she yells. In his mind he is thinking I don't know this lady. Maybe I burned her.

"We've been praying for you to be saved," she said as she hugged him. Sister Mancha was just the first of many to say they had prayed. He found people who had started to care about him before he had even met them. Praise Chapel would be home for him and his wife. That night he said *"I'll never go back."*

Starting Over

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Joe was facing many problems, but they seemed like nothing now. He owed money to some shady characters who threatened him the day after he got saved, *"You know you owe us a lot of money and if you don't pay us, we're going to have to hurt you."*

He thought, *"If the Bible is true then I'm going to have to start proclaiming it."* He looked at the thug and told him, *"You know you can't touch me."*

"Oh Yea!"

"Yea, you might bring your big goons down here, but you cannot touch me because I belong to God now, I gave my life to Jesus last night."

"Man, you're crazier than before."

"That's right," Joe told him, *"You come near this place and my God might strike you dead."*

He had a building in the affluent section of Downey, California. Not caring what the neighbors thought he put in his windows, ***"Repent, you must be born again."*** You could not miss the bright red letters.

Business men started calling to tell him *"you can't do that!"* He didn't care. People started to flock into the store and get saved. Knowing he had a call to preach, he decided to shut down the business. Saying to himself, *"I know me, there's too much money and I don't want to be bound to money again."*

Cruz Guerrero (A Mexican pastor) came to speak at a Sunday afternoon Spanish service. Although Joe could not speak or understand Spanish, at the time, this guy inspired him. Joe had brought a friend with him and he kept asking him *"what is he saying?"*

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"God if you can make me a preacher," he thought, "I want to be a preacher like that."

God spoke to Joe, *"I'm going to make you a bilingual preacher."* This is where his vision for Spanish works started. Joe got a regular job in a warehouse to pay the bills and threw himself into the ministry. He became fanatical about getting people saved. When he decided it was time for you to get saved, you wondered if he might not beat you up if you did not pray.

One convert was a guy at work. He told Joe, *"I want my wife to get saved, but she doesn't speak English."*

"Let's pray about it." Joe said.

A Spanish Ministry

He had been in the church for seven months when Mike called him, *"Joe, I understand that you're interested in a Bible study."*

"I'd love it," Joe told him.

"You mentioned Spanish to me, what about a Spanish Bible study?" Mike asked.

"Do you really think that it will work? You know, I don't speak that good of Spanish. Are there Spanish people that want to come now?"

"No, but they're going to come," Mike Neville told him.

"If they'll come, I'll do it."

When he told his wife she was excited, but not about the study. *"You're nuts man, that ain't from God, you can't even speak Spanish."* She came to the study but never got into it until Mike preached a sermon on Burning the Old Bridges. *"There are some wives here, and your husbands have a call but you're not supporting them,"* Mike Neville preached. Joe knew it was for Bernie. She got up at the altar call and went forward. Looking into Joe's eyes she told him, *"I'm behind you."*

His greatest inspiration and support was his brother Bobby. This was a man of prayer. When Bobby prayed, it was with all his heart. Phil Hernandez also made a big impact on him, because he was just who he was. It might not have been holy, but it was honest. Once, when Joe was with Phil, he all but cussed a man out. Joe asked him, *"Can you do that?"*

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Phil said, "*When I get mad I do.*" Joe thought, "*I like this guy.*" Both would get convicted about their language, but at the time it was raw, exciting, and powerful.

Working for God

Nothing affected Joe more than the fact that Mike and Donna Neville believed in him. After being saved two years Mike sent him to Hermosillo, Mexico to do a crusade. When the miracles started, he felt something greater happening inside him than he had ever experienced in his life before.

Afterwards Mike asked him to come on full time and work with the Spanish ministry. Joe showed him his last couple of checks. Mike told him, "*That's a lot of money. You won't make that kind of money in the ministry. I will you tell you this: you will travel to parts of the world where people have never traveled in their life time.*"

At first Joe did not think much of the traveling, but after his first crusade, he saw the opportunity and the joy of touching other peoples. A big part of his time from then on would be in other nations. Even while pioneering, Joe went to Puerto Rico, Argentina, and the Dominican Republic.

No one would think of Joe as "*religious*". His mark in the world was a cowboy hat and a cigar. He dropped the cigar but kept the hat and still wears one today.

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Joe was running the Spanish ministry and helping Mike. It was everything he wanted, but the fellowship was planting churches one after another and Joe was not sure what God wanted for him.

Difficult Times

He finally decided he needed to leave the mother church and start a church of his own. This would be the hardest times of his life. He left a great platform in Maywood, going down to a border town just below San Diego, (San Ysidro, California). Joe went with the idea of starting a Spanish work.

The first service he had was bilingual with eight people out and seven of them Mexicans. He called up pastor Neville and told him things had started great. When Mike found it was bilingual he said, "*that's not what we sent you down there for.*"

No one at the time believed that separate Spanish churches were a good idea. Those people needed to learn English, was the general feeling. Joe felt God had told him that his call was in Spanish. Not raised speaking Spanish; he trained himself. When he started to preach in Spanish something came over him. There was a dynamic to the language that he never felt in speaking English. The rolling of the r's made speaking more exciting, he got high on the ability to share emotion and excitement.

The conflict with language was real. Maywood had tried to plant some Spanish churches and the re-

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sults had been bad. The language barrier made prejudices and fear seem bigger than they were. It would take a while to overcome the bad taste of the past. There were natural barriers and misunderstandings that had developed in the conflicts of culture and heritage. During that time Joe and Bernie would face one of their biggest tests. It seemed like everyone that got saved in that border town, only spoke Spanish and they had to send them off to another church. Depression set in. All their motivation disappeared.

It was a time that Joe would look back on as good for him, but it was hard to live through. Joe and Bernie developed a sympathy for those in difficult situations from this, and learned to listen to their hopes and aspirations. All of the benefits were in the future and he had to survive today.

Stepping Out

After one year Joe decided that this was not what God wanted for him. He told Bernie, *"I'm not going to sit here and do nothing for two or three years; we need to find out what God wants."* He had always felt a call to evangelize and figured this was his opportunity. Meetings opened up, and he was scheduled for a year in advance, but in the middle of that time God spoke to him again. He was preaching on a Tuesday night in Maywood, and those that attended the church and spoke Spanish had brought everyone they knew. While preaching God showed him all those people and

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said, *"These men here could be pastors, but they need somebody to pastor them. I want you to pastor them."*

Joe went to Brother Neville and told him, *"God's spoken to me to do something with the Spanish people here. I need to start a Spanish church. There are churches all over the area running hundreds with Spanish speaking people, why can't the fellowship have a Spanish church here? I believe that we can have revival, won't you release me? All I want is for you to announce it and let those that want to come, come with me and meet in the old Maywood building."* The building was sitting empty, since the mother church had outgrown it.

"Well, you know what? I've been waiting for you to come talk to me," Mike told him.

"Really?" Joe said.

"I don't have any money to give you. We'd just have to see how many people would come and whether it could support you."

Joe told him, *"That's all I can ask."*

This would be one of the most radical things Praise Chapel would do. They had released couples before this, but now they were looking at a large number of people. There was no way that this would not hurt Mike's church, but he knew it could be good for the kingdom. Over a hundred people wanted to go. They called everyone they knew and the first service had 200 out. It settled down to around 150 and the church was off with a roar.

The Lord Added

Carlos Cota was a key figure in the early days. His love of God was obvious, and as song leader he brought a tremendous spirit into the place. They knew family after family from Mexico, and they started bringing these people in by the dozens.

Carlos would be the first pastor to go into Mexico when he started the work in Tijuana. It was at a conference that this decision took place. Mike and Joe brought him and his wife into the office to find out what God was saying to him. Carlos looked at brother Neville and told him, *"I last conference, when you preached last night. I hear from God. Me, wife go to Tijuana."*

"Have you lived there?" Mike asked.

"Me wife no live there. No nothing. Wife, me, God speak, go to Tijuana." That church has grown in a short time to over two hundred and has started five churches itself.

Joe saw the church grow to 270 people. The money was flowing and then the test hit. A key man in the church rose up, attacking the ministry. The problems went back years, and instead of dealing with it Joe kept trying to be kind. It was biblical approach but it did nothing to resolve the problem. In the confusion, seventy-five people walked out, right when the church was doing more than it had ever done before. Nineteen ninety-one would be a tough year, but once again it would work for good. It would tie the Spanish works

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closer to the other churches as the whole fellowship rallied to help, and soon the church would begin to move forward again.

Trials and Miracles

A great church is one where your needs can be met. A woman brought her son Jesse to a Wednesday night service. Jesse was using a walker with braces on his legs. No matter what they tried; he kept getting worse and worse. The mother had met some people that had told her to come to church and God would heal her son. Joe asked her what had happened? She told him how her son had gotten really sick. Trying to find a cure for her son she went to a witch, who did a cleansing on the boy. The witch told her, *"There is somebody that really wants to harm you. They are going to do this through your son, and they are going to hurt you bad. I want you to take this ribbon and put it on his head for seven days, and that will keep the bad spirits away."*

Doing what she was told, on the seventh day her son lost the ability to walk. She told pastor Joe, *"It's been five years since my son could walk. Doctors say that his hips are deteriorating and there is no hope."*

Looking at her, Joe said, *"You've been involved in witchcraft. But, God can break that curse and help*

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you and your son if you'll pray along with me. Jesse, do you have a bicycle?"

"No," he said, "I can't ride one."

"Do you like baseball?" Joe asked.

"Yes, but I can't run."

"God's going to heal you. We're going to pray and I want you to pray with me." They renounced witchcraft and Joe told Jesse, "I want you to take those braces off."

Jesse unbuckled the braces, and Joe helped him to his feet. Jesse could not believe that he was standing. *"You see that wall?" Joe asked, "I want you to run over and touch that wall."* His first step was wobbly but then he took off running like a normal kid, jumping up on platforms and chairs. When he went home his dad could not stand him running and jumping on everything and put the braces back on. Joe told the mom, *"You take those braces off, God's healed him. You tell your husband, how would he like it if I put those braces on him."* They took them off and never put them back on again.

A Unique Destiny

The Spanish revival is in many ways a revival within a revival. They face their own harvest field and challenges. From the experience gained in these churches there has been great headway made in working with many different national groups and pastors. In

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every tongue there will be those that God will use to bring revival.

These Spanish churches feel a special burden for their world. Often strapped to just meet their own bills these ministries stretch themselves to reach out everywhere that Spanish is spoken. They know they cannot wait for others to do the task and they feel God's help as they take up the burden.

In Praise Chapel they have learned that there is no person too dysfunctional or past so bad, that God cannot use them. In fact, it's the old Bible story of those forgiven much loving much. Joe and Bernie Menchaca are God's illustrations of this truth.

12

Punks

Become Prophets

Bill Hall was raised in a Christian home, but like the prodigal son in the Bible he took his inheritance and wasted it. As a teenager he went through a rebellious stage. His mother was an invalid and it robbed him of what he saw as a normal home. Feeling ripped off, he ran away at 13 and lived under the pier at Laguna beach. He was the classic teen rebel. Doing his own thing and thinking he knew everything.

When he got out of high school in 1965, he joined the marine corps. Bill was a little guy with a huge chip on his shoulder, who wanted to be the best marine that ever lived. Under five feet tall and weighing less than 98 pounds, he was out to prove something. The first day he wondered what happened to his freedom when a DI knocked him out. Quickly he

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learned that he was part of a team, and no one is stronger than the weakest link. He was tough. He learned to handle pain, and respect for authority in the Marines. Still a rebel underneath, at least he learned how to act right when authority was around.

He served three tours of duty in Vietnam, as the leader of a squad. Because of his size, he had to be crazy and wild to keep the men's respect. When he got out of the marines after six and one half years, he realized he had learned nothing that would help him to get a job. Figuring that the world owed him something, he decided to take it. Along with five other friends he went into crime.

Robbery was like a narcotic to him. He was hooked on the thrill of the thing, loving the plotting and making of plans. The Adrenaline was more important to him than the money. One night in the middle of a robbery it hit him, *"I can't stop this,"* and he thought, *"God get me busted."* God answered that prayer. He got caught that night and thrown into jail.

Waiting for his case to be heard, he watched the trial of two men accused of committing a contract murder. Neither of them got a tough sentence, and Bill figured he would get off easy too. But when Bill stood in front of the judge his heart sank as the judge looked down at him and said, *"I sentence you to nine consecutive life sentences. We don't ever want to see you on the streets again."* He started to faint when he heard it. He was 26, with two small kids. His wife figured he was as good as dead and left him that day. He found

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himself sitting alone on a bus heading for Fulsom prison.

Prison

Here was the prodigal down with the pigs. It does not get any worse than Fulsom, called "*the warehouse*," it was where you went when you had years to serve. He passed through gate after gate. His cell was on the row reserved for lifers. As the guards walked the thirteen of them out to the yard, or down for meals they said, "*Dead men walking*." When you hear that label day after day, everything in you, that makes you human dies and you become just a shell. The guards would take the letters that had come back unopened and throw them back at him saying, "*Why don't you just kill yourself. Nobody loves you.*"

Bill had been there five months, when the Mexicans killed a black. Sitting on the bunk that night, the air was torn by the screams of a man burning to death. Bill still can remember choking on that horrible sticky smell. Out to get revenge, a black trustee had thrown a bucket of lighter fluid and a match on the first Mexican he saw. It hit Bill like a punch in the stomach; he was the only white man on that row. If it had been a white man that had killed the black, he would have been the man screaming.

He sat there that night and thought "*Is this why you were born? To come here and die, in this awful*

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place? No! This can't be it; to die, and be buried with no funeral and no one to care, in the back yard of Fulsom prison. Oh God, if you're for real," he cried out, "Please, please do something! I don't want to die this way."

Every letter he sent returned unopened, but Jesus cared about Bill Hall. A desperate and lonely man was crying out that night for someone to love him. It would be a while before he found human fellowship, but he touched heaven, and God heard. That night he was filled with love. Bill approached salvation like everything else he had done; he went all out. He cried out, *"Jesus, teach me how to love the way you love."*

Set Free

The next morning nothing outside had changed but inside he was free. He told the sergeant on the walk, *"You're going to get saved."* They transferred him to Susanville prison, where he got involved in the college located there. Changed, he wanted to help everyone and he started doing the homework for the men that were struggling with theirs. They would try to pay him, but the only thing he wanted was an opportunity to witness. Without even realizing it, he was building up *"I Owe U's"* from every group in the prison.

The Aryan brotherhood was the first to put pressure on him. Saying they would kill him if he did not join up. Bill got excited and told the representative,

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"Praise God, that's my ticket home." Thinking he was crazy, they decided to leave him alone.

There was one guy that would not be as easy to deal with. Leon was short like Bill, but huge in his build. All he did, every day was work out. Leon scared everyone. When an argument broke out in the yard, he could pick up a man in each arm. From the day Bill got off the bus, Leon had his eye on him. Perversion is the life of prison. Many men know that they will never get out, and they fall into lifestyles headed lower and lower. Walking through the gym, Leon put his arm around Bill and said, *"Billy you don't know what you do to me."* Bill thought he was going to vomit. He grabbed Leon's arm and yelled, *"Get on your knees Leon! God is going to give you a miracle. Ask him for your miracle, name it."*

Leon was shocked, caught by surprise, he started to cry. He said, *"I want to see my mamma before she dies. She's an old woman but I want to see her."* He had another 15 years to serve and the chances of seeing his mother were zero.

Bill prayed, *"God, you do it."*

A couple of weeks past and Leon ran into him. *"Billy"* he said, *"where is your God? I'm still here man. Is your God on vacation?"*

One day walking across the yard he heard his name screamed and saw Leon running toward him. He came sliding up on his knees, *"Bill,"* he said, *"the parole board called me in today, and in 10 days they're going to send me home."*

Tried

It was two and half years later while walking across the yard that he heard "63934" (that was his name in prison). *"Report to the wardens office."* Bill was frightened at first. The thought crossed his mind, *"what have I done?"* Yet deep down he knew that he was about to see another miracle.

There were two representatives from the parole board sitting across the table from him. One man was playing the hard guy and looked at him saying, *"I hear you're a Christian. You got that jail house religion. Yea, you're all Christians in here, but when you walk out the door you throw your Christianity in the trash can. It's a bunch of bunk. You're just a punk and you'll go out of this place and rob stores again."*

Billy told them, *"I'm a Christian in here or outside."*

That set the man off and he started yelling and cursing Christ and Christians. Bill was mad and the next thing he knew the arm of the chair came off in his hand. The man leaped up yelling, *"He's going to kill us."* Guards came running in.

The other man calmed everyone down and said, *"I'm sorry for my partner 63934. We have been looking through your files and I think we can let you go home in six months."*

Bill walked out stunned. He thought he was going to live in prison forever. The thought of leaving

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scared him; he had gotten used to no responsibility and everything given to you. He knew that if he got out it was going to be hard to stay saved.

The next day the parole board called him back. *"We're not going to let you out,"* they told him. The warden has put a stop on releasing you. The only way you can get out is to have the governor sign the parole personally. That week, Jerry Brown signed the parole, and four months later Billy Hall walked out a free man. As he went through the gates, Halorman, a guard said, *"You'll be back, Hall. All of you come back."* For Billy it was like stepping out of the grave.

Five months later he came back, but it was to preach. Walking around town, he ran into Sergeant Kelly. *"Hall, is that you?"* he asked. *"You made it? I've been here for years and I began to think that no one could stay out. I began to think I was in a zoo, but I see they can."*

The Next Step

Getting out was not the answer to all of his problems. In some ways it was the beginning of them. He could not get a job, and lived out of an old Volkswagen he had bought with the two hundred dollars the prison system gives you to start over with. He went from church to church trying to find a place to worship. It was his testimony that caused the conflict. They rejoiced to hear what God had done, but afterwards they pulled away. They were afraid of someone that had a past like his. He was not having much success until he stopped to get gas one night, and the attendant invited him out to meet her pastor: Michael Neville.

It was a wild scene the day he walked into that little building. His first thought was that he had walked back into the joint. For the first time in a long time Bill found himself the one that might be called "*religious*." Most of the men were walking tattoo exhibits. The girl that had invited him, did not give him time for second thoughts. Dragging him down to a seat in the front, he soon got caught up in the spirit of the place.

As the worship ended, he heard a sound he had never heard before. People were praying in a strange way. It dawned on him that they were speaking in tongues. A peace filled him, and he told God, "*This is what I was reading about in the Old Testament, where the shekinah glory came down and filled your temple.*" Bill had not felt that kind of intimacy with God since

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he had left prison. In his cell he had felt close to God, but ever since getting out, it had been like a barrier had come between them. From that night on he was hooked on the fullness of the Spirit.

He knew he needed what they had. It struck him how lonely he was, and how much he needed the acceptance of other Christians. Scared of being rejected again, he still told Pastor Neville his story. Mike said, *"You need to share that tonight."* All the way to church he was talking to God, *"Lord, please don't let them push me away."* Just before getting off the freeway the Lord said, *"Billy I love you, does it really matter what people think about you? Isn't it enough that I love you?"* That set him free.

He stood that night and said, *"I'm not what I appear. I've got to tell you what Jesus has done."* When he got through, far from being pushed away, people came up and said, *"Your one of us."*

Billy thought he had been doing well, but he experienced more personal growth those first months at Praise Chapel than he had in years.

God's Voice

At the end of 1980 he said he was going to fast until Jesus spoke to him about the future. Days went by with nothing but an empty stomach. Sitting at work, God broke in. Thoughts began to fill his mind, *"You know what it's like to be in a communist country. Why would I let you go through that prison experience, see-*

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ing the pressure of death all around you, and passing through that? I did that so you would know that my hand and presence were with you to bring peace in the midst of turmoil. I am going to take you to the communist lands Billy. I am going to take you to places where men have not gone. I am going to take, and break the gate of communism. I have given you these countries, to pray for them as a father prays for his children: China, Russia, East Germany, Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Ethiopia. These ten babies are yours. Pray for them that you will see me break the yoke of communism. They will fall like dominoes, and the world will know that this is none other than the hand of God doing his work."

Bill was stunned. He thought that he needed to get a ticket and head out the next day. As he shared this vision with Pastor Neville some other men mocked him, but Mike said, *"You know what Billy? God is going to put this together, and I'll agree with you in prayer, and we'll see God do it."*

Billy said, *"God told me that this was my inheritance and that he would take me there with no financial support. I'm going to break through to that first country with just your support in prayer."*

Two years went past before he had a chance to see this promise fulfilled. Meanwhile Bill got involved in a small struggling church. The Riggs had been beating their heads against Sun Valley, California. They had a vision that Bill was supposed to come and help

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them. When Bill came, he brought the kindness and friendship the church needed. From that day it took off. From 10 people it jumped to 90, and the next year grew even more. Bill's ministry in the future was not as the front man, but the guy that came along side and helped those that were carrying the burden. At times he would function as an evangelist, at others as an assistant or a missionary. In each situation he would leave more behind than was there when he came.

He had gotten a job working for World Vision in the early 80's. It was 1984 when they talked to him about moving to Ethiopia. They needed Bill to manage there \$200,000,000 famine relief program as a financial analyst. Bill had turned down one offer to go to China, but he and Mike both knew immediately this was God.

Confronting the Dragon

Flying out of America and landing in Africa was a bigger change than crossing a border. You could not have landed in a stranger place. It seemed that everyone had machine guns. The soldiers searching his luggage found the two thousand tracts he was trying to smuggle in. Angry, they told him, "*You can't have these in this country.*" Christians were being killed, but their boss said to give the tracts back. For all the time Bill was there he got away with the impossible, as long as it had to do with God.

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In America his idea of evangelism had been straight out confrontation. In Maywood they hit the streets, used bull horns, and confronted people, but God spoke to Billy that Ethiopia would have to be handled differently. He knew that God was going to send someone to him, and spent six weeks waiting for that knock on the door. During that time of prayer God dealt with him about breaking with his American past. He was going to have to change his ways of thinking. He went on a crash program to learn the language and adapt to the culture of Ethiopia.

In the sixth week there was a knock on the door. A man Bill had never seen told him, "*We were praying in our house and God spoke to us to go to the Ethiopia hotel and knock on the door of room 107. My servant Billy Hall will be there and he will teach you the things of God.*" Trusting God, he left with them to preach at their home. The crowd kept building. From one house it spread to another. The government had rules against foreigners being with the people, so everything had to be done undercover. There was a strict curfew in effect that kept people off the streets at night. That worked fine for Bill, most of the services lasted all night.

This was a time when mad men ruled Ethiopia. Men out to destroy the church. The government made all Christian meetings illegal, and the cost of real faith could be a death sentence. Across that land though, Christians continued gathering in homes. Packed in, they listened, praised and believed.

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Bill decided to spend his time spreading the message. To do this he trained natives how to do his job, that way, he was free to go out and preach. On most days he would go to some predetermined street corner with his Bible hidden in a sack. A car would pull up. The door opened and Bill got in, trusting that they would take him to wherever the secret service was being held that night. He was to ask no questions, just be available.

Protected

These all-night prayer meetings were illegal to hold or attend. At one of these meetings he saw soldiers looking in the windows. He was frightened, but nothing happened. Only later did they discover that the neighbors had called the authorities. That night while they had been praising and worshipping, the soldiers had been walking all over the neighborhood looking for them. The only explanation for what happened was that God blinded them. They found and heard nothing. Mad, they went to the people that had reported the meeting. *"We walked all around that house and we did not see anybody or hear anybody. If you ever call us again like this, we're going to send you to the prison."*

It dawned on them that the God that makes the ear can cause it not to hear and the eye not to see. For Billy Hall the scripture, *"All things are possible"* took on new meaning.

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A small boy was brought to a meeting with small pox. The mother was crying, begging for the evangelist to come out. When Billy saw the boy, he knew this was serious. His eyes were rolled back and he was covered with sores. Praying in the Spirit and declaring the word, the boys face started to cool under his hand. As Billy opened his eyes he saw the pox marks beginning to disappear, and then the boy smiled and stood up and started to run around that room.

For the next three months Bill was in meetings every night. Exhausted, he found himself laid up for days. Foreigners left him alone, but the Ethiopians came by to care for him, although it meant a real risk to themselves. He would wake up to hear them praying.

An Unexpected Miracle

Bill had been praying for years about a wife, and it was at one of these all night meetings that he met the woman for him. For several years he had known that when he married, it would be someone that had two children the same age as those he had lost when he went to prison. It had never dawned on him that his wife would be a refugee from another country and culture. As he and Mulu walked together that night to a second meeting, he knew this was who he would marry. At thirty-eight in a foreign land he found the answer to his prayers.

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The scripture that Bill holds to is the one that says of Jesus, *"For this Purpose came the Son of Man into the world, that he might destroy the works of the devil."*

Preaching in Debrose, a city with stricter security than normal, Billy decided to pray for a man brought in unconscious. When he laid his hands on him, he noticed that the skin was cold. Something was seriously wrong, but releasing his faith he prayed. The flesh became noticeably warmer and the man got up. He was dizzy and having trouble walking, but he went into the other room. As he entered that room, the man who had brought him let out a scream.

It shook the man badly. He had come to the meeting with a friend to mock the Christians, but on the way there his friend had died. Not knowing anything else to do, he had brought him with him. This man was so terrified when he saw the friend he thought dead walking, that he repented and got right with God.

One man that came was 105 years old. He had spent his life in the orthodox church. His testimony was that he had never seen a miracle until he came to these services. He became the oldest new convert that Billy would see.

One on One

Billy got to do a lot of walking. You walked to many of the meetings. This was the best time to disci-

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ple someone. Anyone that sat and talked too long, would attract the soldier's attention, so you always kept moving. It was during those walks that he taught young men the basics of leading a meeting.

Gennet was a seventeen year old girl that loved God with all her heart. She missed several meetings and everyone was concerned about her. They finally found her outside the hospital. She had been arrested in a prayer meeting for being a Christian and she was tortured. They would hang her from the ceiling and a soldier whipped the bottoms of her feet with an iron bar. "*Deny your Jesus,*" the soldier would demand!

"*How can I deny my Jesus,*" was her response, "*I love my Jesus.*" As she prayed and worshipped God her body became numb, and she could not feel any pain. The soldiers literally dropped from the exhaustion of beating her. Rejoicing she told how it just felt like they were tapping her foot on the bottom. As she looked at the soldier she could only see Jesus and began to sing songs of worship. After forty days they threw her out on the road like a dead dog. Her feet were broken bones and ripped flesh. For a week they had to carry her around the house. The second week she could walk on pillows and by the third week she was back out at the meetings, inspiring all the other young people.

In 1984 and 1985 people were dying at a rate of 16,000 a week. Billy was overwhelmed with the need, and asked God, "*What can I do?*" I'm only one person. God spoke to him, "*Be one person, be that one person*"

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that will be a difference here." Often all he could do was sing and praise in their language. The people would laugh at his accent, but as they began to laugh, hope would slip into that room.

The government had begun to suspect him. By a miracle, Bill slipped out of Ethiopia just ahead of the government agents looking for him. The greatest miracle was that he snuck his new family out with him. His heart was still in Africa, but he needed to make a living. Bill began to evangelize, but more important to him was keeping the vision for the world and especially communist countries burning.

He has been able to slip back into Ethiopia and encourage the many churches that have started there. Today there are hundreds of home groups affected by Bill's ministry there. Praise Chapels' vision to touch the world has gone down several unique roads. The center of that vision is still to touch the nations.

Bill began to help in the formation of a network of churches called Global Harvest. At the core are the churches of Praise Chapel, but many other churches are linking in with this mission vision for supporting missionaries and national churches. Reaching not just Africa, but every continent but Antarctica, Global Harvest has become a central part of the Praise Chapel outreach. Bill started by volunteering his experience in accounting and speaking. Today he is administrating the organization.

13

From Rage to Compassion

Phil Hernandez and Frank Salcido go way back. They met in the sand box in the first grade. As teenagers, Phil and his pals partied at the corner in front of Frank's house. After Frank's conversion they went their separate ways. Frank never gave up on his old friends and would come and blast the guys whenever he visited home. They would mock him with, "*Check this guy out, what is he on?*" They poured beer on him and threatened him but he just kept coming back.

At the Bible studies Frank always asked for prayer for the old neighborhood. He especially told them to pray for Phil Hernandez, "*He's the worst.*" Phil was a mess. Born and raised in East Los Angeles, his family escaped the pressures around them by work. Phil's dad was an alcoholic and the family was dys-

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functional. Phil's place in the family, was more of a construction worker than a son.

His dad had been a zoot suiter that had ended up in the navy in World War II. This saved him from the trap of the gangs. He had been there when the gangs that are famous today in California were forming. Breaking with the gang culture, he was not going to allow his sons to be involved. He pushed his boys toward work. His dad would buy an old junk house and move the family into the garage. For the next year all of them would start to rebuild the place. As Phil grew up, he learned more and more about construction and watched the family move up the economic scale. Life to him meant to work hard.

A Troubled Beginning

Phil was an unexpected child, born nine years after his parents thought they were through having children. Unwanted and raised in an environment of constant pressure he developed a bleeding ulcer at thirteen. He was too young to be accepted by the others in the family, and always felt left out. The anchor to his life was his fear of his father. His dad had a wrist like Fred Flintstone. All he did all day was construction and he made it clear that if Phil did not do what he was told, he would have to deal with dad.

The home on the outside, seemed to be great. There was food, clothes and a decent house, but it was

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a facade. The bitterness and anger kept growing and it started to break loose on those around him.

He was a chubby little kid that ended up getting picked on a lot, but when they pushed him hard enough he would lose control and hurt someone. At nine, Phil got involved in the martial arts and stayed in them until he was seventeen. He left martial arts to chase women. He looked up every person that ever laughed at him or hassled him as a chubby kid and beat them as badly as he could. As a student of the martial arts he had exercised control, but when he left the practice and influence of his teachers, he just used his training to get even.

Dee Dee

The family had moved to Monterey Park and he went to a new High School where he knew no one. Violent, angry, and lethal, Phil was in one area unusual for a thug in training. He liked to sing and would still rather sing than preach. Joining the school choir he met Dee Dee, a cute little blond that caught his attention immediately. At first he built a friendship with her. There was some tension with her boy friend and the other Mexicans, but Phil figured it was worth it. They did not date, but they talked for hours on the phone and at school.

The other thing that he loved was vans. He hung around with the members of the van club. Liking

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money and nice things, he always worked, and so he always had money to party with. This meant lots of friends but none of them were good for him. He and Dee Dee were getting closer and soon were dating. She got pregnant. The problem was that Phil was not dependable.

His parents had kicked him out of the house but they liked Dee Dee and let her stay with them. At first, Phil got excited about having a baby but he soon got bored and went back to partying.

He was developing a love for drugs. Acid was his drug of choice, but he could spend \$800 on a weekend for Thai sticks, (the buds of an especially good form of Marijuana from Thailand). After the baby was born it was like his life fell apart. Everything that could go wrong did. He got busted, attracted trouble, was in several car wrecks and things seemed to deteriorate. The police were harassing him more frequently. During all of this Dee Dee's grandmother, Myrtle Gray was praying for him.

Pulled From the Fire

Up until this time Phil had always landed on his feet, but his life was getting out of control. He ran into Frank Salcido who pulled Phil aside and asked, "*Think about it, what are you going to do with your little boy, Phil? Are you going to end up partying with him? Are you going to let someone else marry Dee Dee and raise your boy?*" At another time those words would have fallen on stone ears but then, and on that day it was like a spear had pierced Phil's heart.

There on a street corner he suddenly started to cry. "*Man, don't talk to me like that.*" Frank was shocked that Phil had shown his feelings in front of the guys like that. He knew God was moving and asked, "*You want to get saved Bro? Right Now!*"

Some other guys who were loaded on dust had wandered over and asked "*What's happening?*"

Frank told them, "*Phil wants to get saved, you guys come and help.*" They started to laugh, but Frank nailed them, "*You're all laughing because Phil wants to get saved. You're all cold dudes.*" They got convicted and all formed a circle. Phil set his beer and his bong down and they all held hands and prayed. It was June of 1978 and Phil was 19 and had been out of High School one year. He was ready to change.

When he told Dee Dee she thought he was joking and laughed it off until the next morning when he got up and started getting dressed. Frank came by and grabbed Phil for church. Back living with Dee Dee

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again, he made her come along too. They both hit the altar that morning and never turned back.

It was close to the fourth of July and the church had a fireworks stand that they used to raise money with. Phil was working as an electrician and so he wired the booth up. From there he got involved in everything he could. It was not easy.

Finding a Place

The older church members were still having trouble accepting the Hispanics and here was Phil, this giant Aztec married to a little white girl. As the first "*salt and pepper*" team in the church they did not find instant acceptance from everyone. In fact, even some of his own friends wondered if this guy could really change. It did not help that Phil was hot tempered. Except for Frank and Mike he came within a hair of beating every guy in the church up. When there was a disagreement, the men and women sometimes lost track of their salvation and were calling each other out. Phil was often the one screaming the loudest. No one was that mature of a Christian and so about half the time they were guessing on what a Christian should be and do. The wonderful discovery they came to was, that the Holy Spirit really would lead them. Starting to change they began to learn new ways of dealing with conflict.

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Phil's hardest fight was to quit swearing. He was raised in a home where they fought and cussed all the time. Outside the family he worked at construction, and the language there was worse. Over six feet tall, a martial arts expert and in great shape, when he got tired of arguing, he let his temper and his tongue loose. The conflict arose when he became an usher. Gang bangers were coming out to see what this church was doing and every service had men from the joint. Men and women that had fought their whole life were there in the church, and so the ushers did more than help people find the nursery. Many of those who came in thought they could act the same way as they did in the world.

Phil wanted to make sure that the word got out: if you caused trouble in the Praise Chapel service it would cost you. Those who did get out of order often looked like they had fallen down three flights of stairs. Slowly Phil started to separate out the flesh from the Spirit. He felt bad after losing control and even went and wept as he wrestled through the battle with the old nature. When things really started to break was when he started to represent the church and knew he had to discipline his life.

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Anchors

Two things helped him find his place in the church. One was the choir. It was a place where he could do what he loved and find acceptance. The other was street evangelism. It was here he could release his aggression in a positive way. Going out on the Boulevard was radical, and the guys that went were afraid of nothing. They went right into bars and confronted people. Out on the streets they did anything and everything to get out the message. Phil loved it. Christianity was not feminine at Praise Chapel, it was radical and confrontational and that was something he could get into. He loved the commando jackets and the militancy.

They took Pastor Neville out to the streets with them occasionally and before they would let him give a person a track they would frisk them. Once their weapons were gone then they let Mike give them a track. It was their zeal that probably saved them. They had knives pulled and guns stuck in their face but they knew God would protect them. Looking some person with a gun in the eye, they more than once told them, *"Pull the trigger Esse, come on homes, do it - I know where I'm going."* They got the reputation of *"too crazy to mess with,"* and were left alone.

A Costly Change

Phil was doing well as a Christian and at work for Lockheed aircraft. He had just been promoted and was making over \$20 an hour back in 1983. He did a lot at the church. One evening Mike took Phil to a Marie Calendars and started to share with him his vision for the church. He finally asked, "*Would you be willing to come on full time?*"

For Phil it was a big decision. He had been carrying the title of assistant pastor, but now he would be full time. He made over \$700 a week and had made as much as \$1,300 with overtime. It seemed crazy to go back to a salary of a couple hundred dollars a week, but Phil said "*Yes.*" Everyone, including his wife thought that he was nuts to take the job.

After about six months on staff he went and took the El Monte church over when Frank Salcido went to Northern California. Phil stayed there in El Monte for three and one half years. When he took it, the church dropped in numbers before they started to rise again. Working hard things began to take off. They moved into a new building and were having service with over 200 out.

Enlargement

Joe Menchaca and Mike Neville picked him up one day for lunch. When he got in the back seat of that Volvo they asked if he would go to Puerto Rico. Phil was dumbfounded. Joe had him read a Spanish flyer to prove that Phil knew Spanish. The problem was that he could read Spanish but it did not mean he could speak it, or even understand what he was reading. *"I can't even speak Spanish,"* he told them, *"except the slang that's out on the streets."*

Joe told him, *"Yea, but you can learn it fast Bro."* Pastor Neville began to explain the need, and what was going on. Then he told him, *"you take two days and decide."*

Phil grabbed Dee Dee and headed out to Indio. They preached for a friend and talked the thing through. The first thought was *"No!"* The church was cooking. They had planted one church and were getting ready to send out another. He came back from Indio determined to say, *"Nah,"* but as he sat in front of Pastor Neville that Nay went to *"Yea we'll do it."* His wife was ready to kill him when she heard he had said they would go. Dee Dee accepted the move as inevitable and asked, *"How long?"*

"We're gone in ten days," he told her, and ten days later they were in Puerto Rico. Everything that could go wrong did. Most of their personal and household belongings were destroyed in the shipping. They thought there would be people there waiting. When

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they got there they found there was no one in the church, and no one wanted to come to hear a Mexican that could not even speak Spanish. The church never did well, but in their family, Puerto Rico would be a water shed. Until now his family, though important to him, was second place to the ministry. In Puerto Rico they became a unit.

All Things Work for Good

Since the church was not doing well, they could either be bummed out or try to make the best of it. They started by going to the beach looking for coconuts, and teaching the kids to snorkel. In the past the phone was always ringing and people pressing in, it was on that island that he and his wife built a relationship that went from shallow to deep. They laughed and cried together, but most of all they just spent time together. Church life stunk but it was so good at home that it became the greatest thing that would ever happen for their family.

After about a year, things clearly needed to change. Phil was willing to get a job, and there were many available. If he had done that he would have never left. They had no idea what God was going to do, but they believed something would open. As Mike and Phil got to sharing together, they decided that they needed to team up. Phil went back on staff in California. It was a move they would never regret. Mike and Phil complemented each other. Phil has a style of min-

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istry laced with humor. People sometimes have to walk out of the service from laughing too hard. He respected and liked Mike and this allowed him to share his concerns and views. The church could not grow in the building they had, but it locked down into a solid, powerful family. The Phil and Dee Dee met a need in the congregation and released Mike to be freer to help other churches.

Coming Home

Phil was a key player in seeing the Maywood church (now known as the Huntington Park Church) transition into a team. While he was there, they went from a small church into a center for revival with a large staff and responsibilities that stretch across the globe.

The next few years were exciting. The church was outgrowing facilities and new ones were hard to find. They moved all over the Southern California area. As the ministry expanded so did the pressures on him and Mike. Now it wasn't their church and a few others, but several hundred pastors that looked back to Huntington Park for help and challenge. The Huntington Park church had thought it was a miracle when they sent those first couples out and raised the money to open those small store front churches. Today they have to find the finances to send a couple to another country, which can cost thirty to fifty thousand dollars just to get them there. No one could help but be excit-

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ed by the adventure of it all. Phil, while changed into a nice guy, can still get mad at the devil and want to do him harm. The fights he likes now are with Satan.

The church that he use to pastor in El Monte, California, opened up when Danny and Linda Mancha left to minister in Russia. Phil and Dee Dee felt God deal with them to take it. Stepping from a secure position back into an insecure, small pastorate has been both difficult and stretching. The finances were tight and Phil was forced back to work to see the church grow and his family not suffer. Bringing all of his experience to bear, he's excited about the future. He and Dee Dee are seeing what they have always asked God for, to be used in a critical place of ministry.

Phil and Dee Dee are typical of the pastors that make up Praise Chapel. Men and women of talent, who are not out after a job but to change the world. These are couples that go back to New Testament roots. Whether working or drawing a salary from a congregation their, lives are ministry.

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Mission Global

Harvest

The stories of Gods Grace operating in these men are exciting, but the future is even brighter. What is developing is a great team of leaders. Men who know Gods power, and are linking for the future.

As the leaders of Praise Chapel look at the next few years they see several key directions for their fellowship. The first is with their own structure and fellowship.

Praise Chapel has been best at responding to needs. There was not so much a blue print for their future that led them, as just a willingness to do what was required next. God has taken them each step a little farther. Before even realizing what had happened there

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were thousands of people in churches under the banner of Praise Chapel.

Over the last couple of years the churches have struggled with their obligations to one another. Everything has been loose and easy in the past. Relationships were the foundation not rules or by-laws and that still is their goal.

In some ways they know more what they do not want than what they do. They do not want to kill the life with rules. They are not interested in an organization as much as a place to resource the needs of the future.

Praise Chapel exists because of God, and desires to see all the resource in people and money used to glorify God. Without wanting it to happen the churches have become a small denomination. There are pressures to fill vacant pastorates, to help those that are struggling or discouraged, to service churches that are hundreds of miles away.

Just to hold their yearly conference is a mammoth organizational and financial challenge. Facing all of this, the pastors are feeling led in two directions.

Direction

The first is to clarify who they are and what they believe for the future. The idea that each church needs to be self-governing and self-supporting has guided the men from the beginning. While not violating this principle of the indigenous church, there has

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been a need to make simple statements of belief and practice, and guidelines for ordination. Unity is more than feeling good about each other. It entails agreements. Over the past two years a representative group of pastors has wrestled with organizational and doctrinal beliefs. These are not to exclude or reject others but to help clarify Praise Chapels' future.

The second great direction is toward the world and to helping missions and missionaries. This led to the forming of a second organization that's main purpose is to participate in the Global Harvest. To be a part of this you only need a heart for missions. Sending a young pastor a few miles away was tough... sending them to other continents takes a dream and planning.

Mike should have suspected that his call was to the world when this Oklahoma country preacher started reaching people of another culture and a deeper skin tint in the barrios of Southern California. Who would have thought that these men off the streets of LA, who had never been off their own turf would travel the nations of the world?

A Global Vision

Mike's brother Larry has helped keep Praise Chapel in touch with the pulse of the world. While Mike and Larry Neville have not always been in the same organization they have always been close. As the only two children of evangelists they often found their

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only friends were each other. They fought, played, home-schooled and ministered side by side. Today they are still cooperating in the vision for "*World evangelism.*"

The birth of Mission Global Harvest goes back to 1973 when Larry wanted to take a break as a young evangelist. He went to be an assistant pastor in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for a church that had a great missions vision. The church was struggling when Larry was there; but filling the walls of the sanctuary were pictures of past crusades in every part of the world. The pictures moved him, and he began to believe that he could do the same thing. A contact opened a door for him in India, and Larry set his face toward there.

Larry came back from this trip fired up. It was 1976 and Mike and Donna had only been pastoring in Maywood for two months when Larry and Janet came to preach and visit. As Larry showed slides of India and shared the needs there to the church, that small group opened their hearts and wallets. That night they gave over a one thousand dollars. They had been doing nothing before this for missions, but from that day the commitment has grown. Today they have raised offerings over a hundred times that size to reach other countries.

It was in 1982 that Larry and Janet went to the Philippines to build something lasting. There they started to pick up some practical understanding of what works and does not in other cultures. Working with Filipino pastors, Larry saw a great church started

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that exploded into over one hundred churches in the next ten years. The men of Praise Chapel have been involved from the beginning.

During this time, Praise Chapel was developing in the United States. The first churches were being planted and leaders were being shaped and formed. As these men wrestled with the problems in their local area, God was building the resources and ministries to support a global vision.

In Praise Chapels first attempts to cross cultures there were as many failures as successes. God used all of it to train and sensitize them for the world. Over the years this loose partnership with pastors in other parts of the world has come together in “*Mission Global Harvest.*” No one saw it coming, but its birth today seems natural and inevitable.

Enlargement

For Praise Chapel, this world involvement took natural lines. It started by reaching out to the Los Angeles area. There was an easy and natural expansion into Mexico as many members had roots there. Mike and Pam Stephens went to Hawaii and began to face issues of distance and cultural diversity. Johnny Dorris went every few months into Asia and Joe Menchaca’s cowboy hat traveled into nation after nation South of the border. Bobby and Melinda Menchaca paved the way in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. To-

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day a whole book would have to be written to tell the stories of those that are picking up the dream.

The pastors started going into other countries and holding crusades. While there, they taught pastors basic skills and brought in equipment for the national churches that they could not hope to buy for themselves.

The fellowship heard about John and Wanda Haynes and their son Gary in Brazil. They offered to partner with this couple that had years of experience in South America and each year has joined them into a tighter relationship. Working there with orphans and pastors has been one of the most fulfilling experiences a pastor and congregation can have.

This burden for missions is drawing others with a call. The latest couple is Alex and Nancy Wilson. Alex and Nancy started in the ministry 17 years ago in Winslow, Arizona, a small city on the edge of the Navaho reservation. There they pastored a multicultural church that set the pace for their future. Over the next few years they filled several positions as either pastor or assistants, until about five years ago when a door opened in Africa. They knew immediately this was Gods destiny for them. A church took off overnight.

Today Alex and Nancy are opening a ministry in a new part of Africa. The opportunities are unbelievable and a big part of what made it possible was Global Harvest.

A Personal Call

It was wanting to help people that brought them first into contact with other nations. Praise Chapel has always prayed for the sick, but it was when Mike went to the Philippines with a team of pastors that God showed him his personal responsibility and call to help overseas. Jack Harris was doing crusades there at night and Mike preached during the day at a pastor's conference. In those services several hundred people a night would stream forward to get saved. After getting right with God they would lay hands on the areas of their body where they were sick. The miracles were incredible. Men and women would stream to the front to tell of how they had been healed. The moment Mike saw these people coming to the front healed he knew immediately that he had that ministry too.

In Hermosillo, Mexico, Mike stepped out in a miracle service. There was a lady with a huge goiter on her neck. As they prayed for her, it disappeared. There was a four-year-old child with a club foot healed before everyones eyes. These were some of the first crusades and those miracles would be the foundation for the future faith to see God move in any land or place.

Today the men of Praise Chapel go all over the world. Frank Donker was from Ghana, Africa, but living in America. When a church came open back in his home land, he was willing to go back, and the churches pulled together to send him. Teams now go into Ghana to minister regularly.

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One team ministered to over 10,000 Liberian refugees that were there in Ghana. Four thousand got saved that night. Another team went from village to village seeing crowds of over a thousand a night. One night a man was healed from seventeen years of blindness. He began to scream out as his sight came back. The Moslem leader of that village came up to the microphone with tears running down his face and said, *"I met the real God tonight."*

A lady brought her baby up with a raging fever. As Mitch Thurman prayed for the child the fever broke and the woman began to cry out in joy. Women from all over the crowd came running up to the front, ripping their children off their backs to be prayed for and healed. This is not just happening in Africa but all over the world. An expanding network of ministers is having their faith enlarged as they reach into the third world.

Nicaragua

God has worked out each step in His own way. Carl Friedrich made his first trip into Nicaragua in 1987. There were people from Carl's church who had relatives in Guatemala, and he went to see what God could do there. The mayor of Zacapa allowed them to use the amphitheater. A secular radio station picked up the crusades and over 2,500 a night came out.

It was in a crusade in Tijuana that he first met Arturo. Arturo Sanchez was a Los Angeles boy, who

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went to Nicaragua and fought for the Sandinista Communists. At twelve years old he got into the Chicano rights movement in California and then went into the Communist party. As he became more politically involved he went to Cuba where he was trained in revolutionary tactics. From there he joined the revolution and fought for the Sandinistas. While in Nicaragua, he fell in love and married Maria (originally Maria Luisa, a famous singer from pre-Sandinista days).

After the war he came back to the US and joined a "new revolution" when Mario Moreno won him to the Lord. Five years later he went back to Nicaragua. In those two years the church has taken off. Arturo and his wife were both well known and as they started to preach doors opened everywhere.

He started his church in a Sandinista jail. You could seat a hundred people in it if some hung out of the windows. The economy in the country has fallen lower and lower. Buildings are closed everywhere. Arturo found the owner of an abandoned movie theater and started to hold services there. This man owned theaters across Nicaragua, and gave him free use of any theater in Nicaragua for the next two years. In addition they have started a Christian drug program for the nation, and had land donated to them.

Miracles

Carl Friedrich has been in for crusades three times. In Matagalpa, Managua, Leon, and Blue Fields, they have seen great miracles. Maria sings and Arturo translates. In Matagalpa they rented an outdoor stadium and had over 2,000 a night out. These people had been abused horribly and at first would not respond, but by the end of the crusade everything had changed and the crusade was packed out.

There was a young teenage girl at the altar one night with a half-paralyzed face. She came up to Carl crying, and said all she wanted was to commit suicide. As they laid hands on her the paralysis disappeared. In a moment that girl went from despair to uncontainable joy.

On the last trip in they were preaching in San Rafael del Sur. It was an outdoor meeting on some church property. A little lady about 50 was walking by when she heard Carl talking about miracles. She was lame in one leg. Standing outside the wall of the church grounds she laid her hands on her leg and was healed. She came after the crusade and said, *"I know God is here. I have a daughter at home that the doctors say has a tubal pregnancy and I'm going to possibly lose the baby or my daughter."* Carl said he would come and pray, so they climbed into an old vehicle and drove out into the middle of nowhere. The scene would be etched in Carl's memory forever. Up on a little hill was a house that seemed more like a shack, as

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they walked up to it there were stars everywhere. Entering the yard pigs and chickens ran around like a part of the family. This little girl laying there on a bed as the mom ran up crying "*God healed me and he can heal you.* "

Expanding Harvest

Larry Neville had opened the door by going into the Philippines. Others wrestled with Central America and Mexico. Today no country is off limits.

Danny and Linda Mancha are in Russia working with the local churches and ministries. The conditions are horrible but the spirit is a fairy tale. Hundreds are getting saved. They are working around the clock with leaders in the local churches that want to learn how to do the most for God.

John and Pam McGovern have one of the most exciting ministries in the world in Hong Kong. They started their ministry by going into China as teachers. Living at the level of the Chinese, they soon made contacts with the underground church. Pastors and Christians began to drop by their house. They moved then to Hong Kong, a city that's future is in question and that has never been open to the gospel. The church that is coming into being is unbelievably alive, with people from every part of Asia. The church is not content with just reaching Hong Kong, their goal is to reach across the border into China and establish a base to reach all Asia.

Guidelines

A couple of simple guidelines have developed. The first was they were there to work with nationals not dominate them. Larry and Janet set a time to turn the Philippine churches over to Filipinos and followed it. Today Sammy Morris is wrestling with the leadership of those churches, and also preaching in churches in Asia and America. While he and Larry are friends and partners Sammy is the man in charge.

Sammy had been in the ministry for several years when he met Larry. They began to work together to build a strong church in Metro Manila. Sammy was at first a little hesitant about their relationship. His work with missionaries had not been as personally rewarding as he would have liked. Soon he and Larry were breaking down those walls that separated them. Learning to communicate across cultures is not easy for anyone. Both pastors spoke English, but the simplest phrases could lead to misunderstandings. Larry met Sammy for morning prayer and as he left him, casually said *"I'll see you later."* Sammy waited all day for Larry to come back. The next day he told him, *"You lied to me."* Larry did not know what he was talking about until finally he realized that his words had been taken literally. It was a learning experience for both of them.

For seven years they partnered in building a church and church planting. Together, they formed a

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lasting relationship that is growing and enlarging. Larry turned the churches over gladly and went on to build a point of impact in Singapore.

Singapore

Going to Singapore was part of a long-term strategy to touch both the Chinese and Indians who make up over half the worlds population. Singapore is a melting pot of Asian peoples who speak English. Larry met Mike and Lay Kim Mak at his first service in Singapore. Mike told Larry how he had a burden to pastor a church in Taiwan. Larry had traveled into that land in 1984 and saw how only a Chinese couple could open the door. In 1993 the Maks opened a church there with a vision to reach into China, the last great untapped harvest field.

Out of Singapore also has gone Sam Lovelyson into Bombay, India. This Singapore church has been a platform to reach into India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia and other Asian nations.

Second, Global Harvest was not there to dominate or control the missionaries, but service them. Larry by being a missionary for several years has developed a great sympathy and compassion for those who are overseas. While ministering overseas he saw how men were often limited in their vision by organizations and structures. He and Mike and the other pastors began to wrestle with how to help those with a dream for other countries.

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Today they are partnering with many different men and missions. Global Harvest is sending out workers into the mission field, but is just as involved in discovering those who are already there and helping them. To partner with Global Harvest does not require joining the Praise Chapel group; it merely requires a vision for the world.

Acts 1:8 shows the growth of the New Testament church, *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."* Praise Chapel's call is similar. They were first to reach Maywood, and Ontario, and then all of California and then into the uttermost parts of the world.

15

Progression of Vision

For Praise Chapel Fellowship the best is yet ahead. As exciting as the past has been, the future appears richer if more demanding. Hundreds of churches are clamoring for their help and ideas. The mother church is packed out and God is still as good and trustworthy as ever.

What started as just a couple who loved God, is expanding into a network of relationships. The dream of these men brought together in a small Southern California church is taking form. As a young man Mike knew a couple of things were true and he wanted to pass those on to a few others. Like every pastor he dreamed of great impact, but the reality has turned out to be better than the day dreams. Now not only Mike is dreaming but men in cities North, South, East and

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West of Huntington Park are finding a synergy and enlarging the dream.

Praise Chapel does not see itself as having some secret formula for revival. They offer other churches less a pattern to imitate than a spirit to catch. A few things have marked them from their beginning and still does. It's a healthy pattern for any church to copy who is looking for a way to please God.

The Foundations

Mike was first of all an **evangelist**. He and his brother Larry started as teenagers singing and preaching. They fasted when the food was short and rejoiced at a good offering. What made preaching worth while for both of them was reaching lost souls. The reason Mike switched to pastoring was to see those he won to the Lord taken care of. That heart of an evangelist is still the purpose of Praise Chapel. As God began to add to the Maywood church these men and women grabbed the vision and took it farther than Mike could have ever done. Car salesmen, crooks and drug addicts dropped their old habits and began to embrace the need to reach a lost world.

Still committed to radical evangelism; the churches are looking for ways to reach those in the nineties. Some churches still stand on a street corner and preach, others' are invading schools and cities with plays and dramas. What unites all the churches is a feeling that they must reach their world.

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What started as telling a handful that Jesus was their answer is now just multiplied a hundred times. Now they may stand before hundreds or even thousands but their hearts still turn over and a shout or a tear may come when just one comes forward to receive Jesus Christ.

Worship

Praise Chapel secondly is called to **establish Gods presence**. David is a pattern of this. He brought the tabernacle back into the center of the nation of Israel, and took praise and worship to a new level.

Worship and evangelism are linked for Praise Chapel. As an evangelist Mike Neville soon learned that worship set the mood for the preaching and most churches lacked in this area. So Mike started bringing his guitar and singing before the preaching. When he took the Maywood church, he wanted more than music. He wanted worship. Donna took the choir in the church and turned it into an encounter with the spirit. Many future leaders of Praise Chapel were involved in this. Johnny Dorris and Frank Salcido led worship; Phil Hernandez sang solos, and they all learned how God dwelt in the middle of their praise. God came in that little building and some laughed, some shouted and some cried, but the key was God was there. It is where the church started and what it is still after today.

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God spoke to Mike to change the name of the church to Praise Chapel, because that is what they are.

In each church there is a different expression of worship. Some add a country twang and others use rock or soul. The words can be in English, Spanish or Chinese but the Lord is the same, and the goal is to lift him up.

Joy

Enjoying God and your friends and family comes naturally to Praise Chapel, and is there third mark. As a fellowship they are as concerned as the next pastor about doing things well but performance is not the motivating factor. The men have learned in the ministry you need *"To think on those things that are good."* Too many pastors are driven, and could spend a lot more time laughing.

Praise Chapel is made up of all kinds of men and women. It has it's driven personalities and also the kicked back types, but they are all a little quicker to laugh and invite you out to eat than the typical religious leader. A Spirit of optimism pervades the group.

Servants

The fourth defining characteristic is in a desire to **help** pastors. This is the reason the leadership of Praise Chapel got together and formed an organization. Just as the churches have helped their people to find better and richer lives, the conferences and home-comings do this for many a worn-out preacher. Mike remembered what a difference these types of concentrated meetings had made for him. Traveling as an evangelist and dealing with problems had sapped some of the joy. Preaching had become more and more just a job. Some friends invited him to a conference, and sitting there in an evening service God touched him. Weeping and praying he felt his life take on a new energy. From that point on Mike would have a high regard for special services to help pastors. One day he would host conferences for hundreds of pastors and see their lives changed like his was that night.

Today this idea is multiplying. Each church that has planted churches has their own home-comings and reaches out to pastors around them. Possibly even more important is when the pastors band together and go to other nations where they sponsor meetings for pastors and encourage and train them. For each of those men whose stories have been told, there are many others that are doing just as much to see God's kingdom and his workers encouraged and helped.

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The first of these conferences was in 1982. It had only three other churches involved. Ten years later, close to two hundred churches gathered in Los Angeles. They celebrated their victories, and launched new works. Networking to reach the world for a "*global harvest*."

Tomorrow

Gearing for the future, Praise Chapel is seeing old habits becoming more important. As a group involved in the world, they are seeing four trends in the church.

The first is Gods rising up a **new song** in people. Worship has always been at the center of revival. Luther wrote songs; Wesley's brother Charles's music was as important as John's sermons. No evangelist would think of preaching without singing. In churches around the world congregations are discovering the value of worship.

A few simple things help worship enter the heavenlies. The first is to lift up Jesus. We see a God that is big when this happens. A god who cares and can meet our needs. Two is when it's contemporary. For a few hundred years the church locked into a style of worship around hymns, today that is changing. The organs are being replaced with key boards and guitars, and the drums are as important as the song leader.

Worship should make us feel God is close and experience both his majesty and his love. It is breaking

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down the barriers in people, as they become one in worship.

Touching Heaven

The second move of God is **prayer**. Across the world Christians are seeing new possibilities in an old habit. The Neville family always made prayer a central practice. As kids Mike and Larry watched their parents go to God before they did anything else. Praise Chapel Fellowship has always made prayer a central part of church. Before services people gathered and early in the morning men and women learned to rise early and start their day with prayer. In the home meetings prayer was often more important than the teaching. In this environment the pastors learned that their source was Christ.

Prayer today is becoming more exciting. Groups of intercessors are coming together and warfare prayer is a part of the churches. Organization, structure, financing and education all have a part but none of it makes sense without prayer.

Fellowship

The third arena of God's is in **small groups**. When the Blooms brought their Bible study into Praise Chapel, they did not understand they were establishing their ministry. The church was just doing what churches around the world were doing. From Korea, South America, and Africa are coming the reports of great churches forming around the idea of worship and cells.

We live in a world where people are being isolated. The church needs more than a celebration. There has to be a place where people feel needed and touched. This is hard to do with hundreds of people, but simple with under twenty in a home setting.

Today more of their leaders are facing the pressures of growing churches and ministries. They cannot pray for every sick person or answer every question. Concerned about meeting peoples needs and raising up leaders they began to release the ministry to lay members of the congregation. Today the cell groups are more important to the churches not less.

Release

The fourth world move is the release of the body into the **gifts of the Spirit**. The Charismatic move released the Baptism of the Holy Ghost into the life of the church. Praise Chapel is expecting a great move of God in the last days that will release people

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into their gifting. In the past you came to church to watch. Churches around the world are frustrated with a system that is turning people into spectators rather than minters and disciples. In Praise Chapel they have attempted to turn much of this upside down. Even when they were small Mike began to involve as many people as possible. Young men had a chance to preach, new converts found themselves acting or singing. The excitement that this generates and releases into people is both exciting to feel and to see. In services and home groups they are preparing for God to use more people not less.

Praise Chapel is stepping boldly into tomorrow. The vision is no longer just Mike and Donna but it's a multitudes. A team has been forming since the early days to reach a lost world. Planting churches across the US and the world, they invite others to join them in the great adventure of being laborers in the world harvest field.