

# The Gathering Net

Dear Saints,

Well, I believe this will be one of the most difficult newsletters I've ever written. I am about to share the most troublesome season I've gone through in my life. I know that may sound dramatic and exaggerated; but trust me, on my part, it's not. I also

want to preface this by hoping my word and testimony will not stumble or offend any of you. I do believe the Holy Spirit is directing me to lay myself out and be vulnerable before you. Please, understand that as I am being candid and honest with you that in no way am I setting myself apart as being someone special who has been going through something that others may not have experienced. My intention is not to measure or compare my struggle with anyone else's difficulties or grave traumas of this life. I do have to admit to you though, that as difficult and painful as my three years were in North Carolina during the early 90's, including the death of our son, Shawn...there is something very deep and disturbing regarding *this* season of perplexity and hopelessness.

## The Dark Night of the Soul in the Back Side of the Desert

Let me start by saying that all of my life since I was a child; (I am sorry if some of you do not understand this) I have always been conscious of God and His presence. In fact I truly met Jesus at seven years old in 1952 when I received my first communion. My teacher and Catholic nun, Sister Dolerata told me how Jesus died for my sins and I could ask Him into my heart as Savior and Lord. I believed it. I prayed for His forgiveness of my sins and as He chose me and took residence in my life I became 'born again.' That moment there in the church in Pittsburgh is as real to me today as it was back then. Obviously, I grew and built a relationship with Jesus over the years. But believe me from the time I was fifteen until my thirtieth year I had some very rocky and carnal seasons. In 1965 I was introduced to the Holy Spirit, but it wasn't until 1975 while Elaine and I were in the Philippines that I was baptized with the Holy Spirit and

my walk with God took on a whole new measure of sanctification, joy, gifts, power, and peace. Why am I telling you this since many of you have heard this before? Because I can honestly say that with the great foundation of faith and relationship with the Lord I have had all my life....I never thought I could have gone through this "Dark Night of the Soul," a season of great anger, frustration, doubt, confusion, perplexity, hopelessness, despair, and mental and emotional

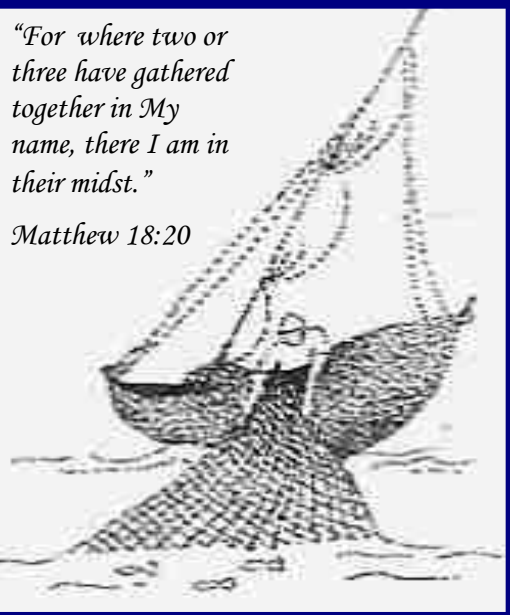
**GREAT ANGER**

death. I know those are a lot of superlatives and sound like exaggerations, BUT I believe that's what I experienced day after day for months. You may ask, "What triggered this? How could this happen?" Well, to the best of my recollection, I was seeking to study the attributes of God at a greater depth than ever before, looking at some of the ways He dealt with people and events in the Bible. It was like there was a side of God I never grasped or understood about the way He handled things. Now hold on....please don't judge what I am saying about God before I finish this writing. Some of my comments may sound blasphemous but if anyone truly knows me, they know I have had a solid fear and reverence of God and that I very seldom question His thoughts, ways, or actions. You see, I believe what has taken place through these months

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*"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst."*

Matthew 18:20



## “The Dark Night of the Soul ...” continues...

has been a whole new look into my soul (mind, will and emotion) and my flesh. Saints, God has created me as a “relater,” one who very much loves and enjoys that part of my soul; feeling emotions with God and others. The positive side of this is my experiencing a very real and tangible presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Through all my years of struggles, sin, disobedience, impatience, anger, etc. I was still aware of His presence. I also knew God gave me a good mind/intellect where I can study His word and read the writings of others and get, by His grace and unction, wonderful revelation and understanding about Him and others. I count this as nothing but God’s sheer mercy and grace; a life walking with God. But all of a sudden in early October as I was contemplating and musing over God’s sovereignty and His ways, unconsciously I started to become miffed and offended toward Him. It must have been building inside of me. This reaction was very foreign to me. As most of you know I have read Bible stories and the scriptures for years and it seems like God dealt with the situations harshly and oh “so indiscriminately.” Wow! I can’t believe that I just said that. This is foreign thinking to me. I also started to become more angry and impatient with things I normally wouldn’t. My mind was bom-

**HOPELESSNESS** barded with thoughts, doubts and imaginings I never had before. This included curse words and foul language that I wrestled with mentally but would never have spoken aloud. In April 1964, the Holy Spirit delivered me from using foul language and I haven’t been tempted in that area again. I am not bragging; believe me, I have other sins and temptations to deal with. **Read Hebrew 12:1.** The more all of this was going on in my head, the less I felt His intimacy and presence. No matter how much I failed in the past, I could always confess, repent, and crawl right into His lap and be loved up on by my Papa. I no longer experienced this with Him. Saints, it was dark, hopeless, despairing. For the first time ever I even questioned my relationship, sonship, and eternal security. I thought how can someone, **DESPAIR** who is a child of God, have these evil thoughts. Oh, it’s such a scary place, having this iniquity raising up in me daily and not being able to be sensing His presence. For the first time in my life I felt totally forsaken. I received a whole new insight into what it must feel like for an unbeliever going to hell. I was not able to contrive or conjure up any strength within myself. John 15:5 This included my “spirit man.” No matter how bleak things would be in life, I had always been able to draw on my “spirit man.” Not this time. If I tried worshiping in song, which has always been a rem-

edy for me, there was nothing; no feeling, no tears, just death. Then I just knew I could go to the Logos, His written word; it would always minister to me. Again, nothing, no life at all in them! Finally, I felt I could go to Him personally. You know, the Rhema, conversational dialogue with

Him. It had always worked. Again, there was nothing but silence. I know this sounds crazy but at times I just wanted to throw myself down on the floor. I was nauseated and felt like vomiting. It was sickening. All these thoughts and ideas I have had **FRUSTRATION** concerning His ways, I realize I have been impugning His nature or reputation. Even in the midst of this stupid and evil assault on God, the majority of time that I was tempted in so many areas, such as lust, cheating, anger, jealousy; I normally would not give in and succumb to this assault. Amazingly, I did not desire to sin. I now understand more and cry out the verse, “**deliver me from evil**” for I could not sense the power to do it on my own.... Duh! Surprisingly, my moral compass stayed in tact.

Now as I start bringing this to a close, I would like **RELIEF** to share where I started to get some relief and possibly why God permitted this to happen to me.

Obviously, I learned through the years that to go back to God’s word is the safest place to be. As I stated before, even though there seemed to be no life in them, my feeler and thinker were distorted or shut down. I still obeyed and quoted, “**His ways and thoughts are not mine, and far above my understanding,**” **Isaiah 55:8-10.** Also I kept repeating, **II Cor. 10:5, “Casting down every speculation, imagination, and lofty thing that comes against the knowledge of God and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”** Regarding the question of my current relationship and not being forsaken by Him, I kept saying aloud, “**Nothing shall separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus,**” **Romans 8:35-39.** Seriously, Saints, I still did not get any

**GOD’S WORD** warm fuzzies or relief, but I believe the Word ‘kept me.’ Finally one Wednesday as I was doing my “watchman assignment” praying around Montgomery, I usually put the Chuck Girard CD, Spirit Wind on while I am traveling the 50 mile prayer time around the gates of the city. Mind you, I was doing this strictly out of obedience because there was **OBEDIENCE** no feeling or desire or joy. Normally, I am able to tap into my ‘joy tank’ freely. I did not experience any true joy during this season (including Christmas; some happiness but not joy.) In fact for a long time I did not share any of this with my family members or close friends, etc. And surprisingly, most people could not tell my internal turmoil by my external demeanor. Through God’s grace I

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was able to preach, teach, and minister - not in hypocrisy, but out of His gifting and truth so that others might benefit. **Romans 11:29 state that His gifts in me are not mine but his, and they are irrevocable and are for others benefit and edification not mine.** So, as the Lord used Balaam's donkey in Numbers 22:28, so He can use me even in my fleshly and destitute state. This in no way condones or blesses any of our disobedience or ungodly attitudes.

Now, I want to go back to the time in the truck with the CD "Spirit Wind." As I was sitting at the 'southern gate' frustrated with the lifelessness in me. I started screaming out to the Lord in agony, "Everything I have ever experienced or tasted concerning You, came through Your mercy and grace; none from me. Please Lord, intervene and invade my life with **Your Life** even though I have accused you and slandered you with my thoughts. I don't in any way deserve you

**CRIES FOR MERCY**

to bless me, but as your servant Job cried out, I am so desperate for some kind of touch from you. You said those who seek You shall find You. Even as the saints in Psalm 107 cried out to You and You delivered them, please Lord, just a drop of living water. Have mercy on me, an earthen and cracked vessel. " Again ...silence....then all of a sudden I saw as it were, an IV put into my arm. I saw a liquid bag full of grace next to me and as I looked below the bag, the regulator of the flow was dispensing one drop of life into me at a time. For the first time in months, I had hope of coming out of a soulish and spiritual stupor; one drop at a time. I did not shout or leap over walls, but tears began flowing freely from my eyes. Slowly, but surely since that day, I am being restored, particularly in my mind to a semblance of life. I'm still in the midst of the battle, but much healthier now than the previous state of death.

**PRAISE**

I have been asked by a couple of saints, "What started all of this? What door did you allow to be open in your soul/flesh?" I think part of it was seeing a side of God that I never saw before, and I took offense because I didn't like it. Woe is me! That opened the door for the demonic to have more access to me and injected many ungodly doubts and thoughts. I believe the Holy Spirit has revealed to me that, yes, we serve a God who is gracious, slow to anger, abundant in loving kindness and truth, full of mercy, truth, and grace, and love. But, that is only some of His attributes. He is also a God of justice, holiness, hates sin, and is perfect in all His ways. So what we think of Him is not always accurate. In fact we humans like to bring Him down to our level of understanding, thinking, feeling and experience rather than being taken up to His. We kind of see him as a jolly, lovable, easy going Santa Claus. The world needs a Santa Claus because they don't know Jesus. When a person recognizes Jesus as Lord and Savior; then Santa Clause becomes the myth that he is. Santa has become the world's surrogate; a counterfeit provider and gift giver which is primarily reserved only for God. Without realizing it, we want to form God into

our framework rather than acknowledge who He really is.

But Father God allowed me to experience this season in my life for several reasons.

**First**, my attitude toward God and my disobedience in certain areas of my walk needed to be disciplined for God's Glory and my benefit, because I am His and He loves me. See Hebrews 12:5-11 below.

**Secondly**, I have taught and am very aware of the doctrine of **Body** (flesh), **Soul** (mind, will, emotion) and **Spirit**. I have known not to trust my flesh or feelings or thoughts, but God showed me at a whole new level, that apart from His Grace, the flesh and soul cannot be trusted at all! They can deceive and betray you. Ultimately, true faith has nothing to do with feeling or thinking!

**Thirdly**, I share with and minister to other pastors, leaders and saints who may have gone through this type of situation with little or no understanding. Hopefully, I will be able to help them process what they have gone through and help others who might have similar experiences in the future.

None of us should compare the depth or breath of each others experiences but we are to help encourage and support one another in need.

As I have become so transparent with you through this newsletter, I thank you for your patience in its length. I also ask that you might pray for me as God continues to create in me a clean heart and re-new His Right Spirit in me.

**PRAYERS OF OTHERS**

Still desperate for His touch and presence,

*Carmen*

Hebrews 12:5-11

<sup>5</sup> "My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you and don't be discouraged when he corrects you.

<sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children."

<sup>7</sup>As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who was never disciplined?<sup>8</sup>If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children after all.<sup>9</sup>Since we respect our earthly fathers who disciplined us, should we not all the more cheerfully submit to the discipline of our heavenly Father and live forever?

<sup>10</sup>For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always right and good for us because it means we will share in his holiness!<sup>11</sup>No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

# The Message Board



## **Central Alabama Prayer Leaders' Network**

**Invites you to their next  
Quarterly Training meeting!**

**When: Saturday, February 25, 2006**

**Time: 8:30 Continental Breakfast**

**9:00—1:30 Teaching and Prayer**

**Where: Greenwood Missionary Baptist,  
Tuskegee, Alabama**

**Directions: I-85 N to Exit 32 Tuskegee/Franklin.**

**Go right on Tuskegee-Franklin Rd. Go 2.7 miles.**

**Bear left onto Washington Ave. Go 2.4 miles.**

**Address: 1510 Washington Ave.**

**Tentative Topic:**

**How Your Prayers Can Change History**

**Wallbuilders  
Presents...**

**David Barton Seminar  
Understanding America's  
Heritage**

**At Frazer UMC**

**(334) 272-8622**

**February 6, 7-9pm**

**"Understanding America's Godly  
Heritage"**

**February 7, 9am-3pm**

**"Four Centuries of American Edu-  
cation"**

**"The Role of Pastors and Chris-  
tians in Civil Government"**

**"America's Heritage"**

**Register at Frazer or on-line at  
[www.frazerumc.org](http://www.frazerumc.org).**

# CARMEN'S CALENDAR

## What has he been doing?

Sunday, January 15	Led Snowdown Baptist Men's Bible Study
Wednesday, January 18	Led Servant Leader Team and John 17
Friday, January 20	Hosted show on TV-45

## What is yet to come?

Mon.-Tues. Jan. 23-4	Nashville, TN for Chuck Pierce's National Leaders' Meeting
Wed. Jan. 25 1:00 PM	Valley Christian/Huntsville, AL Christian Civics Class Prayer Walk Downtown
Thurs. Jan. 26 Noon	Beasley/Allen Law Firm Bible Study
Wed. Feb. 1, 8:15-11:15	Canaan Land Men's Bible Study
Wed. Feb. 15 10:00—11:30	Servant Leader Team Meeting (Frazer)
Wed. Feb. 15 11:30—1:00	John 17 Pastors' Fellowship (Frazer)
Thurs. Feb. 23 Noon	Beasley/Allen Law Firm Bible Study
Sat. Feb. 25 9:00—1:30	CAPLN Regional Prayer Workshop in Tuskegee, AL

Dear Ones, Reading Carmen's article reminds me of a book which former pastor Terry Teykl wrote several years back entitled *Preyed On or Prayed For*. The premise is that either our pastors and spiritual leaders must be prayed for by those who receive from them or they will be preyed on by the enemy and any he can enlist to help in tempting them, discouraging them or destroying them in any way. Personally, I am convicted to renew my commitment to pray faithfully for my pastors as well as for Carmen and Elaine and their ministry to our city and beyond. A recent article in *Central Alabama Christian Family Magazine* called Carmen "The Pastor's Pastor" and rightly so. If our pastors need prayer, how much more the one who is trying to minister to them. If you pray for *The Gathering* regularly, please email Carmen and let him know. If you feel called to organize prayer cover for this ministry we would love to hear from you TODAY! Thank you for all prayers you have invested in God's kingdom! He moves through the prayers of His people!

Jacque Lunsford, Editor

[For prayer resources visit Terry Teykl's website at [www.renewalministries.com](http://www.renewalministries.com).]

**"THE GATHERING" IS A MINISTRY OF UNITY AND RECONCILIATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST**

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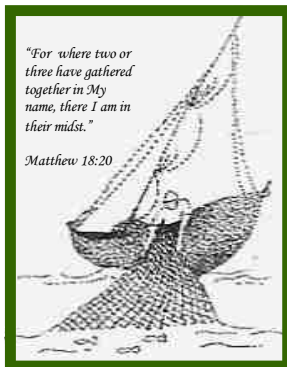
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### **the prayer closet - "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17**

Lord, we offer these prayers for Carmen and Elaine and ***The Gathering Ministry***, according to Your Word and Your Will...

- \* May their love (for each other and all the world) abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that they may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, - - to the glory and praise of God. (See Phil. 1:9-11 NIV)
- \* May You give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that they may know You better. I pray also that the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened in order that they may know the hope to which You have called them, the riches of Your glorious inheritance in the saints, and Your incomparably great power for us who believe. (See Eph. 1:5-21 NIV)
- \* My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. (Quoting Jesus' prayer in John 17:15 NIV)
- \* We pray that Carmen and Elaine may enjoy good health and that all may go well with them, even as their souls are getting along well. (See 3 John 1:2 NIV)
- \* Thank you that they can do everything through Him who gives them strength. Lord, please supply all their needs according to Your glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (See Phil. 4:13,19)