

METHODIST MEN'S PRESENTATION
2 MAR 2009

I'M REASONABLY SURE THAT A GOOD MANY OF YOU HAVE HAD THE GRAVE MISFORTUNE TO HAVE TO LISTEN TO ME SHARE THE OFT REPEATED ANECDOTES OF A WAYWARD FIGHTER PILOT THAT SHOULD HAVE COME OFF THE TARGET TO THE RIGHT, BUT INSTEAD CAME OFF TO THE LEFT. WELL YOU WILL BE OVERJOYED TO KNOW THAT AT LEAST YOU WON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO YET ANOTHER ITERATION OF THAT STORY.

IN THE WORDS OF OUR MOST RECENTLY DEPARTED RADIO BROADCASTER AND FRIEND, PAUL HARVEY, NOW YOU'LL GET "THE REST OF THE STORY". WHAT ABOUT THOSE YEARS BETWEEN THEN AND NOW? HOW HAS MY WALK WITH THE LORD EVOLVED AS I HAVE MATURED FROM A MACH 2, 1200 MILE AND HOUR AIRPLANE DRIVER TO A GIMPY-KNEE'D, POST RETIREMENT, HEAVYWEIGHT, SLOW MOVER? NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, THIS PART OF MY LIFE HAS REALLY GROWN INTO SOMETHING WORTH SHARING, AND YOU KNOW SOMETHING YOU ARE A BIG PART OF THE REASON THAT MY WALK WITH MY LORD HAS GROWN INTO SOMETHING REALLY REAL.

I WANT YOU ALL TO KNOW THAT I AM IN NO POSITION TO SIT UP HERE AND INFER THAT MY WALK IS ANY MORE SIGNIFICANT OR MEANINGFUL THAN ANY OF YOURS, IT SIMPLY IS NOT, WELL EXCEPT MAYBE TO ME. BUT I CAN SAY WITH A GREAT DEAL OF ASSURANCE THAT YOU, EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU ARE PART OF THE REASON THAT I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN MY FAITH OVER THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS AND I THANK YOU FOR THAT.

I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BE A PART OF A METHODIST MEN'S FELLOWSHIP THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY HAVE A CAPITOL "M" ON MEN. I HAVE KNOWN MEN OF THE METHODIST CHURCH THAT ARE DEMONSTRATING THEIR FAITH, THAT ARE PUTTING THEIR LOVE OF THE LORD OUT THERE FOR ANYONE AND EVERYONE TO SEE. THESE ARE MEN OF ACTION THAT ARE WILLING TO REACH OUT TO ANYONE AND INVITE THEM TO JOIN IN THEIR "WORK" AND SERVE THE LORD. AND YOU KNOW THAT WORK DOESN'T HAVE TO HAVE A HAMMER, WRENCH, CIRCULAR SAW, CROWBAR, NAILGUN OR SAWSALL ASSOCIATED WITH IT; THE OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE THE LORD ARE BOUNDLESS.

I HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRISTIAN MEN OF FAITH THAT COINCIDENTALLY ENOUGH HAVE FELT THEIR CALL TO GREATER SERVICE TO THE LORD AND ONLY BY CHANCE HAVE THEY BEEN METHODISTS. I HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE PERSONAL AND GROUP TIME WITH THESE MY SPECIAL NURTURING BROTHERS IN CHRIST. AND YOU KNOW WHAT; I DON'T BELIEVE IT HAS BEEN BY COINCIDENCE.

I THINK THE GOOD LORD HAS PLACED ALL OF YOU IN MY PATH, AND I THANK HIM GREATLY FOR MAKING ME STUMBLE OVER YOU WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF. SO I THINK I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A LITTLE TIME THIS EVENING TO TURN AROUND AND REFLECT ON THE BROTHERS THAT I HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO BUMP INTO AND STUMBLE OVER AND TO THANK GOD FOR THESE "ACCIDENTS" THAT HE HAD PLANNED FOR ME.

IT WAS AT HOUSTON LAKE COUNTRY CLUB ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO. I DIDN'T KNOW ANYONE, BUT THIS FELLOW INTRODUCED HIMSELF, SAW THAT I WAS CLEARLY A SINGLE AND ASKED IF HE COULD PLAY ALONG. IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO MEET ONE OF THE LOCALS SO WE DROVE TO THE NUMBER ONE TEE TOGETHER. WE FLIPPED THE TEE TO DETERMINE WHO WAS TO GO FIRST AND HE WON, OR LOST I GUESS DEPENDING ON YOUR POINT OF VIEW. HE GOT UP ON THE TEE, PLACED A TITLEIST PRO V-1 ON AN EXTRA LONG TEE, BACKED OFF, LINED UP HIS SHOT AS IF TO CALCULATE THE EXACT YARDAGE, WINDAGE AND PRECISE TRAJECTORY THAT WAS REQUIRED. HAVING CRANKED THE CRITICAL INFORMATION INTO HIS DATABASE HE STEPPED UP TO THE BALL AND WITH A MIGHTY SWING THAT WOULD HAVE EMBARRASSED EVEN THE MOST STERRHOID PUMPED MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PLAYER, HE LAUNCHED THE BALL _____ INTO A SHARPLY BENDING SLICE WITH AN EVER DECREASING RADIUS. THE NEXT SIX WORDS THAT I HEARD WERE "OH, SHIT - - - THAT'LL BE A MULLIGAN", AND RIGHT THERE I MET A NEW BROTHER IN CHRIST, OTTO WARREN. THANK YOU, LORD!

ANOTHER "CHANCE" ENCOUNTER BROUGHT ME IN CONTACT WITH A BROTHER THAT IS AS FULL OF THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT AS YOU CAN POSSIBLY BE. HE HAPPENED TO BE A GUEST PREACHER AT OUR 11:00 SERVICE SEVERAL YEARS AGO. THIS SOUTH GEORGIA BROTHER WITH HIS DISTINCT COUNTRY ACCENT OPENED HIS MESSAGE WITH THREE LOUD, SHRILL CROW CALLS. HE THEN SHARED A STORY WHEREIN HE WAS SCHEDULED TO PREACH THE MESSAGE IN UGANDA. AS HE WALKED TO THE

PULPIT, HE HAD NO IDEA WHAT HIS MESSAGE WAS GOING TO BE; HE ASKED THE LORD FOR GUIDANCE AND THE ANSWER WAS "GIVE A CROW CALL."

NOW YOU AND I MIGHT NOT CONSIDER THAT TO BE A VERY APPROPRIATE OPENING FOR A WHITE MISSIONARY IN BLACK AFRICA, BUT THE LORD KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING. THIS MISSIONARY STOOD BEFORE THAT AFRICAN CONGREGATION, TILTED HIS HEAD TOWARD THE LORD AND LET FORTH THREE OF THE LOUDEST, MOST RAUCOUS CROW CALLS THAT YOU HAVE EVER HEARD. INSTANTLY THE CONGREGATION RESPONDED WITH CROW CALLS OF THEIR OWN. AFTER THE SERVICE WAS OVER THE HOST PASTOR COMPLEMENTED OUR CROW CALLING BROTHER ON HIS UNDERSTANDING OF UGANDAN CULTURE. OUR BROTHER ASKED IN A RATHER BEWILDERED TONE OF VOICE FOR AN EXPLANATION, AND WAS TOLD THAT HIS CROW CALL WAS A STATEMENT THAT "THE LORD WAS IN THIS PLACE" AND THE CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE WAS A CONFIRMATION THAT "THEY WERE THERE TO PRAISE THE LORD." DON'T TELL ME THAT BOBBY GALE DOESN'T WALK WITH THE LORD.

YOU CAN TELL ME THAT HE DOESN'T LIKE ADMINISTRATIVE DETAIL; YOU CAN TELL ME THAT FOR THE MOST PART HIS HAND DOESN'T FIT A HAMMER AND YOU WOULD BE RIGHT, YOU CAN CHALLENGE HIM WITH NUMEROUS QUESTIONS RELATED TO PLANNING ACTIVITIES AND SPECIFIC DETAILS ABOUT EXECUTING A PARTICULAR MISSION AND HIS MOST COMMON RESPONSE WILL SIMPLY BE, "THE LORD WILL PROVIDE". BUT WHEN IT COMES TO PASSION FOR MISSIONS HE'S "RIGHT ON," AND I HAVE BEEN SO BLESSED

TO BE WITH HIM ON MISSION TRIPS TO AFRICA, WHERE WE INSTALLED WATER TANKS, TO LOUISIANA WHERE WE REPAIRED FLOOD DAMAGE AT MISS SYLVIA'S, AND TO FLORIDA WHERE WE COULD SEE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD AT WORK AS WE SHARED IN REVIVALS. THANK YOU LORD FOR MY ONE-OF-A-KIND BROTHER BOBBY GALE.

NOW THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OUR BROTHERS THAT ARE VERY FAMILIAR WITH ALL THOSE CONSTRUCTION TOOLS, AND THE LORD JUST KEEPS PUTTING THEM IN FRONT OF ME WHEREVER I TURN AND IN WHICHEVER DIRECTION HE SENDS ME. I HAVE BEEN SO WONDERFULLY BLESSED TO SHARE THE WALK WITH MEN LIKE; BILL PARKER, GENE HARDIN, DONNIE ROGERS, LYNN WILHELM, STEVE STRADER, STEVE THORN, DICK HAMILTON, JON TALLET, JIM BARCLAY AND SO MANY OTHERS. I HAVE ENJOYED FELLOWSHIP WITH THESE GUYS WHILE WE BUILT HANDICAP RAMPS, CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS, WORKED ON HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOUSES, MADE REPAIRS ON REBUILDING TOGETHER PROJECTS, AND DEMONSTRATED OUR APPRECIATION OF HEROES AT HOME. AND THROUGHOUT ALL THESE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES, THE UNITING BOND WAS THAT WE WERE WORKING TO DEMONSTRATE THE LOVE OF GOD TO OTHERS. THANK YOU LORD FOR THESE MY BROTHERS.

I HAVE SHARED IN THE RESPONSE OF OUR OWN METHODIST MEN'S GROUP, THIS TIME WITH A CAPITAL "M" TO CLAIRE THOMPSON'S NEED TO GET HER HOME READY TO SELL AFTER CHARLES DIED. IT WAS A GOOD TURNOUT WITH MANY OF THE GUYS THAT CAN'T NORMALLY GET OUT DURING THE

WEEK, A TURNOUT THAT DEMONSTRATED THE BROTHERS' CARE AND CONCERN FOR A SISTER THAT NEEDED A LITTLE HELP. IT WAS A FUN SATURDAY WITH GOOD FELLOWSHIP, AND I WAS BLESSED TO BE A PART OF IT.

SOMEWHERE ALONG THE ROAD IN THESE LAST 5-10 YEARS, BROTHER BOBBY GALE INTRODUCED ME TO ANOTHER GROUP OF METHODIST MEN, THIS TIME AGAIN SMALL "M". THIS GROUP OF METHODISTS OUT OF EAST DUBLIN ARE LEAD BY TOMMY VEAL, A PASTOR WITH ONE ARM, THEIR IDENTIFYING PIECE OF CLOTHING IS A TAN BASEBALL CAP WITH A BLUE BILL, ACROSS THE FRONT OF THE CAP ARE THE WORDS "*HOOKED ON JESUS MINISTRIES,*" THE "J" IN JESUS HAVING BEEN REPLACED WITH AN EMBROIDERED FISH HOOK. THE TRADEMARK ITEM FOR THE GROUP IS A LARGE GOLD COLORED FISH HOOK THAT PINCHES THE BILL. THE GOOD LORD HAS HAD HIS HAND ON TOMMY'S SHOULDER FOR SOME TIME AND FOR A LOT OF REASONS. TOMMY'S BEEN THROUGH SOME TOUGH PERIODS IN HIS LIFE.

AT ONE POINT HE WAS A LINEMAN FOR AN ELECTRICAL COOP AND ENDED UP TAKING 7200 VOLTS THROUGH HIS BODY. THE FACT THAT HE SURVIVED IT IS EVIDENCE THAT THE LORD HAD A NEED FOR HIM. THE RECOVERY WAS LENGTHY AND INVOLVED NUMEROUS PAINFUL SKIN GRAFTS AND THERAPY THAT ONLY BURN PATIENTS COULD POSSIBLY IDENTIFY WITH.

LATER HE AND HIS SON WERE WORKING ON THE BOY'S PICKUP ONE DAY. THEY CRANKED IT UP TO TEST IT ONE LAST TIME. THE FAN CAME OFF AND COMPLETELY SEVERED TOMMY'S LEFT ARM. HE NOW WEARS A

PROSTHESIS, WHICH HE LAUGLINGLY USES AS A SPARE HAMMER WHEN A REGULAR ONE IS NOT IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE. YET, THROUGH ALL OF THIS TOMMY HAS MAINTAINED THE CONVICTION THAT GOD HAS BLESSED HIS LIFE IN SO MANY MANY WAYS; A LOVING WIFE AND FAMILY, A LOVING AND DEDICATED CHURCH FAMILY AND THE CONTINUOUS BLESSINGS THAT FLOW FROM A LIFE OF SERVICE TO THE LORD.

LET THERE BE NO DOUBT, THIS IS A GROUP OF CHRISTIAN MEN THAT ARE REALLY "HOOKED ON JESUS," AND I AM SO GRATEFUL THAT THE LORD PLACED ME DIRECTLY IN THEIR PATH WHILE THEY WERE ON THEIR WAY TO SUNBELT CHRISTIAN YOUTH RANCH SEVERAL YEARS AGO.

SUNBELT IS A 200 ACRE WORKING FARM ABOUT HALF WAY BETWEEN MERIDIAN AND JACKSON MISSISSIPPI. IT IS A HOME FOR AT-RISK CHILDREN. A HOME WHERE CHILDREN WITH TROUBLED BACKGROUNDS ARE BEING RAISED WITH A CHRISTIAN HUSBAND AND WIFE THAT SERVE AS THE CHILDREN'S PARENTS WHILE THEY ARE AT SUNBELT. FOR MANY OF THESE KIDS IT IS NOT ONLY THE FIRST TIME THAT THEY HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED TO CHRISTIANITY, IT IS ALSO THE FIRST TIME THAT MANY OF THEM HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED THE CONCEPT OF A FAMILY WITH BOTH A LOVING MOTHER AND A LOVING FATHER.

REMEMBER THAT I SAID THIS IS A WORKING FARM. FOR ALL OF US THAT WERE RAISED ON A FARM, WE KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS. THESE KIDS ARE UP AT 5:00 AND START THEIR DAY WITH DEVOTIONS, MAKING BEDS, MILKING COWS, FEEDING STOCK, GATHERING EGGS, PASTEURIZING MILK,

AND ALL THE OTHER CHORES THAT ARE INHERANT IN MAKING A FARM WORK, BEFORE THEY HAVE BREAKFAST. AFTER THAT, THEY HEAD OFF TO SCHOOL. AND YOU KNOW WHAT, THE CONCEPT WORKS. THE RECIDIVISM RATE FOR THESE KIDS AT SUNBELT IS LESS THAN 2%, LESS THAN ONE IN FIFTY OF THESE CHILDREN END UP RETURNING TO “CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS” LATER IN LIFE. YOU KNOW WHAT THE RECIDIVISM RATE IS FOR THE YDCs IN GEORGIA, MORE THAN 75%. MAYBE THERE IS SOMETHING HERE THAT WORKS_ _ _ _ _ YA THINK!!!

WHEN TOMMY AND THE GUYS HEAD FOR SUNBELT IT’S A WORKING RETREAT. WE HAVE BEEN BUILDING ANOTHER RESIDENCE HOME THAT WILL ACCOMMODATE ANOTHER TEN –TWELVE CHILDREN. THE PROGRESS IS SLOW, IT TAKES MONEY AND RESOURCES TO BUILD ANY HOME EVEN WHEN YOU HAVE VOLUNTEER LABOR AND A SIX BEDROOM HOME IS NOT SMALL BY ANYONE’S STANDARDS.

THE LAST TIME WE WENT TO SUNBELT, TOMMY TOLD ME THAT WE WOULD BE JOINED BY “*TEEN CHALLENGE*”. I’LL HAVE TO CONFESS, I HAD NO IDEA WHAT OR WHO TEEN CHALLENGE WAS. BUT I CAN SHARE WITH YOU THE IMAGES THAT THE NAME BROUGHT TO MY MIND. I HAD A CLEAR PICTURE OF 13-19 YEAR-OLD CHURCH YOUTH MEMBERS. YOUNG BOYS AND GIRLS WITH BRIGHT SHINING FACES AND LIVES THAT ARE PURE AND YET TO BE TAINTED BY LIFES AGING PROCESSES.

WHEN THE HOOKED ON JESUS CARAVAN PULLED UP IN THE LOWE’S PARKING LOT ON 96 AND THE GUYS STARTED GETTING OUT OF THE “*TEEN*

CHALLENGE” VAN, I KEPT LOOKING FOR THE CHILDREN THAT WOULD MATCH MY MENTAL IMAGE. THEY NEVER APPEARED. THE VAN WAS CLEARLY EMPTY AND WHAT I SAW STANDING BEFORE ME WAS A GROUP OF MEN THE YOUNGEST OF WHICH WAS 22 AND THE OLDEST WAS 47. IT WAS THEN THAT I REALIZED THAT I NEEDED TO READJUST MY MENTAL IMAGE OF A “*TEEN CHALLENGE*” MEMBER. THAT READJUSTMENT INCLUDED MORE THAN JUST THEIR AGES. REMEMBER THAT IMAGE OF BRIGHT SHINING FACES AND LIVES THAT ARE PURE AND YET TO BE TAINTED BY LIFES AGING PROCESSES, _ _ _ _ _ LET ME JUST SAY _ _ _ _ _ THAT WAS SLIGHTLY OFF THE MARK.

ONE OF THE THINGS I ENJOY MOST ABOUT BEING WITH A GROUP OF MEN OF FAITH IS THEIR WILLINGNESS TO SHARE HOW CHRIST IS WORKING IN THEIR LIVES. THIS TRIP TO SUNBELT INCLUDED THE MOST MEMORABLE DEVOTIONALS THAT I HAVE EVER BEEN A PART OF. TEEN CHALLENGE IS A FAITH BASED RECOVERY PROGRAM. NOT UNLIKE AA, THESE MEN FROM TEEN CHALLENGE HAVE DEALT WITH ADDICTION PROBLEMS AND ABUSE PROBLEMS. THEY HAVE HAD YEARS OF THEIR LIVES BLURRED BY ALCOHOL AND DRUGS. THEY HAVE SUNK TO THE DEPTHS THAT FEW OF US WILL EVER KNOW, BUT THEY ARE COMING BACK AND COMING BACK STRONG THROUGH THE HELP AND LOVE OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. AND LET THERE BE NO DOUBT THEY ARE READY TO _ _ _ TESTIFY!!!!

SOME OF THE STRONGEST TESTIMONIES THAT I HAVE EVER HEARD IN MY LIFE WERE SHARED IN THOSE EVENING DEVOTIONALS DURING THAT LAST WEEK AT SUNBELT WITH THESE “TEEN CHALLENGE” GUYS. AND YOU KNOW,

THEIR TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE OF THE LORD WORKING IN THEIR LIVES DIDN'T STOP AT THE END OF DEVOTIONALS EACH EVENING, IT WAS CONTINUOUS DURING THE DAY.

YOU KNOW, I'VE BEEN ON A LOT OF WORK PROJECTS WITH MY BROTHERS, BUT I CAN'T RECALL A SINGLE TIME THAT FROM SUNUP TO SUNDOWN I COULD HEAR DISCUSSIONS ALL AROUND ME ABOUT HOW CHRIST WAS WORKING IN THE LIVES OF MEN. I DON'T RECALL HEARING MEN DISCUSS FOR HOURS SPECIFIC SCRIPTURE AND HOW IT APPLIES TO THE LIVING OF LIFE, BUT THAT'S WHAT WAS GOING ON ALL AROUND ME. WHILE NAIL GUNS DROVE NAILS, AND CHOP SAWS CUT 2X4s AND SHEETROCK WAS BEING MEASURED, CUT AND LAID UP, THE CONVERSATIONS WENT ON. LET ME TELL YOU, YOU EMERGE YOURSELF IN THAT KIND OF FAITH SHARING AND YOU CAN'T HELP BUT BE BLESSED. THANK YOU LORD FOR YOUR HEALING HANDS THAT HAVE REACHED OUT TO TOUCH THOSE MY BROTHERS.

THERE IS ONE MORE GROUP OF MEN WHOSE FELLOWSHIP I HAVE BEEN BLESSED TO SHARE. IT'S A SMALL GROUP, PROBABLY WITH EVERYONE IN ATTENDANCE IT MIGHT MAKE A DOZEN. THE GROUP MEETS IN AN UPPER ROOM, AND THEY ARE LED BY ONE THAT HAS BEEN SPECIFICALLY CHOSEN TO NURTURE HIS FLOCK. BEFORE YOUR IMAGINATIONS RUN TOO FAR AFIELD, THIS GROUP DOES NOT MEET IN JERUSALEM AND THE LEADER NEED NOT FEEL THE NEED TO BE CRUCIFIED FOR THOSE OF US THAT ARE PRESENT, THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN TAKEN CARE OF.

THIS IS A GROUP OF MEN THAT MEET TO SHARE, DISCUSS, DEBATE, UNDERSTAND AND REINFORCE THE APPLICATION OF OUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. WE'VE DISCUSSED SCRIPTURE, CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL ISSUES, AND THE WRITINGS OF MODERN AUTHORS THAT REPRESENT A BROAD SPECTRUM OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT. THE RANGE OF SUBJECT MATTER OFFERED FOR DISCUSSION IS WIDE AND OCCASIONALLY IS EVEN CONSISTENT WITH THAT WHICH WAS SCHEDULED FOR THE DAY. IT IS CERTAINLY NOT UNCOMMON FOR THE DISCUSSIONS TO OVERFLOW INTO SIDEBARS BETWEEN KEN AND I AT MCCALL'S JUST WHEN HE'S TRYING TO CLOSE.

THESE DISCUSSIONS FREQUENTLY GO WAY BEYOND THIS POOR EX-AVIATOR'S ABILITY TO COMPREHEND AND APPLY. YOU KNOW, IF THE CONCEPT GOES BEYOND "PUSH THE STICK FORWARD AND THE BUILDINGS GET BIGGER AND PULL THE STICK BACK AND THEY GET SMALLER (UP TO A POINT), IT GETS BEYOND A PILOTS ABILITY TO COMPREHEND. BUT THE PATIENT, NURTURING AND UNDERSTANDING RESPONSES TO MY DISTRACTING QUESTIONS ARE ALWAYS OFFERED AT AN INTELLECTUAL LEVEL THAT EVEN A FIGHTER PILOT CAN UNDERSTAND - - - WITHOUT PICTURES EVEN! PRAISE THE LORD!!!

YES, PRAISE THE LORD. AND I DO PRAISE AND THANK THE LORD FOR THE PRESENCE OF MEN OF FAITH IN MY LIFE. I THANK HIM FOR METHODIST MEN, BOTH WITH A CAPITAL "M" AND A SMALL "m". I THANK HIM FOR MY FRIEND BOBBY GALE, I THANK HIM FOR ALL THE WORK PROJECT GUYS AT

FUMC IN WARNER ROBINS, I THANK HIM FOR THOSE THAT SERVE THE LORD WITH OTHER TALENTS AND ENERGIES, I THANK HIM FOR MY FRIENDS BOBBY GALE, AND TOMMY VEAL, AND FOR THE INCREDIBLE FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY WITH MEN OF FAITH WHO ARE PUTTING THEIR LIVES BACK TOGETHER AFTER GREAT PERIODS OF DARKNESS AND SELF DESTRUCTION, AND I THANK THE LORD FOR A GROUP OF MEN THAT ALLOW ME TO GROW INTELLECTUALLY IN MY FAITH.

YOU KNOW GUYS, IT'S LIKE I SAID UP FRONT, I THANK EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU, FOR YOU HAVE ALL BEEN SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTORS TO MY FAITH JOURNEY. THANK YOU FOR GETTING IN MY WAY AND PLEASE ALLOW ME TO KEEP STUMPLING OVER AND BUMPING INTO YOU. LET US PRAY.

FATHER GOD I AM SO BLESSED BY THE MEN IN THIS ROOM AND THE MEN OF FAITH THAT YOU HAVE PLACED IN MY PATH ON THIS LIFE'S JOURNEY THAT YOU HAVE GIVEN TO ME. HELP US ALL TO FEEL YOUR PRESENCE AND TO SHARE IT WITH OTHERS. SELDOM DO WE REALIZE HOW OUR PRESENCE AND OUR INTERACTIONS TOUCH OTHERS. WE PRAY THAT AS WE GO FROM THIS PLACE THIS EVENING WE WILL BE MORE ALERT AND CARING FOR THOSE WITH WHOM WE COME IN CONTACT, FOR WE ARE THE WITNESS AND THE EXAMPLE OF THE LOVE THAT YOU HAVE FOR ALL MEN. HELP US WITNESS TO THAT LOVE THAT ALL MEN MIGHT BE ENCOURAGED TO KNOW YOU, AND THROUGH KNOWING YOU FIND THE BLESSINGS OF LIFE THAT COME FROM SERVING YOU. THIS WE ASK IN THE NAME OF OUR BLESSED SAVIOR. AMEN

