

April-May 2005

The Gathering Net - 2005

Pastor Carmen's Ministry Reports

Dateline: March, 2005 God's Blessings in Florida

Dear Saints,

Well, I know it has been a while since you have heard from us, but it has been a jam packed couple of months. In March, I went to the **Transformation Tampa Bay Seminar**. Guest speakers were Doug Stringer from Houston, Texas and George Otis, Jr. of the Sentinel Group and author/director of the four Transformation Videos. I met George ten years ago and have been involved with his ministry in different parts of the world. When we met this past month in Tampa, Florida, he asked if I could stay over an extra day and be available to attend an all day consultation of city leaders from around the country in Orlando, Florida. I had to make some adjustments in my schedule but the Lord opened the door for me to attend and loosely represent the southern region of the United States. I am so grateful to have received this invitation because of the wealth of fresh revelation and strategies, along with the fellowship we all enjoyed that day. I came away reignited for the transformation of Montgomery and this country!

Now I would like to share some things that George Otis expressed to us at the consultation and meeting. I could tell what he was about to say was fresh out of the oven and burning in his heart. I am now going to quote some of his nuggets from the Holy Spirit.

He said, "**Everyone's agenda and schedule has become a major distraction.**"

Many attend meetings and church services for a while then their attendance steadily decreases. Their desire has waned and therefore their commitment was lessened. A move to the transformation of a city is NOT dependent on large numbers, great churches or high profile leaders. In most part the cities being transformed around the world, none of which is in America, started out with twelve or less believers who were sold out to God in prayer, fasting, and hungry for His presence!

George said, "**There seems to be in the hearts of these saints an abandonment to God with great expectation of what He's going to do!**"

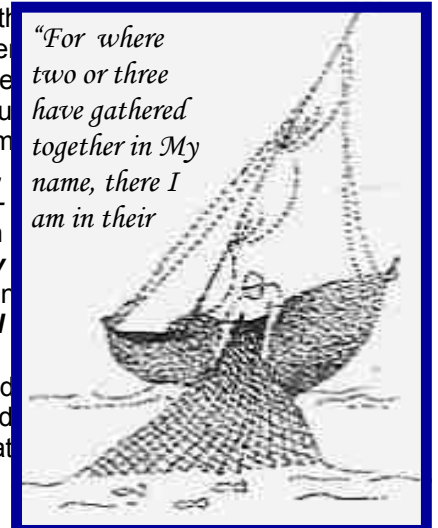
I think this is best described in Rhonda Hughey's book **DESPERATE FOR HIS PRESENCE**. She attended the consultation in Orlando and gave some of us a free copy of this book. It is gold to me! (See page 2 for an excerpt of her book.)

Is this not where we all want to be? In closing I want to sum it up with some of my feelings and a scripture that is close to my heart and end with a prayer that George prayed for us. First, we try so hard to do it God's way, and become like Jesus. We get so caught up in our sanctification that it really becomes about us and not Him. Saints, this is all about the Lord and the things that Glorify Him not us. Jesus said to his disciples in John 5:39-40 "**You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.**" Then in **John 6:67** "**Jesus said therefore to the twelve, You do not want to go away also, do you?**" Simon Peter really got it correct this time when he answered in verse 68. "**Lord, to whom shall we go? YOU have the words of eternal LIFE.**"

So, therefore saints let us yield ourselves afresh to His schedule and agenda. Let us abandon ourselves to Him with this prayer that George prayed over us at the conference. "Lord, stimulate in me the appetite for those things that attract your presence and favor for us and our city. In Jesus' name. Amen"

Grateful that we are sojourning together, *Carmen*

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



Desperate for His Presence

By Rhonda Hughey (Excerpts)

A widespread cry is growing in the hearts of believers for a real, tangible encounter with God. They want, like Moses, to see Him face-to-face. They don't want only to read about Him, talk about Him, and pay homage to Him on Sunday mornings. This strong undercurrent in our nation manifest itself as a holy dissatisfaction with the status quo of the institutional church. Many people who have attended church faithfully for years are now wandering around disconnected from any collective expression of the body of Christ. As mentioned in the Introduction, researcher George Barna estimates that more than ten million born-again believers in the United States are now considered "unchurched." People have become disillusioned and jaded; many are unwilling to return to the local church in its current condition.

What are people longing for? I believe it's the presence of God in the midst of His people, the manifestation of His nearness, and an awareness of His love that is both real and relevant. We desperately need the tangible presence of Jesus both in the church and in our communities!

How do we gauge whether or not His presence is among us? Do we simply *assume He is present*? This is a fair question. *How do we know?*

Should we even ask the question? I'm not referring to the omnipresence of God but to His *manifest* presence. Do we believe Jesus is present simply because we wish Him to be there? Or is there discernible evidence when He is present and when He is absent?

God is looking for people with a heart like David, who declared, "*One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.*" (Psalm 27:4)

People who are desperate for God's presence move beyond convenience and personal comfort. They have gotten hold of something in their spirit, and they cannot let go. For them, Jesus is not a religious concept—He is reality. The very fact that Jesus came to live among us is a clear example of His desire to be with us in a way that we can both understand and pursue.

In Revelation 3:18 Jesus said, "That we can buy gold from Him, refined by fire." How do we buy this gold from Jesus? What type of currency allows us to buy pure gold in exchange for our "wretched" condition? The answer is hunger. Desperate hunger is the currency of heaven!

Hunger is what causes us to empty ourselves of compromise and create a holy dissatisfaction that drives us to our knees and makes us depend on God.

Dateline:
April, 2005
God's Speaking
in St. Louis...

For three days in April, Elaine and I went with Jan Niel, Jacque Lunsford, and Gwen Bradley from Central Alabama Prayer Leaders' Network, and our friends Paul and Sue Camp from Fairbanks, Alaska, to a **City Reacher's Roundtable in St. Louis, Missouri**. Over 120 delegates from around the country came to share, testify, teach and hear wonderful deeds the Lord is doing in different cities throughout the country. Frankly, it was one of the most intense and busy schedules I have ever attended, starting at 7:00 in the morning until almost ten in the evening. It was non-stop discussion and strategies given, even as we sat around our tables for meals. It was like a big smorgasbord of information as we all chose different roundtables in order to get as much knowledge as we could. It was very taxing on our bodies, but we arrived home full of hope and excitement as we re-engage in the transformation of our city.

Please pray as we share this info with others and seek God's direction in application for Montgomery!

THE DIVINE APPOINTMENT

St. Louis, Missouri

I do have one precious testimony of a divine appointment during the City Reacher's Conference. As we were changing sessions I took a walk outside to clear my head and get some fresh air. As I leaned against the building a young man in his early twenties caught my eye. He was an employee of the city maintenance department and was sweeping the gutters and picking up trash. The Holy Spirit directed me to go and talk to him. This was truly a divine set up. As I approached him, he looked up and saw me coming toward him. Our eyes connected and I saw right into the young man's heart. I asked him how he was doing, and gently inquired if he knew the Lord.

He said yes, but that he was very down and depressed. He shared how he felt like he was a failure in life and was not fulfilling his destiny. (my words)

I then expressed how much the Lord loved him; that as he was faithful in doing the small mundane things in life with a humble and grateful attitude, the Lord would promote him to his calling in life. I continued to tell him what the Lord showed me about his heart and character and how the Lord was pleased with him. He really did have a gentle, intelligent strength about him and I was speaking to that seed in his life. I then asked him his name, which was Nelson. I took my hand and touched his shoulder and "heart." I blessed him and told him I would continue to pray for him, that I was excited about his future with the Lord. Nelson's whole countenance changed and lit up. As we said good-bye and I looked back, he went back to his work with a new beat in his step. I went back into the building thanking the Lord for the privilege of loving up on one of His.



The St. Louis Travelers: Paul, Jacque, Elaine, Sue, Carmen and Jan. Gwen was smart enough to fly but missed a lot of fun in the van.

Where Has Carmen Been Serving?

- * Every Wednesday night at 6:30 Carmen has been teaching the book of Romans at Open Door Church.
- * April 8 Frazer Prayer Banquet (or Was It?)
- * April 10-13 St. Louis City Roundtable Conference
- * April 14 Call to Life Worship Center Greenville, AL.
- * April 20 Servant Leadership Team Meeting and John 17 Pastor's Luncheon
- * April 22 Solemn Assembly at His Vessel Ministry
- * April 27—May 3 6:30 AM Jericho March
- * April 29 Host "Praise the Lord" TBN Channel 45
- * May 3 Montgomery Reconciliation "ONE" meeting at First Baptist Church
- * May 4 Annual Mayor Prayer Breakfast
- * May 5 The National Day of Prayer at State Capitol Steps
- * May 8 Ministered "Missions Sunday" at Open Door Church
- * May 18 Servant Leadership Team and John 17 Pastor's Luncheon
- * May 18 His Vessel's Watchman Prayer Walk

What Is Still to Come????

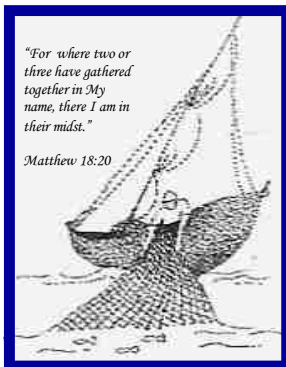
- * Thursday, May 26 12:00-1:00 Bible Study at Beasley Allen Law Firm
- * Sunday, May 29 7:00 AM Jubilee Celebration Sunrise Service at Old Amphitheater at Riverfront Park
- * Sunday, May 29 3:30 PM Word of Life Church, Anniversary Celebration
- * Tuesday, May 31 7:00 AM Supreme Court Bible Study
- * Thursday, June 2, Teaching at Caanan Land Boys' Ranch
- * Sunday, June 5, Preaching at Open Door Church
- * Wednesday, June 15, 10:30 AM Servant Leader Team at Aldersgate UMC
- * Wednesday, June 15, 11:30 AM John 17 Pastor's Fellowship at Aldersgate UMC
- * Thursday, June 23 12:00—1:00 Bible Study at Beasley Allen Law Firm
- * June TBA Preaching at Vineyard Church

THE GATHERING IS A MINISTRY OF UNITY AND RECONCILIATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST!

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the prayer closet - "We are ever giving thanks to God for all of you, continually mentioning [you when engaged] in our prayers, recalling unceasingly before our God and Father your work energized by faith and service motivated by love, and unwavering hope in (the return of) our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah." 1 Thess. 1:2-3

Praise and Glory to God! Our hearts are overflowing with the blessings of the Lord!

***The Lord took care of Carmen and Elaine while they were apart,
Elaine ministering to her Mom and Carmen ministering all over the place.
The Lord provided Carmen a laptop computer through one of His precious servants and is
providing voice recognition software to help him write his book.***

God imparted fresh teaching and renewed vision at:

***Transformation Tampa Bay
City Leaders' Consultation in Orlando
St. Louis City Reacher's Roundtable***

God's presence was felt during all of the following:

***Ministry in various churches and Bible studies
The Solemn Assembly preceding the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast
The Joshua Marches preceding the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast
The Mayor's Prayer Breakfast
The National Day of Prayer Service on the Capitol Steps
The Special Night of "Surprise" for Carmen and Elaine***

***Thank you for praying!
From Jacque Lunsford, Editor***