

THRIVE!

M A G A Z I N E

Issue #6

celebrating the stories and milestones of Calvary Church

July 2010

Meet Mark Johnson, Calvary Music Director!



Mark may be a familiar face to many since he often plays in the worship band on weekends. In addition to his skilled musical service to the Calvary family, in his new role as Music Director, Mark also leads worship rehearsals and assists the weekend worship leader in selecting music, musicians and vocalists-not a small task!

His job is one of communication in a variety of directions - with worship team leaders and members (and potential members), staff, planning teams, and Technical Arts Director, Kelly Gubser. He actively participates in the weekly planning meetings and brainstorming sessions and makes sure that musicians have schedules, music and whatever else they might need to ensure that corporate worship is relatively smooth and distraction-free.

Mark began his part-time duties at Calvary in May of this year, and has proved to be a valuable and enjoyable team member. He can be reached at mark@calvaryonline.org

JOANNE ARENTSON

FROM THE ROCKS TO THE ROCK

The month of July marks thirty years of marriage for Calvary family members Dean and Tina Finley. They recently told the story of their journey, a remarkable account of a rocky path of pain and forgiveness, and of God's amazing faithfulness to His promise, "Call to Me in the day of trouble and I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me." (Psalm 50:15) It is a story of how God turned their "mess into a message" and created a passion in them for helping couples strengthen their marriages through following Biblical principles and mentoring.

So meet the Finleys. According to Dean, "Tina is diligent, detailed, organized, focused, insightful, a good money manager, industrious and observant." And he grins, "They say opposites attract."

Ten years ago, Dean didn't have much to grin about. The parents of four found themselves in a place where "divorce wasn't an option, but murder was a strong possibility." Crushing debt, poor communication, unrealistic expectations and years of festering pain had left their marriage in shambles.

"Tina did not like me, love me, admire or respect me when we were at the very bottom," Dean relates. It was a horrible place to be. He'd been a farmer all of his life and by his own admission, "I wasn't very good at it, but I didn't know what else to



Tina and Dean Finley

do." So for lack of a different career option, he continued to farm and continued to rack up mounting debt on operating costs which created considerable tension in the marriage. "Actually, we had talked about possibly separating for a while, but that was the good thing about being broke - there was no money to run and no place to hide," Dean laughs. They had to stay together.

Tina felt trapped by both the debt and Dean's lack of leadership. "He didn't really know how to lead, had never been trained or mentored," she says, "And I was spending way too much time focusing on the negative and expecting Dean to meet needs in me that only God could meet." She was unable to see the good things he brought

Continued on Page 3

UPCOMING EVENTS

CALENDAR

july: august: september: 2010

Date	Event	Description	Location	Time
JULY 26	FAMILY SWIM NIGHT	Free swim night at the Muscatine Aquatic Center in Weed Park.	Aquatic Center	8:30 - 10:00 PM
AUG 21-22 28-29	NO KIDZONE	No KidZone (K-5) programs No Middle School Bible Study	Calvary Campus	SAT 6 PM SUN 10:30 AM
28-29	CRAZY LOVE	New Fall Small Group and Weekend Teaching hour series begins!		
29	FPU PREVIEW	Financial Peace University Preview Class	Community Space 6	6 - 8 PM
SEPT 5	SUMMER'S END CELEBRATION	Summer's End Celebration in the Park! Worship, Food and Family Fun	Weed Park	10:00 AM
12	FPU BEGINS	Financial Peace University Classes begin and Meet weekly through December 19; no class 11/28.	Community Space 6	6 - 8 PM



Summer's End
AT THE PARK

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

WEED PARK BANDSHELL

10 AM

WORSHIP:::FOOD:::FUN FOR ALL



to the relationship. It almost seemed he was incapable of doing the right thing, and Tina was pretty much emotionally dead to him – her spirit was closed to him. Dean was depressed; he walked on eggshells. “I’d been in church 20 years and didn’t even know what Tina’s needs were – it wasn’t taught. We lived in two separate worlds in the same house.” They spent three years “against the wall,” living in stony silence, pain and frustration.

Tina recognized it was time for Dean to get out of farming, yet he persisted in financing the venture yet another year. He made the decision against her better judgment. (He doesn’t promote that as a way for married men to make decisions.) 2001 proved to be “the year from hell,” but September of that year brought the first of four events that began to crack the shell on Tina’s heart. “It was the 911 terrorist attacks. It scared me into thinking, ‘what if this is the end?’” It started her thinking about something besides Dean’s failures.

It became obvious that Dean would need to leave farming, and he was helped greatly in figuring out finances by three men from Calvary who had started the Good Sense financial ministry, Doug Dorris, Jeff Underwood and Brian Ohge. Doug walked him through the meeting with the creditor, and to Dean’s amazement and relief, part of the debt was forgiven.

In the summer, God showed Tina a picture of who she was becoming, and “it was somebody I didn’t want to be.” It was a wake-up call of where she was heading if she continued on the same path; the second of the four events.

Then the third event: Dean contracted Lyme’s disease, and it was serious. “We caught it two days before the time where it could have gone to his brain,” says Tina. “My heart became tender toward Dean for the first time in a long time. I cared about him.” And the final event that brought the Finleys to the end of themselves occurred on Tina’s birthday in October 2002. Tina endured a harsh and devastating verbal chewing out and her despair was compounded by the news that Dean had just been let go from his job. They cried and prayed together. Dean felt as though there was a curse on him. It seemed everything he touched turned to dirt.

They explained their situation to their

class on Sunday, and by Tuesday he had a job. Granted, it was one of the two occupations he never wanted to have, but it was a job and there was money coming in. “God whispers to us in our pleasure. He screams to us when we’re in pain,” says Dean. “He really wants to get our attention.”

About that time Dean picked up a book by Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Husband*. (Today it is ratty and dog-eared.) “I got that book and I started praying every day for Tina. And the book said you should be praying for your wife’s husband, so I started praying for me, too. Pretty much every day.” He had to trust God to do what only He can do.

There were changes starting to happen in Tina’s heart and her spirit began to open up to her husband. “I learned to forgive



Dean, even if he wasn’t aware that he had hurt me. I learned to CHOOSE forgiveness.” And I also learned to say, “God, I trust You,” Tina explains. “I had been consumed with anger, and it was a terrible waste of energy.”

Slowly Tina and Dean pulled back from the brink. “It takes two to make a good marriage and it takes two to mess one up,” says Dean. “Everyone is on a path, whether they know it or not. We were on a path toward divorce. We didn’t plan on it – it’s sort of like the person who doesn’t plan on getting diabetes, but doesn’t really pay attention to what he eats and becomes overweight, and one day he winds up in a doctor’s office and gets the diagnosis. For the last 10 years, we’ve put ourselves on a path toward a good marriage. Good marriages aren’t accidental – you have to be intentional. Everyone who has a vehicle does preventative maintenance – change oil, rotate tires. You just have to. The same is true for marriage. You can’t just drive it until the wheels fall off.”

So is their marriage perfect after 10 years

of intentional care? “Nope. But we rebound faster, resolve conflict quicker, now. Things aren’t allowed to fester. And now Tina knows I want to do the right thing – that I have loving intentions.”

At least 20 couples have met in Finleys home over the last two years, being led through the Jimmy Evans book *Marriage On The Rock*. Tina is adamant. “Accountability is important. And so is mentoring. Women need another trustworthy woman who will ‘get in her face’ and ask the hard questions, just like guys need another guy to be in theirs.” Both Dean and Tina realize they were woefully inadequate in their preparation for marriage, and they are committed to providing resources for couples so that more marriages will flourish, rather than fail.

“Our goal is to have others take this class and run with it. We can only host so many people. We’d love to see lots of small groups doing this material,” says Tina. “Everyone should be encouraged that they have a 100% chance to succeed in marriage if they follow the four laws that God set out for us.

“And another thing we like about this class is that we can invite anyone, including folks that don’t know Jesus yet. It’s great to rub shoulders with them.” The material is cross-cultural and non-denominational. They are excited about being on the front lines in such a vital ministry.

And the best thing they’ve done for their marriage? They walk a mile down the gravel road that runs past their house every morning. They talk on the way out, and turn around and pray their way home. It’s done an amazing thing in their relationship.

“Being intentional about life brought security and hope for the future, and drained the stress for Tina,” says Dean, “and I’m learning how to lead for the first time in my life.”

For more information about getting into a *Marriage on the Rock* group, contact the Finleys at dftinley@juno.com, 563-260-5767 (Dean) or 563-260-6758 (Tina).

Dean Finley and Tina Meeker were married at Fruitland Baptist Church on July 26, 1980. They are the proud parents/grandparents of Clint & Krista and daughter Savannah; Grant & Jessica and son Isaac; Tana and Ricky Padilla and daughter Addison; and Clay, stationed with the Army in Afghanistan.

AROUND THE WORLD

Inner City Awakening: Chicago by Steve Ott, Student Ministries Pastor

"All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor" - Galatians 2:10

As the last night of our Chicago mission trip wrapped up, the images of hurting, broken, impoverished people fresh on their minds, 22 middle school students from Calvary reflected on all they had seen and done during the week. Some spoke of being humbled, some spoke of being charged to serve more. Some spoke of being challenged to grow, some spoke of a need to make changes in their own lives.

But of all the things spoken about, the unified cry amongst the students was to "remember the poor," the very thing Paul was asked to do many years ago. And remember the poor is the very thing our students intend to do!

This past June, 22 middle school students and 4 adults went to inner city Chicago on a mission trip to serve as a part of Center for Student Missions. After months of preparation and training, our students spent 5 nights and 6 days serving the poor and needy in many different areas, including soup kitchens, senior care facilities, a YMCA, and a Head Start Program.

Two of the most rewarding and challenging activities were Meet-a-Need and Immersion. For Meet-a-Need, we split into four separate groups and ventured out into the streets of Chicago with \$5 to find someone whose need we could meet. Each came back with a different story of how they were stretched and challenged, and how rewarding it was to be able to help someone, if even to just buy them a drink or a sandwich. Be sure to ask the students about who they helped; their stories will

entertain and encourage you! Immersion gave us the charge to find our way around Chicago using public transportation, with the goals of first finding out more about life in Chicago and second finding dinner for our group of six using only \$2 a person. Armed with only \$2 a person and a map with directions on where to go, our four groups set out in different directions to see the city and experience life from the perspective of someone without the money and resources our students are accustomed to. The adults were instructed to allow the students to lead and make decisions during this experience, so the adventure was very real and exciting for all involved. While fun was had by all during Immersion, our students quickly understood the sobering

reality that many families live day in and day out with the same limited resources.

This is why our students will remember the poor. Yes, they helped the poor and needy through serving and caring and loving as much as they could, but helping is momentary and often limited. To remember the poor is to constantly orient your life in a way that honors and reflects what you have learned and experienced with the poor and needy. Our students do not want to forget how they have changed and grown from this experience. Thank



2010 Chicago Mission Team

you to everyone who prayed for and supported our team; we really appreciate it, and know that God worked great things in and through our students!

Interested in reading stories and seeing pictures from our trip? Take advantage of our new Calvary Student Ministries Missions social media network by accessing the following: Twitter: CSMMissions; Facebook: Calvary Student Ministries Missions; Blog: csmmissions.wordpress.com.

Gateway: China

Calvary has a rich heritage in both local and world outreach. On July 15, we will send a team of five adults to China, to a city of 1.5 million people which is located in the southern part of that great country of 1.4 billion people. Several on the team have had previous ministry experience in China.

They will be staying with second-generation workers who are a part of World Venture, the organization that Calvary has worked with for nearly a half-century. One of the goals is to establish a partnership with the workers there and to continue to send teams to China every year, similar to our partnerships in Guatemala, Liberia, and Senegal.

The goals are:

1) Establish a long-term partnership with our World Venture "workers."

2) Disciple young Chinese believers, mostly university students and young adults.

3) Speak about Jesus to numerous Chinese young adults using the platform of English clubs (The fact that we are Americans will help create this opportunity.)

Many parts of China are wide open to the gospel. Documented reports have shown that as many as 30,000 Chinese come to know Jesus every day. This is one every 3 seconds and 11 million a year! Our desire as a church is to go where God is already working.

For information about ways you can support the team financially and in prayer, please contact Dave Schmidt at the church office, 263-3367, or dave@calvaryonline.org.

Missional Teaching: Korea by Joanne Arentson



Amanda Noller is about to see the twin passions of her life, teaching and international ministry, converge. The Fort Collins native, who has taught science at Muscatine High School for several years, will begin a 2-year teaching assignment this fall in Taejon, South Korea.

Amanda's interest in international ministry began developing the summer after she graduated from high school, when she spent six weeks with long-time friends of her parents helping in their work in Japan. The stirrings of love for people of other cultures began that summer, and increased as she became part of International Friendship Connection (IFC) on the Iowa State University campus, where she was a student in Genetics. She speaks with obvious fondness of being part of an international family, hanging out with each other, loving people, inviting those who didn't yet know God to be part of the Body of Christ in friendship. "I knew it was God's heart as well as mine," she says of the vibrant and diverse community.

The summer after her senior year at ISU she participated on a Salt Company team that went to China. She found herself amazed by the way God was at work there, and she became increasingly reliant and dependent on God - and she knew then, "I wanted to do missions in some fashion." Her parents were encouraging her to get her Masters and Amanda had interest in teaching, so she returned to Iowa State and earned her Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in Science Education. She struggled with the idea of teaching when she really wanted to be involved in missions until God changed her perspective to understand that He uses people in whatever field they're in - she began to see that teaching is a mission field.

She came to Muscatine following her graduation with her MAT, and taught at

Muscatine High School. Although she was able to develop some friendships with internationals here and worked with some students through Nexus, she missed the international community.

In February of this year she attended an international recruiting fair at UNI. She was surprised to discover that job opportunities were proffered by a number of agencies, and she was excited to accept an offer to teach science at an international English-speaking Christian school in the 6th largest city in Korea. The school is populated by 75% Koreans, a fact that gives Amanda great pleasure. She will be living off-campus, and expects to have ample opportunity to make friends with a wide variety of people, as well as be able to help believers know more about God. She will also be 2 hours from Seoul, where a good friend lives, so moving to a new country will not be without a friendly face relatively close by.

We wish Amanda God-speed as she follows Him in this new endeavor. Blessings!

Important Conversations: China by Austin Bell



Last summer I had the amazing opportunity to travel to Wuhan, China. There I had the great privilege of teaching conversational English at the Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuchang Branch (HUSTWB). When not in the classroom, my team and I spent all of our time building relationships with the students there. We told them about our lives and how Jesus has transformed them. Some students began attending church with us on the weekends, and really began to wonder who this Jesus was. We clearly saw that God was at work in their hearts, and proof of this was soon to be seen.

A Bible study began, and we had approximately 20 participants every time. During the study we let the students read

about who Jesus says He is in the book of John. Many saw that Jesus was claiming he was son of God, and that he came to save all people. What God did in one student's life was truly amazing, and proof that our King draws people to Himself. Jordan (his English name) was a student from another university in Wuhan who attended and actively participated in the Bible study, and on the last night he told our leader and I that he had Jesus in his heart. Jordan entered the kingdom that day! God works in the most unexpected ways, and every one has an opportunity to be a part of it. The Bible study has continued ever since we left.

Austin Bell is the son of Jon and Harriette Bell. He will be a junior at the University of Iowa and is involved in the 24/7 campus ministry.

Leaving Something Behind: Liberia By Rachel Stern



At the beginning of June, I traveled with five other recent high school graduates to Liberia, Africa. Our goal on this short-term trip was to visit the students at the Prime System School of Christ in Paynesville and to work with the Ngendas, missionaries who are building a library. The trip was hot, humid, and eye opening.

I find it hard to bring something back from a mission trip, so I chose instead to focus on what I would leave there. I left bonds of friendship forged in a week, and mainly I tried to leave my love. That is, love for the people of Africa, the children carrying buckets of rocks on their small heads up the mountainside, the mothers with the day's water on their shoulders, the fathers chipping at the rocks trying to turn the stone into a meal for their family, and the growing church in Africa where God's people can't help but depend on Him. I just have to hope through our labors as a team, we would help someone in need, and I pray the people of Liberia will appreciate God even more for what He provides for us.



The Care Team Ministry is an active, behind-the-scenes ministry at Calvary Church that “cares” for the church family in various loving and caring ways. Our team members are busy providing meals, making hospital and nursing home visits, sending out cards of encouragement, and praying for church family members who are hurting.

UNLEASH IN ACTION WHO CARES?

From the Mailbag – a few thank-you notes for team members “caring”:

“Thank you for your faithful calls on Hallie. She was a dear one to many and loved each of us in return. Thank you for lifting some of the burden for us and for attending her service.” *This card came from Hallie’s family after her death. Two Calvary Care Team members, Erica Newman & Nancy Mohr, began visiting her at a local nursing home several months ago.*

“Thanks for praying for Ron during his heart surgery. He is home now and recovering well.”

“Thanks so much for the ladies that provided meals for us. Everything was greatly appreciated. I am now doing much better so Jim has more time for cooking as I require less care. In His Name,”



Nancy Mohr and Erica Newman at the Calvary Information Center.

“Thank you for book 2, “Experiencing Grief” – Journeying Through Grief series. This material is practical and encouraging as well as spiritual. I appreciate your care for me during this time.”

Hospital Conversion: “God, I’m scared. I’m blind. I may die. Please forgive me and live in me.” *These words were spoken by a heart attack patient after having heard the plan of salvation from a Care Team visitor. His spiritual journey had begun.*

A new ministry: Cards of encouragement, comfort, birthday, and gratitude are being sent monthly to various church family members. Tina Wixom is passionate about sending cards and has been helpful in starting this new ministry. Diane Sywassink is graciously creating all the beautiful cards we are using. God is using Tina’s gift of encouragement and Diane’s artistic gifts to bring a blessing in the mail to those who need to be remembered.



Diane Sywassink and Tina Wixom work on cards.

Thanks to all Care Team members who, in various ways each week, are unleashing God’s love to others. To join the team, contact Gale Schmidt: gale@calvaryonline.org, or call the church office at 563-263-3367.



COMING THIS FALL → GOD IS LOVE CRAZY, RELENTLESS ALL-POWERFUL LOVE

Small Group series through the book *Crazy Love* by Francis Chan
Weekend Service teaching time will follow the same topics!
Start Date: August 28-29, 2010

ABOUT CRAZY LOVE It’s crazy if you think about it. The God of the universe — the Creator of nitrogen and pine needles, galaxies and e-minor — loves us with a radical, unconditional, self-sacrificing love. And what is our typical response? We go to church, sing songs, and try not to cuss. Whether you’ve verbalized it yet or not . . . we all know something’s wrong.

Does something deep inside your heart long to break free from the status quo? Are you hungry for an authentic faith that addresses the problems of our world with tangible, even radical, solutions? God is calling you to a passionate love relationship with Himself.

Because when you’re wildly in love with someone, it changes everything.

BRIAN & ANGIE PALMER

OUR ROAD TO FINANCIAL FREEDOM

For the first 15 years of our marriage “bill night” was the worst possible night of every week. We would sit at the kitchen table together every Friday night both stressed about what we would see when we balanced our checkbook. We fought, and we pointed fingers. We would look at each other and say, “We make good money. Why are we negative in our checkbook every week? How are all these other people able to go on vacations, buy new cars, etc. but here we are living paycheck to paycheck?”



Brian, Angie and family... “We’re Debt Free!”

Our story may sound like yours. We were perpetual chargers who would charge up items throughout the year at Best Buy, Menards, Kohl’s, Target – anywhere that would hand out free financing for a year or give a percent off just for signing up for a card. Then, we would wait for our tax refund the following year and pay off most of them. That was our financial plan. We even refinanced our house a few times, putting all the credit card balances, car loans, etc. into our house loan thinking that would wipe the slate clean and we could start fresh. But that never happened. Within a few months we would “need” a new TV or bed set. We “deserved” it for working so hard. By each pay period we had already spent the money that was going into our account and most of the time we had a negative balance. Looking back now, we know that if one of us had lost our job it would have been less than a month before we would have lost everything. We had no savings, no future plans, but we had great TV’s!

Then, during a Saturday night service about three years ago we heard a message about Financial Peace University being held at Calvary. There was going to be a 13- week session starting in a few weeks. We both looked at each other and decided to go. What could it hurt? We knew almost nothing about what would happen during those 13 weeks and we were kind of embarrassed to be going to be honest, but we were definitely at a point that we were nervous and scared about where we were,

so we took the leap.

The classes were fun and entertaining! Each session we learned something new and everything was explained at a level we could understand. There was homework we needed to do each week. Sometimes it was hard. Not complicated hard, but ‘being honest about how we were living and where we wanted to be as a family’ hard. But we’re here to tell you that that class was the best thing we have ever done! We have paid off every bill we had except for our home. We only use cash or a debit card to pay for our purchases and have not used a credit card in over 3 years. We now have a savings account that we could live on for up to 6 months should one of us lose our job. Besides all of what we have accomplished, we want you to know we now have true financial peace; the hard work has paid off. To think that we had lived like that for 15 years putting our family in a position where we could have lost our home because of our inability to manage/ budget our money was embarrassing and humbling at the same time.

A quote that Dave Ramsey uses through the course is: Proverbs 22:7 “The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.” We are so happy to share that we are no longer slaves to lenders and we praise God for His patience as we grew up, took responsibility for the mess we had made of our finances and learned to use what He has provided us wisely. So what are you waiting for? Take the leap.

Live Like No One Else!



Financial Peace University (FPU) is Dave's life-changing program that teaches you to achieve your financial goals by eliminating debt, saving for the future, and giving like never before. More than 1 million families have attended FPU with amazing results. You will be challenged and motivated to make a plan for your money and change your finances forever!

Fall 2010 Financial Peace University at Calvary!

Financial Peace Preview Event:

Sunday, August 29
6:00 - 8:00 PM
Community Space 6
Calvary Campus

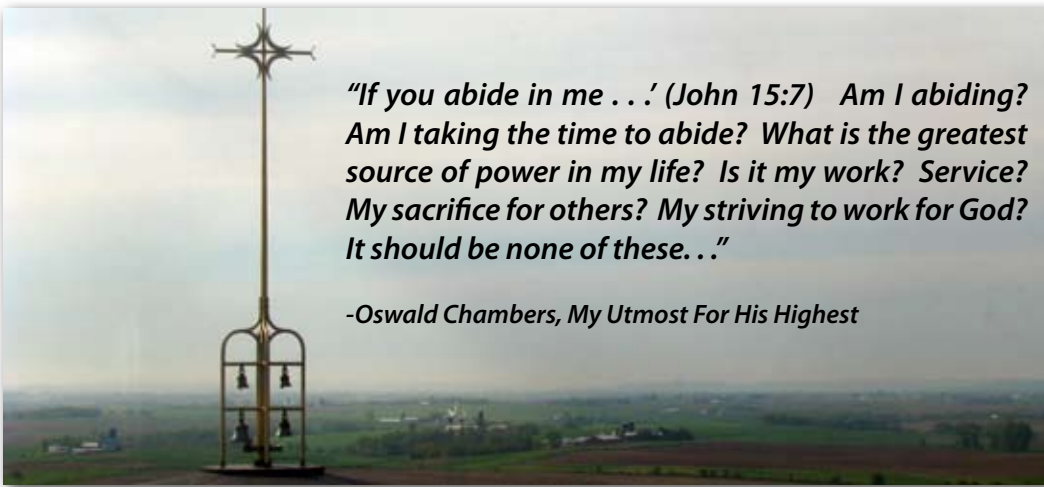
Financial Peace Classes Begin:

Sunday, September 12
6:00 - 8:00 PM
Community Space 6
Calvary Campus

Classes End Sunday, December, 19.
No Class will be held 11/27/2010

For More Information, Contact Ed Lampe: elampe@machlink.com or Dave Schmidt: dave@calvaryonline.org or 563-263-3367 (Calvary Office).

KENDALL EMMERT MAKING ROOM



"If you abide in me . . .' (John 15:7) Am I abiding? Am I taking the time to abide? What is the greatest source of power in my life? Is it my work? Service? My sacrifice for others? My striving to work for God? It should be none of these. . ."

-Oswald Chambers, My Utmost For His Highest

When the word "retreat" is brought up, there are three camps into which people tend to fall: 1) I'm not a retreat person. No. Thank. You. 2) I love connecting! Can't wait to stay up talking all night! 3) I hope the speaker is good . . .

What if the word "retreat" meant something else entirely? What if it simply meant a space and place to abide? No agenda. No speaker. No schedule.

My small group girls and I decided to embark on such a retreat a few weeks ago. With the attitude of expecting God and the longing to abide, we climbed into one van, leaving our children, husbands, and lives behind in anticipation of two nights at a retreat center in Wisconsin.

When we arrived, we were each given a small room complete with a bed, a desk, a sink, and some drawers. There was a little window overlooking a wide, green horizon that stretched behind a delicate cross, sitting simply upon the round chapel. This space was my retreat. No one knocked on my door. Meals times were optional. My phone was off.

I sat my little rocking chair in front of the window and draped the mismatched, homemade afghan around me, letting my brain exhaust all of its random trails: where-are-the-kids?-did-I-write-that-last-email?-oh-I-forgot-to-call-my-mom!-I-hope-people-are-having-a-nice-time-here.-did-I-bring-my-face-wash?-does-Andy-know-that-I-made-banana-bread-for-his-breakfast?

After my brain had finally rested, I prayed. And I prayed. As I thought and wondered, I listened for God in my soul and journaled

my deepest thoughts – poetry came out of my pen. I read passages of my Bible out loud. I fell asleep when I became sleepy. I arose when I felt like it. I took a walk with a book. I literally stopped and inspected some flowers closely- more than once.

A few weeks after the retreat, a friend wrote me and said, "A peace washed over me upon arrival. It wasn't scary or overwhelming to attend a retreat void of speakers filling the air with teaching. It was refreshing. God's present to me was that He wanted me to rest in my spirit and body." She told me later that God didn't have a big message for her that weekend except, "I want you to rest;" to abide.

For another friend, the retreat provided a "time and space to think, to pray, to listen, to read, to write, to talk, to laugh, and to just be – without any guilt. I treasured the time to be with godly women in godly discussions, without interruptions. But the real lessons God wanted to share with me came after my return home, through my reflections of this 'time away with God.'"

So, what is it that you need? When was the last time you allowed yourself space and time to talk to God? To simply listen? Have you been able to find a quiet place in the hubbub of your mind? Let me go further: Do you actually believe that God has something to say to you? Do you believe that it is even possible to abide in Him?

Consider a personal retreat to escape your life in order to focus on God focusing on you. Rest. Learn to abide. Abiding usually starts in the quiet places and then, follows you home.

Around the World...

Unleash: Thailand

Don and Jane Hodge recently had an opportunity to help Bangkok clean up after destructive Red Shirt activity. They had no idea what a stir they would create:

"The Army moved in on Wednesday to move the Red Shirts out. Well, we had heard via our Home Group that there was to be a clean-up on Sunday (May 23). So, we went to the early service dressed to help. We were hooked up with Angie, who lives in a highrise right by the street where the Red Shirts had made their camp for nearly a month. She lent us a scoop and a broom and Don and I headed down the streets along with 1000s of Thais. Many of the piles of garbage which had been sitting for weeks were 6 feet high.

Don and I had been trained well by attending Calvary Church and especially Rebuilding Muscatine and other opportunities...so, when we heard there was this huge clean-up we knew they needed help. Literally, unspeakably disgusting and decomposing refuse awaited all of us. We scooped and someone was there to hold the bags and take them to the garbage trucks. Well, this is where the story takes an unexpected turn.

Because we were 'farangs' i.e. Westerners, we stood out in the crowd. People were constantly taking our pictures and saying 'thank you', two Thai TV stations interviewed us, and we were given Department of Sanitation polo shirts. We were on the Channel 9 news that night. Then our church here heard about it and asked if we would talk about the event during the Sunday services.

As we stood in the shade, a lady approached us and said 'thank you', then went into a tirade about all that had happened to the city, her favorite places being burned and her wanting to kill some people. I knew this lady would be miserable all her life with this kind of hatred. I had some gospel information in my pocket and waited for a bit, then told her that both Don and I had found peace in Jesus and hoped she would too."