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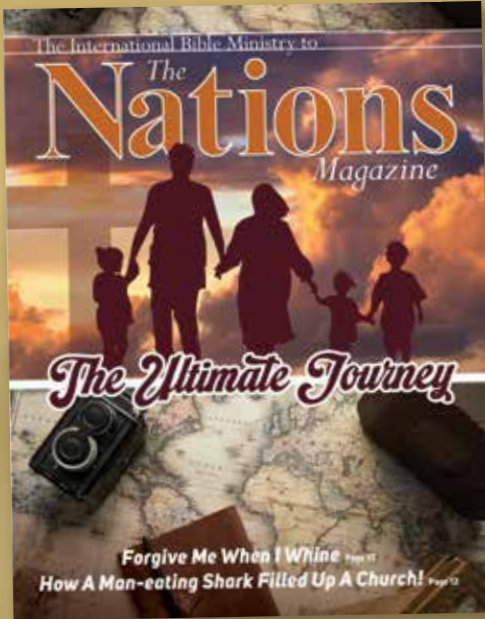
The Nations Magazine

The Ultimate Journey

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The Nations Magazine



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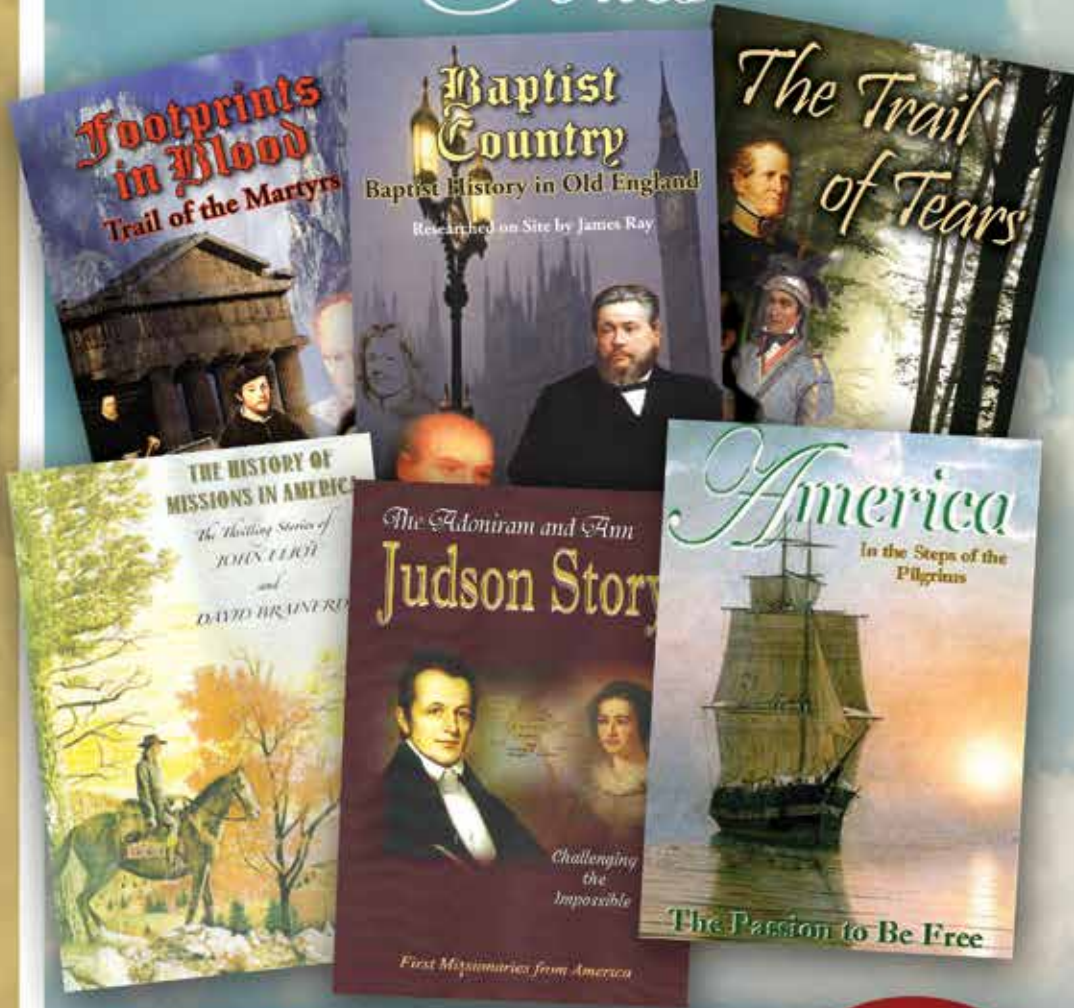
The International
Bible Ministry

Volume 18,
Number 1

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EDITORIAL

JAMES RAY, *Editor*

Arranging a Meeting with God

In the book *Embracing the World*, Mary Ray shares a story that represents what BIMI is all about. Below is a reprint of an article by BIMI Missionary Roland Simeonsson.



We have just celebrated Debbie's 7th birthday. The whole family is enjoying a rare evening of relaxation together. The front door squeaks. Somebody has come. Our first reaction, "No . . . not tonight!"

A girl with wind-blown hair and a bewildered look on her face stammers, "Can you arrange a meeting with God?" "Yes, we can, but how did you find the church at this time of night?"

"I saw the cross," she said.

During the ensuing conversation, we found a girl who had some problems, had run away from home, and had come to this city to commit suicide. Somehow, she just could not take her own life. She prayed the sinner's prayer and added, "God, please give me strength to LIVE."

To worried loved ones, she places a phone call, "Please do not be angry with me, I'm coming home tomorrow."



A happy girl—happy missionaries—a time of rejoicing in Heaven!

We are so grateful to our many friends and Bearing Precious Seeds Ministry who print the Bibles for us. The Bibles are shipped right to the missionary's door with no cost to the missionary. Over 200,000 marked edition New Testaments thus far have been provided to the missionaries. Each Bible has helps for life's problems printed on the first few pages. On the back cover of every beautifully printed Bible are printed the words "YOU CAN EXPERIENCE GOD!" Each of these New Testaments is designed to help lost people "*arrange a meeting with God.*"

Most of these Bibles have been distributed by missionaries. Can 200,000 Bibles make a difference? The answer is an astounding—YES! There are many people waiting in darkness like the girl in Japan—waiting for someone to arrange...

a Meeting with God.

The Ultimate Journey



The bus station below the hill seemed almost as if it would burst with its pressing transient population. The hordes of people pushing between large vehicles and *en route* to destinations were totally unaware of my presence or my notice of them from the hill above.

Long ago, other crowds hurried past this very point below this hill. They too were *en route* with hardly a passing glance up the hill. That day long ago and the presence of those up above on the hill generated little more than a curious glimpse.

I had followed the steps of greatness throughout America and Europe. I had surveyed the footsteps of Brainerd, Judson, Livingstone, Meyer, Spurgeon, and others whose footsteps of faith and courage inspired me. I had walked in footprints of blood and climbed through dungeons. I had surveyed the darkness and felt the iron chains. I had visited their graves.

The trail of the faithful and martyrs merged from a thousand directions until the many paths blended into one road—*Calvary Road*. Those footsteps had led here to this hill above the bus station. More realistically

the thousands of footprints had not merged into this road to Calvary but *out* from it. There were those who had followed the steps of Christ and who had gone throughout the earth. *They* had noticed the hill and had been *changed forever* for their notice.

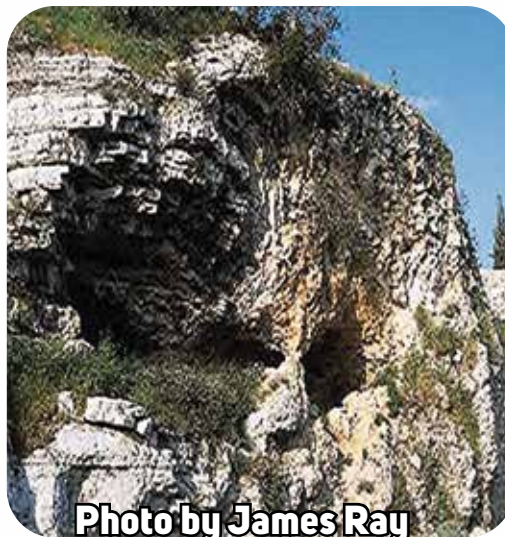


Photo by James Ray

I retraced the ultimate steps from the cave at Bethlehem to the well at Samaria—to the Sea of Galilee—to Gethsemane and at last to this hill. What happened here? This hill represented the center of eternity, the central point from which all time pivots. The man dying up on the hill was called Jesus.

In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself by **Numerous Names**. A name tells all about a person—his family, his background, his roots. But what **ONE NAME** could describe God's roots when He is eternal? What **ONE NAME** could tell **FINITE MAN** about an **INFINITE GOD**?

In Exodus, Moses at the burning bush asked God **what His name was**. God replied, **"I am the LORD"** (**Jehovah**—the Ever Existing One). "I have always been." The first words of Scripture began with "In the beginning, **GOD . . .**" The word *God* there is "Elohim,"

meaning “Greatness and Glory”—Omnipotence. God was saying, “I am all powerful.”

Abraham was told to take Isaac, his only son, to the mountain and sacrifice him. He was to slay Isaac with a knife and make him a sacrifice to God. Before the knife came down into the heart of Isaac, however, God stopped him. God had arranged for a ram to be caught in the thicket. That ram would be the sacrifice instead of Isaac. God revealed Himself that day to Abram as “**Jehovah-Jireh**,” meaning “The Lord will provide.” God was saying to Abraham, “I am the God who will provide.”

There are **12 names of God in the Old Testament**, all describing one who cannot be described in mere words.

Ask Adam — “Who is God; what is His name?” He would reply, “God is ELOHIM—THE ALL POWERFUL ONE.”

Ask Abraham — “Who is God; what is His name?” He would reply, “God is JEHOVAH-JIREH—THE ALL PROVIDING ONE.”

Ask Moses — “Who is God; what is His name?” He would reply, “He is JEHOVAH—THE EVER EXISTING ONE.”

Throughout 4,000 years of human history, there were not enough names to describe One such as God whom the Heaven of Heavens could not contain. Finite man could never put One so great in a name or a **word**.

THEN CAME THE DAWNING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT and the rivers and streams of the continents finally found their way to the ONE GREAT OCEAN—JESUS. The stars and planets locked in their orbits around the great sun. All the ships made the Harbor. The Scribe at last combined all the volumes containing the wisdom of the ages into one. He closed his book and laid down his pen. The cover read JESUS. The mysteries of all ages were UNVEILED by a birth in **Bethlehem**.

The Wise Men and stargazers for 4,000 years had searched the heavens and then they found the STAR they had been looking for.

What a Night!

That night when in the Judean skies
The beaming star dispensed its light,
A blind man moved in his sleep
And dreamed that he had sight.

That night as Mary called His name
The Son of God so pure and sweet,
A lame man moved upon his bed
And dreamed that he had feet.

That night when shepherds heard
The songs of angels singing near,
A deaf man stirred in slumber’s spell
And dreamed that he could hear.

That night when o’er the newborn babe
The tender Mary rose to lean,
A loathsome leper smiled in sleep
And dreamed that he was clean.

That night when in the manger lay
The Son of God who came to save,
A man moved in the sleep of death
And dreamed there was no grave.

—Author Unknown



They came to Herod and said, “We have seen His star in the east.”

All the names of God were gathered up and poured into One—**THE NAME JESUS**. The **Name of Jesus** and the **Person of the Father** are welded together by **ISAIAH WHO SAID**: “*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6, KJV).

The Apostle Paul explained it this way: “*For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead **bodily***” (Colossians 2:9, KJV).



Paul said we have reached the end of our search.
In Jesus **BODILY IS ALL OF GOD** WE SHALL
EVER NEED TO KNOW.

That body, then, dying up on the hill, represented all of God that there was. This hill had been the starting point of all the footprints I had retraced. The spring had enlarged into a stream. The stream had widened into a river. The river had made its way to the great ocean, touching every shore and flooding every land.

Millions had been caught in the wake of its flood and were washed and redeemed.

That redemption was reflected in the words of Cooper:

**“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.”**

The echoes of Calvary resounded into a mighty universal chorus of the redeemed.

The dungeon glowed with light as so profoundly described by Wesley:

**“Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.”**

The guilty souls sighed relief:

**“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,**

**And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.”**

The slave trader who showed no mercy and knew no grace turned in his whip for a cross and wrote:

**“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see!”**

The atheist threw down his infidel writings and picked up the *Book of Hope*. The forsaken embraced a “Love that would not let him go.”

The blind reveled in visions of light. As Bunyan’s pilgrims, the great throng marched upward toward the Celestial City of Light, taking with them millions on the . . .

Ultimate Incredible Journey To Heaven!





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THE POWER OF HIS WORD

The International Bible Ministry of BIMI and missionaries in Great Britain have distributed 200,000 Bibles to the cities surrounding their churches. It is like saying that 200,000 homes have received a “pardon from God” if the families and individuals in those homes accept the message. We know that not all of those who receive a Bible will do so, but those who do can rest with the assurance that eternity will be all right and that Heaven awaits beyond this fragile life.

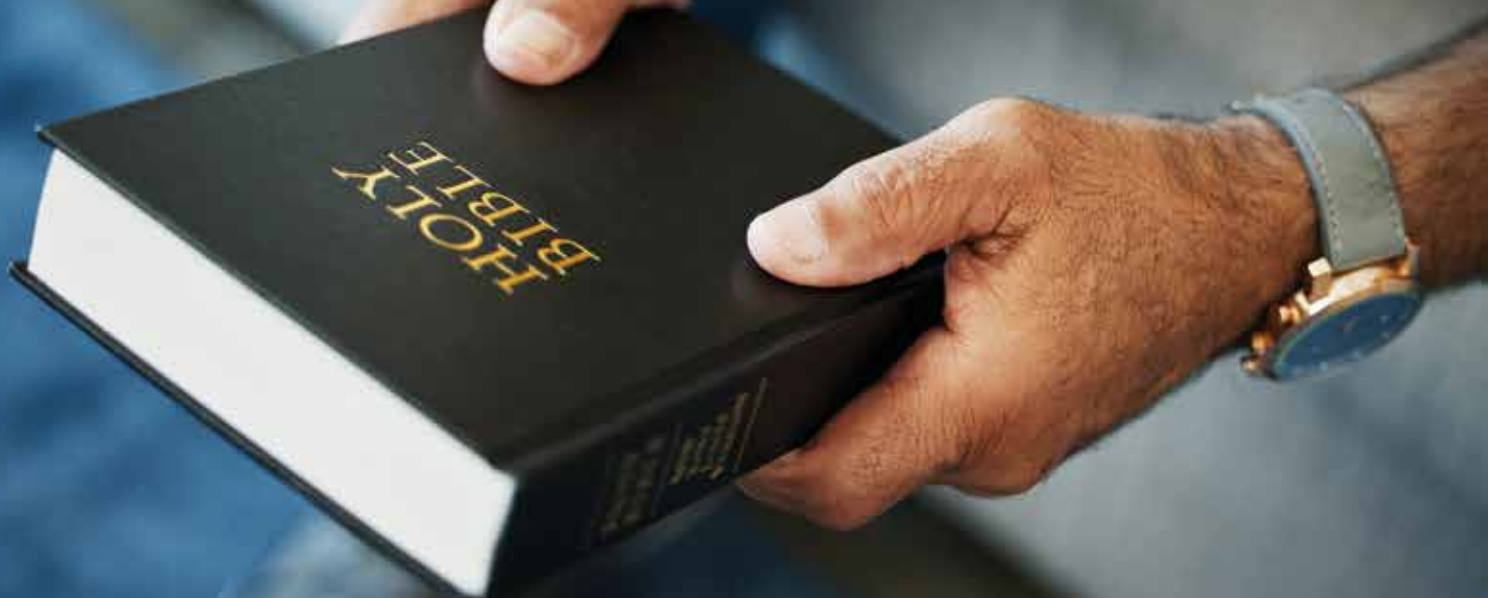
The Word of God has power. BIMI Missionary Emeritus Butch Abbett served 40 years in France and another 15 years as Representative for Southern Virginia and Northern Tennessee. Butch sends this interesting report.

“HEY, I’VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU!” ...

“That is what a man said to me the other day as I walked into the exercise room of our Seniors’ Citizens Center where I go once in a while to use their treadmill and other apparatus. He asked if I remembered giving him a small booklet a couple months ago. I did. It was the nine-page booklet I wrote titled *Where Do I Go with My Troubles?* based on Psalm 23. He said he read that booklet over and over and then went to a church near where he lived and got saved and baptized. He said that he had not missed church on Sunday nor Wednesday since he had been saved. He said, ‘I was in church again last night (Wednesday), and I enjoyed it!’ The man is 68 years old but brand new in Christ. Praise the Lord for the message and power of His Word!”



Butch & Margie Abbett





Forgive me... when I whine

by Mary Ray

Even before getting out of bed, I knew that it was not going to be a “fair dinkum” day. How could it be? My husband, James, was in Papua New Guinea; both of our children had the mumps, which meant that I would be confined to the house for a “fortnight” as the Australians would say.

To add to my misery, it was raining and I was suffering from the malady that all missionaries face from time to time—HOMESICKNESS. It was going to be a long two weeks. I felt I had adjusted quite well to the “Aussie” accent and could actually carry on a conversation without constantly saying, “I beg your pardon.” I had learned that a “chook” was a chicken, a “scone” was like a biscuit, a “biscuit” was a cookie, “evening tea” was supper, and “supper” was a “snack.” After totally embarrassing myself numerous times, I had also learned that some words that we said in America were “rude” words in the land of Down Under.

Driving on the “left” side of the road had almost begun to feel normal, and Christmas was still Christmas even though it came in the middle of their summer and was usually about 110 degrees. Our family had finally accepted the fact that just before the bananas on our banana tree ripened that the “flying foxes” would gather them before we did. We could only imagine how wonderful they would have tasted.

In spite of finally feeling somewhat adjusted to a new culture, I still had days when the “longing for home” could overwhelm me if I did not remind myself of what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:5 about . . . *bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* This was definitely one of those days.

Climbing out of bed, I made my way to the kitchen to make breakfast, grumbling all the way. Standing at the sink, I gazed at the rain falling on the street below. It was then that I saw her. Robin, our little neighbor girl, who lived across the street, was standing in the rain. I wondered if her mother knew she was there. She was neatly dressed in her school uniform. Her hat that was worn to protect her gentle skin from the hot Australian sun was on the ground. Her port (school bag) was lying next to it.



Leaning closer to the window, I saw her twirling around and around; the bottom of her little checked pinafore uniform was flowing gracefully around her knees. Her arms were outstretched and her hands were turned upward as if she were waiting for a precious gift. Her head was tilted back and the rain was gently falling on her face. I was mesmerized by the expression on her face. I had never seen such a look of utter joy and happiness.

Robin was still twirling around in the rain when a car pulled into the driveway. She grabbed her hat and her port and happily skipped to the car where the driver opened the door and tucked her safely into the back seat. I watched as the driver maneuvered the vehicle slowly down the street on his way to transport his BLIND PASSENGER to school.

As the car disappeared from my sight, I felt an overwhelming sense of shame; I humbly asked the Lord to forgive me. I had considered the rain a blight on my already miserable day, but Robin had considered it a joy and delight. After making my peace with the Lord, I decided that it was going to be a good day, A VERY GOOD DAY!

That scene has replayed in my mind many times through the years and when it does, I often quote a beautiful and familiar poem that I have memorized. The poem and the Scripture verse *This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it* (Psalm 118:24) are always great ATTITUDE ADJUSTERS for me.

God, forgive me when I whine

Author Unknown

Today upon a bus, I saw a lovely girl
With golden hair,
I envied her, she looked so nice,
And I wished I were so fair.

When suddenly she stood to leave,
I saw her hobble down the aisle.
She had one leg and wore a crutch
But as she passed . . . a smile.

God, forgive me when I whine,
I have two feet the world is mine.

When I stopped to buy some sweets,
The lad who sold them had such charm,
I stayed and talked a while.
If I were late, it would do no harm.

“Thank you for stopping,” he said.
“You have been so very kind,
I like to talk with folks like you.”
“You see,” he said, “I am blind.”

God, forgive me when I whine,
I have two eyes the world is mine.

Later, while walking down the street,
I saw a lovely child with eyes of blue,
He stood and watched the others play.
It seemed he knew not what to do.

I watched a moment and then I said,
“Why don’t you join the others, dear?”
He looked ahead without a word,
And then I knew he could not hear.

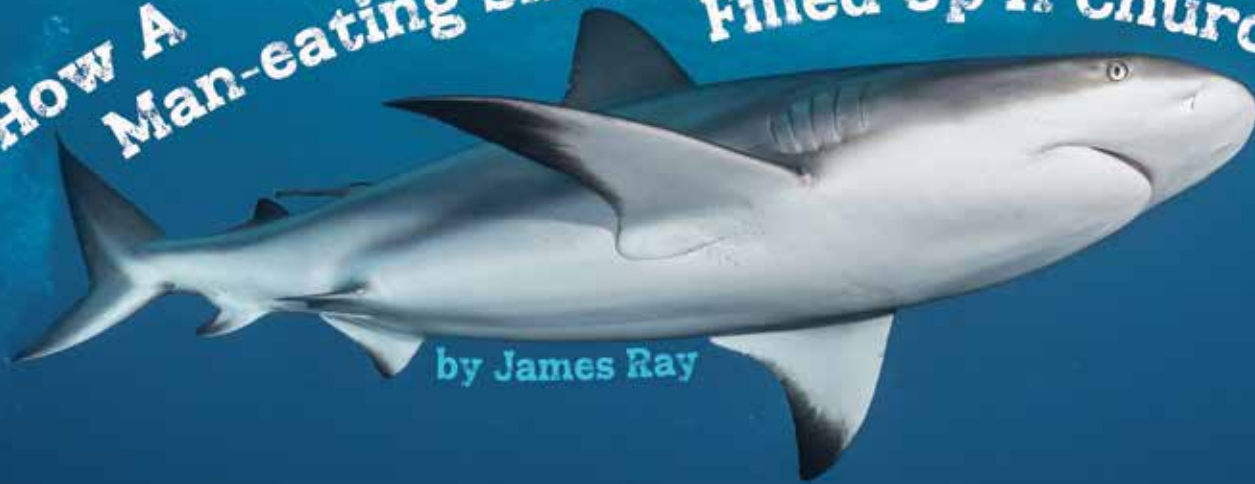
God, forgive me when I whine,
I have two ears the world is mine.

With feet to take me where I would go,
With eyes to see the sunset glow,
With ears to hear what I should know,
I am blessed indeed, the world is mine.

God, forgive me when I whine.



How A Man-eating Shark Filled Up A Church!



by James Ray

Charles F. Weigle was a legend.

The famous author of “No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus” on occasions led singing for Billy Sunday. He related to me of hearing D. L. Moody. Once he met William Jennings Bryan on a train.

As a young student, my wife, Mary, was assigned at Bible college to keep his room ready. Tennessee Temple University had built a special apartment for him at the school. The president of the school at the time, Dr. Lee Roberson, felt that the presence of such a man on campus would be a positive influence on the students.

Mary often would hear the great man writing songs, singing, and playing the piano. He would call her into the music room and sing his new songs to her. One of our treasured possessions is a letter written to us on the occasion of our wedding when the great man was 92 years old.

When Charles Weigle came to our church for special meetings, I listened intently to the stories and events of an era long gone. There was the citywide meeting in an Ohio city. Billy Sunday and other friends urged Charles to abandon the plans for the meeting. “That town is a preacher’s graveyard,” they told him. Still determined that God was in it, Charles Weigle proceeded. He remembered, “We built a huge tin tabernacle. I preached

my heart out for two weeks. Then I gave an invitation and 2,000 people responded receiving Christ.”

Most unforgettable was the account of the shark that filled a church. “I was preaching a meeting in California. On Monday night the meeting was almost bare with few people attending. That night in my room I knelt and prayed about the matter. I reminded the Lord that empty pews could not repent and believe. I asked God to fill the church.



Had I known *how* God would answer that prayer, I would not have prayed it. The next morning a member of the church who owned a house on the seashore invited me to come and swim from his private beach.

There I was, out in the ocean enjoying the waves, when suddenly something beneath the water brushed against my legs. Without thinking, I reacted and grabbed the object. Immediately I realized that it was *ALIVE*—*in fact it was a man-eating shark!* I was afraid to let go. The big fish seemed angry. When it pulled one way, I pulled it the other from left to right. We were making quite a big splash. Panic stricken, I began working toward shore.

As we wrestled, the shark and I, a great crowd of people gathered, watching in amazement. After a very fatiguing

struggle, I was able to drag the big fish onto the sand. A man from the watching crowd stabbed the shark to death with a pocketknife.

I staggered a few feet away and collapsed on the sand completely out of breath. In God's providence a reporter was passing by the area and noticed the great crowd gathered on the beach. Thinking someone must have drowned, he stopped his car to investigate. A bystander informed him that the man lying on the sand had brought in the man-eating shark with his bare hands.

The reporter stood over me and asked, 'Sir, is it true that you brought this shark in with your bare hands?' I told him, 'Yes, it is true.' He said, 'That has never happened on this shore before.' I told him, 'As far as I am concerned—it will never happen again!'"

Taking notes, the reporter recorded all the facts concerning his ministry, the special meetings, and the services and then took his picture. The next morning that newspaper that circulated throughout the main towns and communities along the coast carried the story of the evangelist who brought in a man-eating shark with his bare hands. His picture and the event were featured on the front page. That night the church was packed with people who had come to see the man they had read about in the newspaper. The Lord answered his prayer and filled the church—but in a very surprising way.

Some time ago while spending a night in Lafayette, Indiana, I remembered an event Charles Weigle had related to me—an event that had occurred in his childhood. "When I was a boy, our family lived in Lafayette, Indiana, near the old Wabash River. I was down under the old wooden City Bridge playing with some matches. After a while, the trash caught fire and was out of control in no time at all. Worst still the wooden poles and beams of the bridge were soon on fire. I ran home and hid in a small shed behind our house. Soon I heard the sound of sirens and firewagons. I asked my father what the noise was and he told me that someone had set the City Bridge on fire. I asked, 'What

will they do to the person who did that?' He replied that they would lock him up in jail. 'What if it were a little boy?' My father said, 'They would lock him up too.' The entire bridge burnt down."

Years later Charles Weigle, then a well-known evangelist, held a meeting in Lafayette, Indiana. He found his way to the police station and told them that when he was a lad in the town that he was the one who burnt down the City Bridge. The police laughed and said, "Well, we needed a new bridge anyhow."

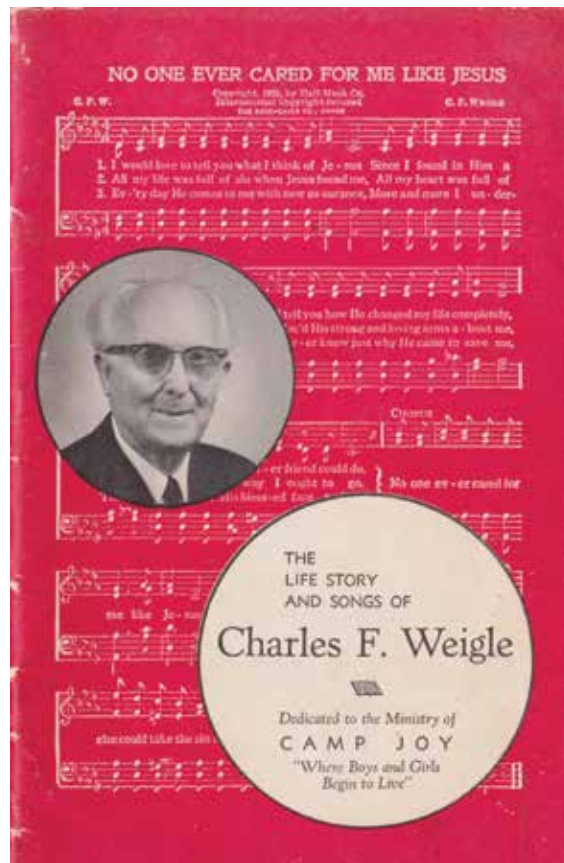
Charles Weigle wrote many songs, which were published and sold widely. His most famous song was "No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus."

With still a note of sadness in his voice, he explained how his first wife forsook him, betraying their marriage vows. After he had watched her and his daughter pull away on the train, he walked out on a pier extending out a ways into the ocean.

"I could hear the devil whisper, 'Weigle—jump into the water and all of your troubles will be over. End it all.' After a moment of consideration I stepped back from the edge of the pier and said, 'Satan, you're a liar.'" In that moment, God put something into his heart. Later, alone, forsaken, he wrote "No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus."

At 92 years of age, he told this writer that an estimated 20,000 people had come to Christ as a result of that song alone. Illustrating, he recounted: "In Chicago the newspapers carried the story of a man who worked in a lunchroom. After being reprimanded, he returned to his place of work and killed a man. He was tried and sentenced to die in the electric chair.

Some Christians visited the man and led him to Christ. There was such a change in the man that everyone believed him to be sincere and truly converted. Intercession was made for him, but there was no reprieve. Again the papers carried the story. The condemned man walked the last mile to the electric chair singing . . . "No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus."



When the Communist regime fell in Romania, our mission organization set up various ministries in the country. Deep in the heart of Romania, we attended a Romanian church and heard a young woman sing in her native language “No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus.” The song had pierced even the iron borders of communism.

Charles Weigle was 92 when he preached for us in our church. On the last night, he preached on the title “A Trip to Heaven and Back.” The sermon lasted over one

hour and a half. The congregation sat at rapt attention almost spellbound.

Some months later when word came to me of his death, I remembered his last words to me when I said goodbye at the airport: “James, one of these days you will get the word—Old Weigle is gone. I just want you to know I will be in Heaven.” His wonderful life had influenced thousands. His personal sorrows had only served to sweeten his spirit and to make him strength for others.

*“I sing of Thee, and smile thro’ tears
When sorrow comes to make me sad;
For I remember thro’ the years
Thy grace, and sing because I’m glad.
I sing of Thee, O blessed Saviour,
Thy praise shall now my tongue employ;
I sing of Thee, O Lord, forever,
For Thou has filled my soul with joy.”*

Charles F. Weigle

GEORGE WHITEFIELD



TOUCHING AMERICA

In 1738 George Whitefield came from England to the American colonies. In the ensuing years up to 1770, he traveled on horseback thousands of miles preaching and winning souls to Christ. His meetings in Boston had more in attendance than the population of the city.

With many others, a man by the name of Shubael Stearns found Christ in a Whitefield meeting. Shubael Stearns came south to pastor Sandy Creek Baptist Church in what is now North Carolina. His ministry initiated the Bible Belt and had a gigantic impact on America.

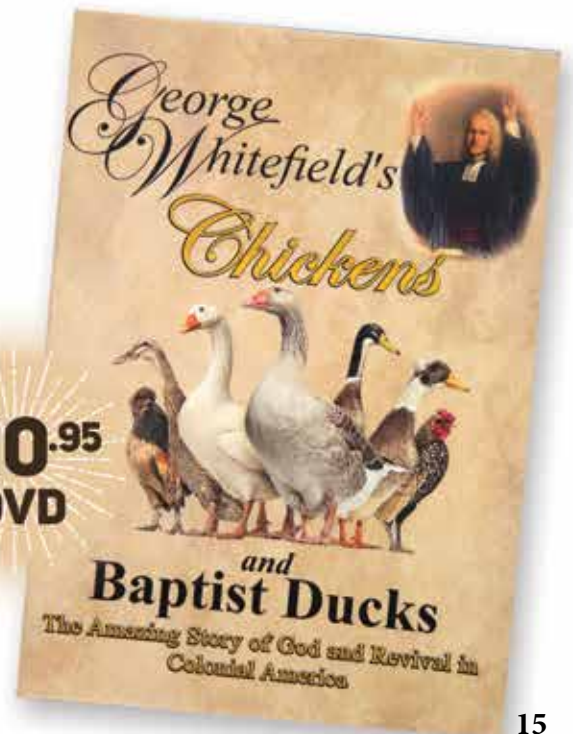
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Russia

must be

Evangelized

By James Ray

It was back in 1929 that the plea went out in the 1929 Keswick Convention book. Although Russia proper was under the grip of communism, the surrounding countries of the geographical Russian Empire were open.

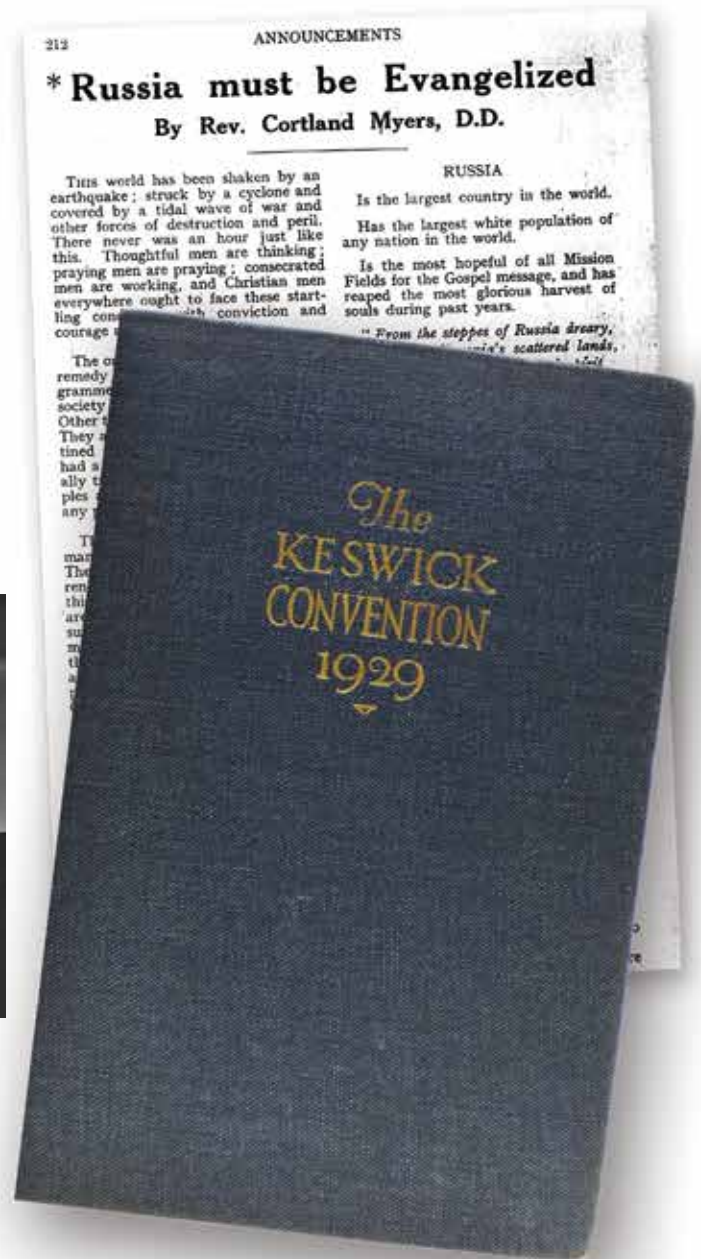
The opportunity was astounding! If the church of Jesus Christ would send missionaries to those surrounding nations, history could be altered in favor of Heaven. Although there was some interest, the plea fell largely on deaf ears.

After World War II, those countries fell under the iron rod of Stalin. Churches were banned and Christianity was outlawed with the possible exception of the controlled state Russian Orthodox Church.

A few months after the end of the Second World War, Winston Churchill spoke at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. During this speech, he used the term *iron curtain* to describe the line in Europe between free nations and those falling under Soviet domination.



“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe: Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, and Sofia; all . . . to control from Moscow.”



Stalin sent hundreds of thousands of people to Siberia. This included thousands of Christians who were arrested for illegal worship. It has been estimated that 50 million people from Russia and surrounding countries died under his reign of terror. In Latvia, Stalin's troops raided homes in the middle of the night, taking men, women, and children. Over 100,000 people were herded into cattle cars and shipped by rail to Siberia. Most of them never returned.



One of Stalin's methods for dealing with dissenters was "hunger." Ukrainians called this campaign the "Holocaust of Hunger." Soviet troops raided villages and homes, taking away every trace of food and whatever harvest was available. With no food anywhere, people died in public, collapsing on the street. If people survived hunger, they were deported to Siberia or shot by the thousands.

In 1969 when I pastored in North Alabama, I invited a Russian minister to share his experiences with my congregation. He described the horror of his life in Russia during the man-made famine of Stalin. No one present could ever forget his words: "I saw my little sister starve to death, gnawing on a piece of shoe leather trying to get food value out of it." Our Bible distribution teams met a 96-year-old woman in the Ukraine who told them of seeing her six children starve to death. These were real, ordinary common people like you and like me living and dying through a night of horror beyond description. What a challenge for American Christians to be missionaries to our own country lest we produce a "Stalin"!

In 1929, the plea from the Russian Missionary Society went out for missionaries. Would things have been different for the geographical Russian countries if thousands of Christians had responded? That scenario might not have stopped the tragedy of Stalin, but the millions who perished might have perished with HOPE. The "Bread of Heaven" might have been the light at the end of the tunnel for those dying in hopeless darkness.

Now 96 years out, Baptist International Missions again makes the plea "Russia must be evangelized." Although there are workers in Russia with BIMIM, the open door of opportunity is slowly closing. We must pray diligently that the Lord of the Harvest will send forth laborers into the Russian Harvest. We must pray even more diligently that the prospective laborers will "listen."

A Latvian poet describes the horror...

*They came in the darkest hour of the night.
They tore us out of our beds, our homes, our land.
They tore us apart, men from women and children.
They herded us into cattle cars, behind bars.
They denied us food and water.*

THEY DROVE US TOWARD LIVING DEATH!

*Lucky the child, the old, and the sick
who died quickly
and were left by the wayside.*

*We who remained were to die slowly
on the barbed wire of the Gulag.
We no longer were human; we became numbers.
We were forced to work without food and rest.*

*Our companions were HUNGER and DEATH.
Our bones piled up on the frozen ground of the Tundra.*

*ONLY A FEW — years later — could traverse
the miles toward home.*

*ONLY A FEW returned, broken and sick,
WHO HAD GONE THROUGH HELL . . .
and HAD LIVED.*

A.B. Simpson's words still haunt us:

*They're passing, passing, fast away,
A hundred thousand souls a day
In Christless guilt and gloom.
O Church of Christ, what wilt thou say
When, in the awful judgment day,
They charge thee with their doom,
They charge thee with their doom?*

Will the Circle Be Unbroken?

By Keith Lay



It was a Sunday morning church service I shall never forget.

My dad had resisted trusting Jesus Christ as his personal Savior for decades. His family had been faithfully praying for his salvation all this time. Both facts collided with wonderful fruition—the result on a February morning in the year 2000.

My parents were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. Dad was 75 years of age. My mother was one of the finest faithful Christian ladies I ever knew. She taught Sunday school, taught Vacation Bible School, sang in the choir, sang solos, and went on weekly visitation. My mother was a submissive wife in always asking her husband if she could participate in church, and even asked her husband if she could give offerings to the church each week. Although my dad never attended church other than perhaps on a Christmas or Easter service, he had agreed to attend church that anniversary Sunday before their 50th wedding celebration party that afternoon in a hotel ballroom.

Earlier that morning, dad and I were having coffee together when I asked him again if he would trust Christ as his Savior. He nodded no. I asked him if he had ever trusted Christ but had not revealed his decision. He nodded no. I asked him if he would attend church with the family that morning and he agreed. In fact, he stated that the day would not be a

celebration without all his family members present. I agreed with him and also reminded him that heaven would not be the same celebration without him with his family in heaven for all eternity.

We finished our coffee and headed to a little country church my mother had been a member of as a child when she lived in that area. We all sat together with me beside my dad. The congregation probably was 150 in attendance that day with almost every pew being packed. Just prior to the sermon, the country preacher asked those attending if anyone had a testimony or song they wanted to share. Immediately, the face of the pastor somewhat contorted as a woman's voice in the rear loudly spoke out, "I have a song to sing." I could tell that her request caught the pastor off guard as he hesitantly asked if she needed the piano to accompany her. She stated, "No." She approached the platform, stood behind the pulpit, and started to sing. I later was informed by the pastor that he had never seen the woman before, nobody in church knew who she was, and she never returned for another service after that Sunday.

After she had sung her song, the pastor preached a Gospel message, but my dad was not persuaded to move. He stood stoically silent, staring straight forward. Some members of the family wept along with me as the invitation concluded. After the prayer of dismissal, my dad left his pew and headed toward the foyer as I started conversing with others when

suddenly a man rushed up to me. He urgently yelled for me to come to the foyer. “It’s your dad!” I immediately thought he had had a heart attack or some other medical emergency. When I reached him, he was crying uncontrollably. I hugged him and asked him if the time had come to be saved? He said, “Yes, I need to be saved.” We both walked to the front of the church and knelt at the altar. I told dad that I could not pray for him for he himself had to ask God to save him. He immediately blurted out, “Oh God, I am a sinner.” By that time, the pastor had joined us at the altar as dad was gloriously saved. When we stood up and turned around, we saw people who had already been in the parking lot going to their cars. They were returning for they had heard that my dad was at the altar getting saved. Folks were crying and some were shouting. All were rejoicing in a man who had been on their prayer list for decades and who had been redeemed!

What a 50th wedding anniversary celebration we had that afternoon! There had been a new name written down in heaven and it was my dad’s name.

The following Saturday after my parents had returned to their home in Florida, I was talking to my mom on the phone. After a lengthy conversation, I told my mom to get dad on the phone because I wanted to talk to him also. She then told me she hated to interrupt my dad for he was reading the Bible I had sent to him a few days prior. Praise God! Dad never missed a church service after that on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, or Wednesday night. Fast forward five years later after he went to heaven in March of that year. As executor of his estate, I was going through his records and found that he had written nine checks thus far that year. Seven of them went to the church or Christian organizations. Yes, my dad got saved and our prayers had been answered miraculously.

One last footnote you may be interested in knowing . . . the song sung by that woman whom nobody at church knew or had ever seen before or after was “Will the Circle Be Unbroken?”

I submit Hebrews 13:2 is real regarding this statement: *thereby some have entertained angels unawares*. Yes—a Divine appointment!



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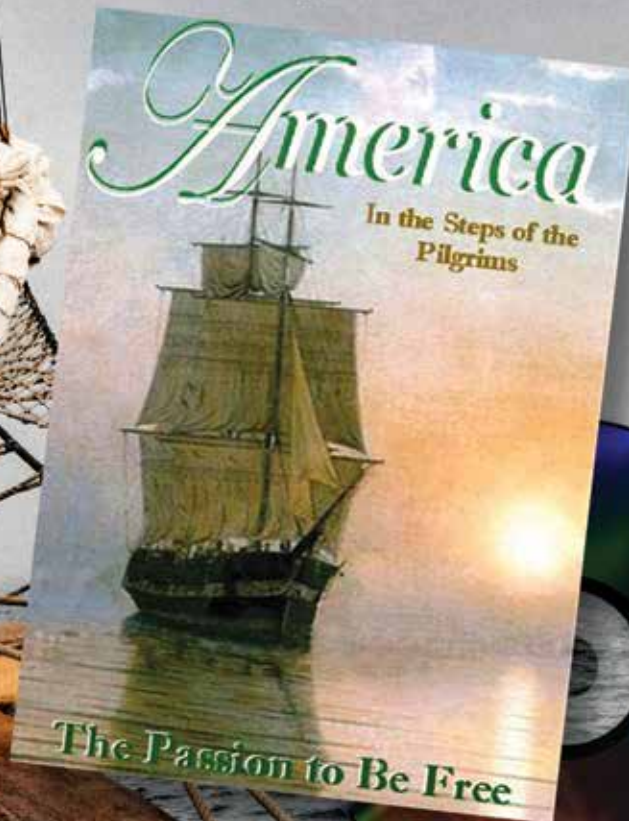
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