



THE ENCOURAGER

Let us never forget



“Let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the day approaching.”
Hebrews 10:25

May/ June 2008

President/Missionary: Gay Reynolds
Editor: Sue Reynolds

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I was involved in an organized church until I was 29 years old. I never read the Bible, was sporadic in attendance to mass — only attending when I needed something or was going through a trial — never gave Christ much thought, and felt certain I was a good person. After all, I was an Eagle Scout, a firefighter, and I helped people when I could. I figured that was good enough to get me to heaven.

In reality, I was a sinner without salvation. Unaware that the Lord was leading me to the place He wanted me; I experienced some tough times and struggled with consequences from a lot of bad choices and sins. Still, I never thought I wouldn't make it to heaven based on my own actions (**Acts 4:9-12, Pr. 14:14**). I acquired many material things that I thought would make me happy. What more could a single guy have? Yet, something was missing, but I couldn't put my finger on it. I was walking in darkness and sadness. I tried to deal with my loneliness in a sinful manner and learned that in the darkness your eyes adjust and fool you into thinking you can see on your own.

My lifelong ambition was to become a firefighter. After graduating from high school in 1994, I became a volunteer firefighter (live-in) in Rockville, MD while attending Montgomery College. After graduating and spending one semester continuing my education, I was hired by the City of Durham (NC) Fire Department in 1997 graduating from Academy 10. I spent six years there and was promoted to driver as well as instructing at the academy. Rough times resulted because of my sinful life, but I loved my job as a firefighter and had a great career with wonderful people. Still something was missing and I felt my grip beginning to slip. In August 2002 while still living in darkness, I accepted a job with the Montgomery County, MD Department of Fire Services. Suddenly I was spinning and was slipping into despair. I felt lost, confused, and hopeless. I felt a strong pull towards home and moved back to Connecticut in 2002 without a job. I'd given up on myself (looking back I know the Lord was calling me to Him).

In Central Connecticut while I worked for a commercial ambulance service, I missed being a firefighter and thought I'd thrown away my dream. I had no faith. I began to spiral into despair and sin even more. I searched for truth in the world, never aware that truth can only be found in Jesus. I'd pulled away from God, but He was not through with me. He was softening my heart.

During a transport to a dialysis facility I was attracted to Kim, a patient care tech that worked in the unit. My partner, tired of me talking about her, got her number for me. I called her and we began dating that week. A few weeks later, after rating third on the list, I was hired by the

Meet A Member



Mike Clark
City of Meriden (CT) Fire Dept.
Truck 1 (shamrock777@sbcglobal.net)

City of Meriden (CT) Fire Department. Kim invited me to her Bible based church. I went, but resisted hearing the gospel of Christ. I thought my “religion” and my works were the only way to God. A year and a half later Kim and I became unequally yoked, (**2 Cor. 6: 14**). My wife had faith that the Lord would open my heart and prayed without ceasing for my conviction of my sins and that I would see the need for a Savior. I still felt hollow, torn, and empty. I went to Kim's church as well as my own. A mural over the altar at my former church of Christ being taken off the cross drew my attention and brought tears to my eyes on several occasions. I'd think of it for days after mass. Still I did things according to my own will and not God's. As God continued drawing me nearer to Calvary, I listened more (**Romans 10:17**), was introduced to **John 3:16-18**, and read that whoever believes in Jesus will have everlasting life. I always believed in Jesus, but not in the way God commands in His Word. I didn't have that saving faith (**Acts 3:16**). I felt convicted of sin as time went on, and I now know the Lord was calling me

to salvation. My heart softened to the Gospel of Christ the more I read and the more I heard. I pondered God's divine Word in **John 3:16** as well as a few other verses in scripture. Shortly after being introduced to some of the Gospel of Christ, I felt a yearning to hear more.

In May of 2005, while vacationing in Bar Harbor, Maine, my sin became vivid to me. I wrestled day and night. In agony, I saw what a wretch I was. Then, on a side trip to Cadillac Mountain in Acadia National Park, while watching an indescribably beautiful sunrise, I felt an amazing peace come upon me. I felt no worries for the first time in my life. I stared at the sun as it crested the Atlantic Ocean's horizon and felt someone staring back at me. Words can't do justice to the feeling the Lord put on my heart that morning. I never felt anything like it. I thought of that picture of Christ from church. I was so moved by the beauty of God's creation. What an incredible sunrise. This was my fall into the arms of Christ. That morning I asked the Lord to forgive my sins and thought of Him dying on the cross for me. Just knowing that Christ died on the cross for me, a wretched sinner, brought me to tears. He died for my sins, and I'd gone 29 years not even acknowledging that. I was so blind to my sin while living in darkness. His blood washed away our sins, and I finally realized that this is what was missing in my life. Jesus spoke to me through something I love and that is nature, God's own creation.

Change came gradually. I attended my wife's church, left

Fellowship of Christian Firefighters
INTERNATIONAL

my former faith behind despite my family's objections, and felt a yearning for more of God's Word. I still felt like my old self in many ways and experienced outbursts of anger when I stubbed my toe or miss-cut a piece of molding. I let little things get to me in a big way. My carnal and spiritual man continually battled, but as I read the Bible for the first time I was comforted knowing "that He who had begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6b). I attended church functions, became convicted about the music and movies I used for entertainment, and eliminated things that took me away from the Lord especially pornography. I felt convicted about many things I'd previously felt were harmless fun. I know I'll never be without sin (Romans 3:23), but the Lord reveals my sin to me daily and is constantly changing me. I praise God for sacrificing His life for me, and praise God He is risen!

Isaiah 1:18 says, "Though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow." I thought my works were enough to get me to heaven, but I now know that is false (Ephesians 2:8-9). Without Christ I would be condemned (John 3:18). My ticket to heaven is because of His redeeming grace and suffering and dying to take away our sins

My heart burst with love that morning on the mountain as I prayed for forgiveness (1John 1:9). That was the most important moment of my life and as a result, on January 15, 2006 I was baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:19-20). On that same snowy morning my loving wife told me we were going to have a child (something we'd been praying for together).

God now comforts me and carries me through the good and the not so good times. I'm not immune to troubles and struggle. The difference in my new life with Christ is that I know that no matter what happens, Jesus will carry me through and when I am weak I am strong (see 2 Cor. 12:9-10). He guides my steps, dwells in my heart, reveals my sins, and even if I lack in faith or curse my enemies, He still loves me. My walk is a constant battle between the spirit and the flesh, but I know the work the Lord is doing my life will endure until He calls me home.

Accepting Christ was like being in a dark, cold, lonely room and someone comes in and lights a warm fire and turns on the light. Jesus brightens up my life and strengthens me. He keeps me warm in such a cold world. Like the hymn says, "He walks with me and He talks with me." I equate my life before accepting Christ to standing under a street light and looking out into the darkness. I can't see my past all that well, but I can tell you I never want to go back to my old life without Christ. The change only the Lord makes is nothing short of a miracle. Amazing Grace!

Kim and I have been married for three years. She is a faithful and loving wife — a true blessing to have as my helper on this earth (Gen 2:18). Our son Jonah is one and our daughter Leah Elizabeth Clark was born on December 23rd, 2007.

The Lord has placed us in our second year of youth ministry at our chapel ("Youth for Christ") as well as teaching Vacation Bible School the past two years. What a joy and privilege it is to worship the Lord through ministry and to share the Gospel with many who are lost and do not know the way.

I still struggle with my testimony and the way I say things especially in the firehouse, but I know from His word that He will continue to change me as I learn His word and become more obedient to Him (Proverbs 3:5-8). He is truly a loving and merciful God to send His only Son to die for us on the Tree at Calvary. And though I am a sinner He still loves me. What a Savior! What grace! "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God-through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but walk according to the Spirit." (Romans 7:24-8:1) Oh that Amazing Grace, a debt I could never repay. I thank God that my wife and I and our children, (I have faith they will know the Lord someday too) will grow in faith and walk together with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I'll end my joyous with a short poem by Charles Spurgeon that describes that morning I was embraced in the arms of the Lord.

Grace comes into the soul, as the morning sun into the world.

First a dawning, then a light,

and at last the sun in his full and excellent brightness.

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International Board and Directors

Present at 2008 Annual Meeting

Directors: Dennis Foshe: MO; Tye Prange: TX; Intern'l Board: Lee Callahan
Russ Stammer, Dan Clegg, Ken Hall, Craig Duck, Gay and Sue

Missionary Musings

Gay Reynolds

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What a super week we had at FDIC in Indianapolis! The booth was open from Wednesday at 8 a.m. until Saturday at noon. It seemed like we had people waiting for us to open, and still at the booth at

closing. We praise the Lord for the interest in serving Him that was shown during the week.

On Wednesday night we were able to show a preview of the movie "FIREPROOF." Not just some selected parts, but the complete movie (with some final editing still to be done). The movie is awesome — I recommend it too you highly. Take some friends — not necessarily fire fighters — and see how it could impact your lives. One firefighter said he had to leave — it was his marriage on display. But, he did come to the booth Thursday morning!

Oh yea, it is a movie for all couples or soon to be couples.

Thursday night we held our International Board Meeting. We had 22 in attendance. Some were part of the board, some were area directors, and some were interested members. All were welcomed. What a time of sharing what God is doing in their areas, and what He will be doing! We were able to hear about several foreign ministries that FCFI is a part of including a report and slide presentation for Steve Parson's trip to Malawi, Africa and Scott Pruiksmas' trip to China. Among the regional reports was the presentation of a format for a Blue and White Service (available to all of you just for the asking), a presentation on the New Jersey Chaplains program and FDNY outreach, and an overview CD of FCFI ministries that can be used for presentations (also available to all of you just for the asking).

As we listened to what the Lord will be doing in the future with His willing servants and what has been accomplished our hearts were filled with praise. It seemed the night went way too fast to comprehend all that was being shared. We do know that the God we serve is truly on the move in the fire service! Agenda ideas are already being presented for next year's meeting. High on the list is a discussion of FCFI's future and future leadership. Your ideas are encouraged, needed, and welcomed. Where do you see your self in the future leadership of FCFI? What visions do you see for FCFI in the future. We want and need your ideas!

Friday night brought the first ever Appreciation Dinner. It was something that the board wanted to do for a while. And this was the year that He provided the time, the place, and the people. We were blessed to have around 100 people in attendance. After the dinner we went to the sanctuary for the awards presentation. Music was provided by Raul Angulo who played Sea of Blue in tribute to 9-11 and by Stan Clark and his band, Deeper Roots. We were able to present Honorary Life Memberships, Life Memberships, and Sharing the Vision awards. What a blessing it was to see many of the members that have been part of the ministry for so many years and to listen to their memories. You can

see the list of recipients on page 8 in the **Encourager**. Just know how blessed Sue and I are to be part of this God directed ministry and to serve Him with you!

One of the "surprises" of the night was a presentation to us for a vacation in Branson. To say we were "surprised" would be an understatement! We thank all that participated and assure you that we are eagerly awaiting our trip. We truly enjoy Branson, and look forward to our R&R.



Saturday morning was our "Prayer and Praise" breakfast. What a super time it was. Craig Duck was our speaker at both the dinner and the breakfast. He did a great job of sharing The Word with us. We would like to thank Slade McLendon and Sunbelt Fire (www.sunbeltfire.com) for sponsoring the breakfast and being such an integral part of our outreach.

The gatherings at FDIC at the booth, in the motel lobby, at the meetings, movie premier, dinner, and breakfast were evidence of our key verse in action: *Encouraging one Another*. Just the presence of so many who are dedicated to sharing Christ with the fire service was an encouragement to Sue and me as well as the others in attendance. We'd love to have many more join us next year. Remember, just your presence is an encouragement.

Now, some administration stuff. Please make sure we have your name, address, phone, E-mail and any thing else correct. Let us hear from you with the new(?) updated information so our records will be correct — at least correct for the immediate. If you want to be removed from the mailings, please so indicate. We want everyone that wants to receive **The Encourager** to do so, but we want to be good stewards of the Lord's money, so do not want to send it where it is not wanted. So please respond with the needed info.

If you would like to receive a color copy by E-mail instead of / or in addition to the hard copy, please let us know at fcfencourager@aol.com.

Let us know if you want to be on the prayer chain as well. What a great opportunity to be informed of needs of our members and family and to take their requests to the Lord in prayer.

God has a lot of activities in the coming months for outreach to the fire service. Two conferences (Family Camp and Couples' Conference see page 5) have been planned with you, the fire service, in mind. The goals include fellowship, refreshment, inspirational input, strengthening of marriage and family unity. Please pray about how you can be part of them. Pray, also, how you can take Christ to your area and the departments nearby. We know that God can use you if you are willing. Let us know how we can help.

May the Lord bless you as you serve Him.

Hebrews 10:25

**Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—
And all the more as you see the Day approaching.**



WELCOME: *Southeast Chapter, AL*

The president of this new chapter is Slade M. McLendon 1-800-642-8484 Ext 115; slmclendon@sunbeltfire.com. Other members are sec. / treas. Bob Wray and V.P., Matt Weaver.

Helping Others To Show His Love

The Darlington County, SC chapter helped The American Red Cross with a BOOT DRIVE fund-raiser on Easter Weekend.

Charlotte Mecklenburg, NC Ministers After 2 FF LOD Deaths

We have had the opportunity to minister to the firefighters in Salisbury, NC following the LOD death of two firefighters. Our chapter, along with Don Biggs, was encouraged by the openness to the gospel. We have been able to stay in contact with several of the firefighters since the incident. On a sad note, the local chaplains and the chaplain for the NCFFF seemed to be very hesitant to even mention Christ. The NCFFF chaplain met with me and told me that he is ecumenical, not evangelical. Unfortunately, he is trying to coordinate the training for all of the fire service chaplains in NC. Please let us know how FCFI's Chaplain's Program is progressing. There is a desperate need for training and encouragement for fire service chaplains, especially those who want to share Christ to a lost and hurting world.

Our prayer breakfasts continue to go well. Between the three shifts, we average about 30 each month. Keith Helms

Greetings from North Jersey Chapter



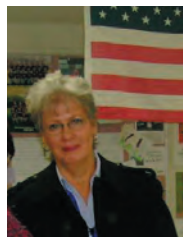
Our chapter continues to meet regularly. We celebrated Easter with a chapter Communion Breakfast at chapter president Joe Smaha's church. March 3, I had an opportunity to speak at the Cornerstone Christian Church in Wyckoff, NJ to the Boys Brigade, Stockade and Tree Climbers program. Scott Lomberk, one of our newer members, assisted. Scott is a new firefighter with the Saddle Brook, NJ Fire Department. We met Scott when I was teaching a Firefighter 1 Class on CISM. In addition to Scott's assistance Lt. Brian Hendricksen of the Wyckoff Fire Department brought a crew and an engine for the kids to check out.

We are all saddened by the news that Pastor Knecht, chaplain for the Oakland (NJ) Fire Department, is moving to a new church in Springfield, NJ. He assisted substantially in the creation of the North Jersey Chapter, provided a meeting place, a mail delivery place, and encouragement. We are thankful and blessed by his help over the past eight years and we look forward to his continued involvement in his new church home.

On a personal note, I've been appointed as the chaplain for the Oakland Fire Department. Please pray for me as I take on the spiritual leadership role for my department and for our chapter as we look to new avenues of ministry.

Following is a report from our FDNY Ministry Team. It's exciting to see how they fit in with the mission of the FCFI.

Regional Director / International Board, Russ Stammer



FDNY Ministry Team Outreach

Annette Douglass from the FCF FDNY Ministry Outreach corresponds with us regularly on this ministry's outreach.

My good friend Suzanne Hagelin and her prayer team from Seattle, WA came to New York at the end of March to once again encourage the FDNY.

With her were Stu and Brenda Reis from Lynwood, WA. They've been visiting about 3 times a year since 9/11. They pay their own expenses (airfare, lodging, etc.). Suzanne has many contacts and a long list of names in the FDNY that she prays for daily. She writes her own music and sings for them. Stu and Brenda, a loving compassionate couple, also minister to the FDNY through prayer and conversations with them. They bring the men Seattle coffee with scripture on the bag, chocolate, and cherries. They first visit firehouse that have experienced death or injury. I try to meet with them on their visits. Recently, they went to a firehouse in Queens that lost their beloved lieutenant in the line of duty. He left behind a pregnant wife and a two year old. The Queens house told her, "No one ever visits us here, we are forgotten." Please pray for more to join this ministry. Linda and I are just "two" and we cannot reach everyone. We are grateful that Eva Dobro (from Harvest Christian Fellowship) has decided to join us.

We visited was Engine 92 Ladder 44, and while most of the houses in NY are old and rundown, this house was sparkling with its shiny white tiles and brass banister (staircase). Everything was gleaming with all of their medals and a wonderful picture of their dog, Rocky (he had a medal too). The men were wonderful and insisted we eat the great pasta dish they just cooked. Suzanne knew one of the young firemen. She also knew his father who is a captain in lower Manhattan. He called his dad and said, "Dad you'll never guess who's here!" Suzanne gave them gifts and I left them the dog tags from www.shieldsofstrength.com. I received a large donation from Kenny www.athletesforChrist.com and also from Russell and Scott from NJ chapter FCF. They loved those tags and quickly put them on. On the back is Joshua 1: 9.

**HAVE I NOT COMMANDED YOU? BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS.
DO NOT BE TERRIFIED; DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED,
FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL BE WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO."**

At the end of this visit the young fireman, whose dad is a captain in lower Manhattan, looked at us as we were leaving and said, "We will never forget this visit!"

Earlier in the year, we handed out 9/11 posters given to us by artist, Jeremiah Youmans from Springfield, MO. He donated thousands to us and paid for all expenses (postage, etc). We visited another house in the Bronx that recently experienced death and injuries. One of the captains is being promoted, changing houses, and appeared sad about the change. One captain shared five terrible things that happened the previous week including a car crash which involved his oldest daughter and wife. The car was totaled but thank God they are fine! He told me that he had three daughters. I shared that I was a mother of three girls and a grandma to four granddaughters. I then asked him "how many bathrooms do you have in your house?" to which he laughed. This is a rewarding ministry and if you would like to join in the outreach to FDNY, Please contact Russ Stammer (fcfnjc@juno.com)

SHARING THE VISION PAMPHLETS

Sharing The Vision pamphlets are available for you to hand out to those you feel share the FCFI vision for the International and for your local chapter ministry. Contact us at FCFIHQ@aol.com; 1-800-322-9848

Delmarva Chapter Update

It has been a while since I gave an update on the Delmarva Chapter. I was recently hired as the EMS director for Pocomoke City and the past month for me has been very busy making that transition. We are continuing to distribute Bibles and I hope to get our first Bible study started soon. I'm still very interested in obtaining new members (it has been a slow start) and for a short time I became discouraged, but they will come in God's time, so I am leaving that to Him. God Bless. Dan Tilghman

Greetings From The Nation's Capital

Members of the Washington DC chapter have been planning and preparing for several up and coming events. The National Day of Prayer, our firefighter Memorial Day service, and Firehouse Expo are just some of the events we are looking forward to. Please pray for us as we seek to spread the Good news to the fire service. We've been praying God will start a revival within the fire service.

FIRE TRUCK

FCF's 1959 tanker is currently in Virginia getting rehabbed. We are hoping to get the word out about FCF by taking the fire truck to regional events. Thanks to members who have been volunteering their time, we are slowly beginning to see progress. We are in the process of getting some parts re-chromed, thanks the Anne Arundel chapter. If you would like to help with the expenses or equipment, please contact Craig Duck at firequacker621@aol.com.



MARRIED COUPLES CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 17-19: OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND.

We changed the dates of the Firefighters Married Couples Conference due to a conflict with the National Fallen Firefighters weekend. I apologize to those who have already made arrangements. The annual firefighters married couples conference will be held October 17-19 in Ocean City, MD. It will be held at the Princess Royale, and feature Brian Beverly as keynote speaker. You will be blessed by Brian's speaking ability as well as his music talent. Prices will remain the same: \$350.00 if paid prior to June 1 and \$375.00 after June 1. Contact Craig Duck if you have any comments or questions.

OUTREACH MINISTRY

Please pray for our outreach ministry on Friday May 16, 2008. Brian Beverly will be performing a Gospel concert in Prince Georges County, MD. We're trying to use this event to share the gospel with firefighters in the region. We are praying that firefighters will be saved, and FCF will become strong in the region. Craig W. Duck DCFD - Truck Company 15 Fellowship of Christian Firefighters - Regional Director



FCFI'S BEST KEPT SECRET
ACCORDING TO DON BIGGS
IS
THE FAMILY CAMP
JUNE 16-20, 2008

FIREFIIGHTERS & MARRIAGE

As firefighters it's not uncommon for you to risk your life to rescue strangers from fire. You face unique challenges, tragedy and loss on a regular basis. Unfortunately, those experiences carry over to personal life. Divorce statistics within the fire service are at an all time high. Every firehouse in America has been affected by divorce. Fire depts. typically see a decrease in productivity and an increase in time off stemming from marriage and relationship difficulties.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

† Go to the Movie, **FIREPROOF**, an action-packed love story from the creators of **Facing the Giants**, that will arrive in theatres this September. This heartfelt movie tells the story of a couple on the brink of divorce... until they discover God's design for their relationship. Rallying your fire department around opening weekend for **FIREPROOF** this September will serve your firefighters well.

† Mark your calendar for FCF's Second Annual Marriage Conference and plan to attend along with others in your department that want to strengthen their marriage. October 17-19 in Ocean City, MD.

CONFERENCES: 2008

- ☛ Firehouse Expo Baltimore, MD: July 24-26
- ☛ I-Chiefs: Denver CO August 14-16
- ☛ Firehouse Central EMS Expo, Las Vegas: Oct. 13-17

CONFERENCES: 2009

- ☛ Fire Rescue East, Daytona, FL: Jan 28-31
- ☛ Firehouse World, San Diego, CA: Feb. 15-19
- ☛ FDIC, Indianapolis, IN: April 20-25
- ☛ I-Chiefs, Dallas, TX: August 27-29
- ☛ Couples' Conference, Ocean City, MD: Oct. 17-19

FAMILY CONFERENCE JUNE 16 -20, 2008 : Black Mountain, NC

Atlantic States Regional Director and International Board Member, Craig Duck will be the speaker. Excellent motel rooms are provided in the guest house. The R.V. Park is available with full hook ups. Baby-sitting is available. **Guest House** per night: Single \$45.00; Double \$64.00; Triple \$80.00; Quad \$99.00 **RV Park:** \$19.50 R.V site; Tent Site; \$12.00: Children 12 - 21 with parent \$1.00 each. Day Use Fee: \$4.00 per person for four hours or less, \$6.00 per person for more than four hours (for persons attending but lodging elsewhere.) Price of meals vary. You may dine at the cafeteria or prepare your own meals.

For more information, information on meal plans, or to register (\$50.00 non-refundable deposit)

contact

**Jack and Diane White: 812-295-2838; jdwhite@rtccom.net;
12024 E 575 N, Loogootee, IN 47553**

Name/s _____

Phone: _____

Full Address: _____

Room type desired: _____ R.V. Space: _____

Children: Ages and Names: _____

E Mail: _____



LOVE THOSE LETTERS

PRAYING EVEN HARDER!



South Talladega, AL County Chapter

Hello. My name is Robert Osbourn. I've recently been appointed chaplain of Sylacauga Fire Dept. in central Alabama. I'm a career firefighter; hired in July of 2000 after four years of taking the civil service test. I almost gave up

but persistence paid off — a good lesson in life. Five years prior to my paid position, I was a volunteer at Oak Grove VFD, where I still serve as their chaplain and LT. As a chaplain, I realized the need for emotional and spiritual guidance in the fire service. In my search for help I came across The Fellowship of Christian Firefighters. After talking with Don Williamson, the Alabama Regional Director, I decided to start an area chapter. We have seven or eight fire departments in the South Talladega County area and we hope to also get them involved.

I'm praying for change in the departments in the southeast and that they will see the need for the chaplaincy program. It really is unheard of where I live but so needed due to the level of uncertainty of our jobs, the stress of not knowing what the next alarm is going to be, and the internal conflicts with the shifts and personnel that is part of the very nature of our jobs. We work in extreme conditions and must respond regardless of the climactic or environmental conditions. These calls can have far reaching effects on us as firefighters. As firefighters we are confronted with living in a complex world and we deal with people who don't, in most cases, understand the job we do until they're the ones that need us. At the same time, we're supposed to be immune to the effects of the stress from our job.

Firefighters face some real risks if they even hint that the stress is too much or is getting to them. It's as if they are expected to be the "perfect person" capable of solving problems, making the complex simple, and performing emergency responses without experiencing any emotional turmoil in the process.

This is part of why I strongly see the need for a fire chaplain who can step in and create a new firehouse environment with the help of organizations like FCFI. Goals for our chaplaincy program include providing spiritual guidance, counseling, visiting members and member's families while sick or in need, and basically acting as a pastor outside of the church — inside the firehouse. Being a chaplain is a challenge in today's world. It requires gaining respect and working hard to set examples in all the phases of life. But it is a life well worth living for Christ. I strongly feel the need for a chaplain's program and would be happy to talk with anyone interested in starting one in their area as well. I can be reached at sfd337@yahoo.com. I will be blessed to help in any way possible.

Our chapter is growing. We have devotions every Saturday. Our members are Tony White, Jarrod Cunningham, Brian Black, Chris Wallis, Don Blair (VP) Richard Davis, Adam Gardner, Reid Tapley, Chuck Baker and me. Please see our web site at www.southtalladega-county-cff.com

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of FCFI

Robert (on left) with Brooke Bolton who has undertaken a project to reach out to fire victim families



I love the **Encourager!** I really enjoyed the front page testimony of William Brobst Jr. It sounds much like my own. Recently, a very close friend I've been witnessing to the past year, lost her 14 year old son in a car accident. He was one of six of her children. When the step father visited me, I showed him the **Encourager**. He's a volunteer on our department and was on call the night of the accident. He was very interested in the **Encourager** until he heard me say "Christian." He actually told me "Nope, you lost me when you said Christian." Makes me want to pray even harder! As a result, I've started an in home program called H2O that consists of a 10 part DVD series of 20 - 30 minute videos that teach who Christ really is and the difference between Him and religion.

I would like to pray for you all as well. I think the **Encourager** is fantastic. We all know that time is short and as Christians there are lots of souls to be reached. This is a great outreach tool and support for the fellow firefighters. Please let them know that I am praying for them all and their "ministry" as Christian firefighters in an unchristian world, and that they all stay strong in the faith. Thanks for everything you do. Stay blessed! Penny

Used By God

I would like to share what the Lord allowed me to do on Feb. 24 of this year. I had an opportunity to speak at Highland Baptist Church in my community. I spoke on Jesus being the ultimate rescuer and was able to share the ministry and vision of the FCFI. I also left copies of the latest **Encourager** and explained the various ministries. The reception of the congregation was great! I am in the process of setting up another meeting at a local church just down from Glassy Mtn. Fire Dept., where I volunteer on my days off from the airport FD.

Please pray also for my Christian friend, Steffan Shwarz, a firefighter in Stuttgart, Germany. We are trying to start a chapter in Northern and Southern Germany. This would be a first, as far as I know. May the Lord continue to bless the ministry of the FCFI. In His Service, Rob Hitt GSP Intl. Airport Fire Dept.

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“Jerry, Do You Copy?”

Rick Barton

“Jerry, do you copy? The fire has crossed the line and is heading your way!” I kept calling my boss over the radio but no answer. Was my radio not transmitting? Was the dozer he was operating making

too much noise to hear the message? A fire whirl had taken hot embers over our line and the fire was beginning to move uphill.

We were doing prescribed burns at the base of Monarch Pass. Three of us had put in a line around the unit and systematically began to light off one section at a time. But now the unstable atmospheric conditions had caused our line to be compromised. Normally this was not a big deal, Jerry and his dozer could cut a new line around the slop over and we could regain control. The problem was I couldn't contact Jerry and the fire was burning towards him.

After a few unsuccessful attempts to catch the escape myself, I decided to abandon my position and move uphill to warn Jerry. Fortunately, I was able to get to him before the fire did.

When things were under control I yelled to Jerry, “Check your radio, I've been trying to reach you for 20 minutes!” He then admitted that he had left his radio at home that morning. Instead of returning to get it, he had gone on with the burn.

Have you ever gone off without your communication with the Lord? Sometimes I get in a hurry and fail to do a “radio check” with the Master. I neglect His word, I forget to yield my spirit to His. I try to “fake” it through a shift.

The problem is, there are fire whirls out there that will try to cut me off. The enemy of our souls will try to trap us into harms way. I not only need to have my communication with dispatch (the Lord), but also with my co-workers (the local church). They can warn me when they see danger approaching. Luke 12:35 tells us to, “**Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning.**” Part of our “gear” for fighting the fires of this life is our spiritual radio, prayer. If we get halfway into our day and realize we haven't checked in with the Lord, we must pull aside and make contact. Otherwise, there may be fire right below us and we'd never know.

So what happened that spring day? The boss realized he needed a radio, so he took mine! Fortunately, he also realized that the air was unstable and we shut the burn down. That same day, a few hundred miles south of us, another crew didn't shut down and their “prescribed fire” eventually took out thousands of acres and dozens of homes.



ENJOY LIFE

Chaplain Dan Clegg

Let me encourage you to slow down and enjoy life and to be content. Everything that needs to be done will be, and if not, was it more important than taking time to enjoy life? Have you stopped to just take time to enjoy

your family, to read a good book, to just stroll through the park with your wife or children, and to talk to God?

Because of the nature of our job, firefighters seem to live on the edge of instant activity and yes, there is a time and need for that. But there is also a need to take time to relax and enjoy the gifts God has given you. Are you too busy to be content? Do you feel like there are too many marks to be made, too many achievements to reach, too many dollars to be earned or saved, too many promotions to be sought after? Have you ever thought that if you were content, someone might think you have lost your ambition?

Jesus encourages us to rest. In Matthew 11:28-30 He says, “**Come unto Me, all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke [is] easy, and My burden is light.**”

The fast track — when a pattern of life — can cause us to lose our ability to be content with what we, appreciate the family God has given us, and to rest in His love. John 10:10 warns us that, “**the thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have [it] more abundantly.**”

Are you taking time to enjoy God's gifts?

Is your life abundant?

Are you taking time to smell the flowers?

Are you taking time to enjoy your family?

I pray you are or WILL!

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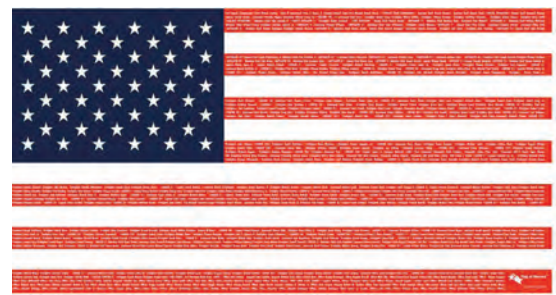
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2008 FIRST ANNUAL APPRECIATION DINNER APRIL 11, 2008



HONORARY LIFE

Throughout the years, many members have helped establish FCFI. They have served faithfully to see that this, God's ministry to the fire service, reflects and shares God's love and word. Among those faithful servants are:

Robbie Robertson	Walt Gabbert	Dan Clegg
Kevin Coffey	John Burris	Don Biggs
Harry Hetz	Gerald Brock	Bob Crum
Grant McIntosh	Duncan Wilkie	John Barker
Maynard Zylstra	Ken Henry	Jack White
Ed Bent	Ed Stauffer	

At last years board meeting, it was suggested that FCFI offer members, churches, and businesses the opportunity to help FCFI reach the fire service with God's love and word. As a result we developed the **Sharing The Vision Program**. Many have come on board and provided funding for continued and increase outreach. Reports presented at the annual board meeting, also held in Indy during FDIC, were evidence that FCFI is growing and God Is On The Move in the fire service nationally and internationally. The meeting and dinner were evidence that this is God's ministry and you, the members, are His servants who carry out the FCFI mission of taking the vision of knowing Christ to the fire service community by evangelism, empowerment and encouragement.

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS were presented to two members in 2008. William Brobst was unable to be at the dinner. Jim Bonson joined us as both a Life Member and Chief Award recipient.

SHARING THE VISION

FCFI First Annual Appreciation Dinner afforded us an opportunity to thanks those who continue to support FCFI financially. Without their support, the ministry would fail to reach many members of the fire service with Bibles, newsletters, literature and personal contact through conferences. Sharing the Vision Recipients were

FIREFIGHTER AWARDS:

A. E. and Cheryl Wagnon, Bob and Millie Winston, Robbie Robertson, FCFI Chicago Chapter, Rich and Celeste Dwinell, Ryan and Marybeth Farrell, Randall and Debbie Barker, Calvary Bible Church Mission Belles, Bob and Linda Swales

CAPTAIN AWARDS:

Raul and Janice Angulo, Kevin and Virginia Barnes, Chief Lee Callahan, Rev. Robert and Cornelia Grove, Dave E. Hedrick, Duncan and Gwen Wilkie, FCFI Treasure Coast Chapter

BATTALION CHIEF AWARDS:

Bob Washburn, Bob and Charlotte Crum, John Barker, Raymonds Trophy & Awards

CHIEF AWARDS:

Rick and Melva Barton, Livermore Community Church, Don and Josie Biggs, Ken and Colleen Henry, Jim Bonson

WE WANT YOUR INPUT

Please send us your input regarding:

- Update information on you
- Chapter update if you belong to or head a chapter
- Ideas on ways to better reach the fire service
- Future leadership ideas
- Ways you think FCFI can better meet your needs
- Ways you would like to be more involved in FCFI

You can write us at
FCFI International
P.O. Box 901
Fort Collins, CO 0522-0901
or E-mail us at fcfihq@aol.com

Fireproof Doesn't Mean the Heat Won't Come

By Raul A. Angulo



"Fireproof doesn't mean the heat won't come; it means it will be able to withstand the heat." That was one of the best lines of the movie, *Fireproof* that will open in theaters nationwide this fall. In our business, the buildings that are "fireproof" are Type I high-rise construction. We don't use the term "fireproof" but "fire resistive". What makes those buildings fire resistive is a spray-on coating of "fireproof" material that protects the steel from flames and heat. This is highest rated material of fire protection in building construction. Type I construction has fire resistive ratings from 2 to 4 hours depending on the components. That means (in theory) we have anywhere from 2 to 4 hours to fight this fire before the building starts to fail and collapse. However, the fireproofing material has to be maintained. If there are breaches in the insulating material where you have exposed steel, that steel is no longer protected. It will react like Type II construction which doesn't have a time rating. Unprotected steel will lose its strength at approximately 1000 to 1100 degrees (temperatures easily reached in any well involved house fire), fail, and collapse under its own weight!

So, is your marriage fireproof? Have you been maintaining the fire resistive coating of your marriage? Or do you have some exposed areas making your relationship vulnerable to the heat and flames? Is your marriage on the verge of failure and collapse?

Thanks to your prayers, God did open the doors so *Fireproof* could be shown at this year's FDIC in Indianapolis. FCF wishes to thank Bobby Halton and Eric Schlett of Fire Engineering for making that happen. We had about 200 people in attendance and at the end; there wasn't a dry eye in the house. Most of the guys crying were enginememen, but there were a few truckmen holding back the tears...so I was told...I couldn't see through all my tears. It's a very emotional movie, so get ready. The action scenes are pretty realistic too! You won't be disappointed. I want to share this E-mail I got after the special screening:

"I went to the movie Fireproof in Indy. I was instantly comfortable with the people in the room. You know when you're around Christians. The movie was great and I appreciate what FCF does and the opportunity to watch such a movie that really hit close to home. I am much like the Kirk Cameron character...more than I care to admit. The character of Capt. Caleb Holt would apply to 75% of the firefighters that I know for one reason or another. I didn't stick around and talk because of feeling the need to be alone after watching the movie. All my buddies were out drinking and partying while I was with you all." Thanks. Lt. Tom Isbell, Wade Hampton Fire Dept. Greenville, SC

Lt. Isbell's sentiments were shared by many in the room. This movie is going to convict a lot of firefighters. Even those with "fireproof" marriages. Some of the fight scenes between Capt. Holt and his wife were taken right out of my own kitchen! Verbatim! (Were the writers and director spying on me?!) I don't even yell at my crew the way I have yelled at my wife and kids! Every time we get into fights with our spouses, say unkind words, act disrespectful, take them for granted, and basically do selfish acts that say, "I do not cherish you" we are deliberately chipping away at the fire resistive coating that protects the strength of our marriages.

The next miracle happened when I saw Harvey Eisner of Firehouse Magazine at FDIC. I pitched the idea of having a special screening of *Fireproof* at the Firehouse Expo in Baltimore, MD (July 22-27, 2008) and he agreed! Wow! Does God open doors or what? So please pray for its success and that God will draw out all those who need to see and hear this ultimate message of salvation.

Don't forget to check out: www.fireproofthemovie.com for more information and share it with everyone. Please support the movie when it opens. Remember, this isn't a movie just for firefighters. It's for everyone who's married, thinking about getting married or doesn't know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Being covered with the saving blood of the Lamb is the ultimate protection we need to be fireproof from the eternal heat and flames.

You Must Choose: There are only Two Options

Chaplain Gilbert Gaddie, Indianapolis FD

Firefighters are in the business of saving lives and property, mainly from the destruction of fire. This has many parallels with souls being saved. The Bible gives us a description of a lake of fire and of a new heaven — a new earth with God. These are the only two options of where eternity will be spent. This will be decided by the decisions we make in this lifetime. We only have this lifetime to accept Christ — and the salvation He offers that leads to the new Heaven and Earth — or to reject Him — which leads to the lake of fire. Some of our church culture today teaches warm embrace of God with so much love and prosperity everything will be good — all the way to the lake of fire. There has to be a balance of judgment and righteousness to go with **Grace and Mercy** to have the type of relationship that will allow us to go out and make disciples as Jesus instructed us to do. Believers — those who have a personal relationship with Jesus — need to lead by example and support each other during the tough times that come from being a Christian.

Please read Romans chapter 6. Understand where you will spend eternity. Many insist there is no life after we leave this world, and there is no God or heaven or hell. These types of beliefs were also popular in the time of Jesus by a group known as Sadducees. Jesus told us about Lazarus and the rich man. He also gave other illustrations of heaven, as well as His eyewitness account of satan leaving heaven as a bolt of lightning. But none of these compare to the resurrection of Christ — a preview of what's in store for those who believe on Christ.

That we can know the truth of statements such as Paul's, when he said to be absent from the body is to be present with God, and to live is Christ and to die is gain. In life we are to continue to strive to be more and more like Christ and to teach others the ways of God while they are young— for the older to teach the younger.

Daily, let's give thanks to God for another day of His mercies. He gives us strength to breathe and participate in our daily activities which would be well spent sharing with others the good news of Christ and our love in God. We are told in the Bible that as time comes closer to the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, there will be more and more disasters, by man and nature; which are the offspring of sin in this world. There will be many things in your life satan intends for bad, but be of good cheer, God will use those things for good. The true valuables of this life are the relationships, and love we have for those in our lives. AND, remember prayer changes things so pray for those near and far.

Note: satan is not capitalized: we don't give him that dignity





MORE THAN JUST A MAN? PART 7

PASTOR KEN IS
AVAILABLE AT
PKATLCC@AOL.COM

Last time we looked at the third miracle of Christ recorded by John in his gospel account. There He healed a man who had sat

beside a pool of water waiting for an angel to come stir the water. Urban legend said the first one in after the water moved would be healed. How frustrating it would have been to sit there for 38 years, never being able to get into the water. That miracle showed Christ to be the Master over time. He can enable you to live a holy life in an unholy world. We also saw that it is never too late for Him intervene in a life. If you are praying for someone, keep on praying because He is the master of time.

I need to detour from the path — going down a rabbit trail — looking at the miracles of Christ John recorded for us. The title of this series is *More Than Just a Man*. We are exploring the topic of whether Jesus was more than just a good man, a moral teacher, and a worthy example to follow. You know my position. Jesus is 100% man AND 100% God. Unfortunately, many don't believe Jesus is God and don't believe He ever claimed to be God.

The miracle we looked at last time was in John 5. The verses following the miracle are a powerful statement of His deity — made clearly by His own words. I won't go into great detail here, but I want you to note them and look into them yourself.

If you look at John 5:17-47 (pp.128—129 in *Answering the Call*) you find five claims to deity Christ makes. The first is in vv.17-18 where He claims He is equal with God in His person. The point Jesus made here is that God the Father always works and never tires. He sustains the universe. Jesus said He never tires because He works continuously, thus claiming He and the Father are equal. He could do good on the Sabbath — which was always permissible — because He is always working just as His Father always works. That is a powerful claim. The religious leaders understood what He was claiming and wanted to kill Him for it (v.18).

His second claim to deity is in vv.19-20. In these verses He claims He is equal with God in His works. He connected the miraculous healing of the man by the pool on the Sabbath directly with God the Father. You might be wondering what difference that makes. Everything the Son did were actions that the Father would do. The implication is that if One did the things that only God could do, then He must be equal to God. That makes sense, doesn't it?

The third claim to deity that Jesus made is in v.21. Only God has the prerogative over life and death. Only deity can give or take life. Jesus said the Father raises the dead and gives them life and He, Himself, could raise the dead and give life. Not only can He give life, but also He chooses to whom He will give life. That's what He did at the pool. Out of all the people needing healing, He selected one. That is His right to do. Why? Because He is God.

His fourth claim to deity is in v.22. Not only does Jesus have the power over life and death, but He also has the right to judge. He is fully qualified to judge people and their motives and actions because He knows everything — omniscience — about everyone. That is only true of God.

His final claim to deity in this passage is seen in v.23. He claimed equality with God in honor. It doesn't get any clearer than this. Dishonoring the Son is the same as dishonoring God the Father. If you reject or dishonor God the Son you also dishonor or

reject God the Father.

(As a sidebar, this last claim to deity eliminates all other ways to reach God the Father. You can't reach God or obtain salvation through Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, or any other ism or cult. If Jesus Christ is not honored, then God the Father is not honored).

The application for you and for me is obvious. If Jesus is truly God as He claimed, then we owe our life, our allegiance, and our very existence to Him. He is worthy of all our love and obedience. There is nothing more important — not our family, not our career, not our pleasure — than being in right relationship with Him as Lord and Savior. If we are in right relationship with Him, we will also be in right relationship with our family, our career, and our pleasure. By the way, how is your relationship with the Son of God? Have you come to Him in submission? There is no better time to do that than right now. If you need assistance contact me.

In this article I want to deal with the third miracle John recorded for us. This miracle is found in John 5:1-18. Take a moment to turn to that passage and read it. If you are using *Answering the Call* you will find it on pp.127-128.

Jesus passed by a certain pool of water on the Sabbath (Saturday) in Jerusalem. According to legend, as I stated earlier, occasionally an angel would descend into the pool causing the water to move. The first one in after the water moved would be healed. You can imagine the place was crowded with people hoping against hope that the water would stir and they would be the first into water. If there was any truth to the legend, how frustrating it would be to lay there day after day. And IF the water moved, who would help you get into it first?

Jesus zeroed in on a man who had been an invalid for 38 years (whether from birth or from some other point in his life is unknown). That John mentions the man had been there for nearly four decades indicates the utter hopelessness of his situation. The Savior asks a strange question of the man, **“Do you want to be healed?”** His intent was to see if the man had the will to be healed. His answer indicated where he was mentally. He said, **“I have no one to help me into the pool...”** He basically blamed his condition on what someone else had NOT done for him. His paralyzed body was accompanied by a partially paralyzed mind and will. The man said he couldn't do anything for himself and Jesus then told him to get up, pick up his bed, and take off. With His command, the Savior gave the man the enablement to do what He asked of him.

In the same way Christ spoke the world into being at creation, His spoken word had the power to heal this man. Those atrophied muscles were instantly restored — better than new.

Controversy ensued because Jesus healed on the Sabbath and then told the man to pick up his mat and skedaddle — violating the oral tradition of the religious leaders. The Law simply said no work was to be done on the Sabbath. The logical interpretation would be that whatever it is a person does as his employment, he is not to do on the Sabbath. But the rabbis added a list of some 39 regulations that made keeping the Sabbath oppressive. The Savior didn't break the Law by doing good on the Sabbath. The man healed was in danger of losing his life for breaking the Sabbath. The religious leaders knew exactly what Christ was claiming as we see in v.18. He claimed to be God.

The lesson of this miracle shows Christ to be the Master over time. You can look at it two different ways. He is Master over time in that He can do good on any day He so chooses. He isn't limited to man's silly regulations. He is also Master over time in that it doesn't matter how long a person has suffered — physically or spiritually — when all hope is gone, He can step in and the ravages of time flee. Even if a person has been in their sin for decades, they are not beyond the Lord's saving touch. That is tremendous hope! No mere man can offer that kind of hope.

This miracle applies to you today. I don't know what kind of touch you might need from the Lord today. Maybe you are

discouraged in your job. You don't seem to be getting anywhere. The atmosphere of the firehouse tends to drag you down. While I'm not a firefighter, I do remember what the barracks were like when I served in the Navy. With all the smut around it was sometimes hard to keep pure, holy thoughts. Most of the guys I associated with weren't into clean, moral, intellectual discussions. Keep your eyes focused on the Savior. He will enable you to live holy in an unholy world. Maybe you have loved ones you have been praying for many years now and they still haven't come to the Savior. He is the Master of time. No matter how bleak it might look, keep praying. Don't give up. He is able. He is God

“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can only do what He Sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does,” (John 5:19).

*If you need a confidential pastor to discuss spiritual needs:
Contact Pastor Ken Hall: PKATLCC@aol.com (970) 493-9081*

**MELISSA WILLIAMSON, WIFE OF
DON WILLIAMSON, APPARATUS OPERATOR VESTAVIA HILLS FD AND LT. CITY OF CHELSEA
FCFI REGIONAL DIRECTOR, AL**



I guess I should begin by saying that when my husband Don decided 15 years ago to become a full-time paid firefighter after years of volunteering, neither of us has ever looked back or questioned for a minute that he is doing exactly what God designed him to do. Not that we haven't had our fair share of adjustments and issues along the way.

First of all, there were my sleepless nights when he was at the station. That got easier when we got a dog, and even easier when our first child came along. But then came the nights (years of them) when I had to do most of the getting up with babies and toddlers because Don was either at work, just coming off a shift, or about to go back on shift.

But the worst of it, by far, has been the “single parenting” of three kids. And trust me, I've done plenty of complaining about that. Those of you who have children know what I mean: day after day (and night after night) with little or no relief from settling disputes, doling out discipline, getting kids off to school and extracurricular activities, and getting kids fed and bathed and off to bed after homework is done. There have been the numerous events that Dad has missed, in spite of his best efforts to be there every time he possibly can; and the days that I've called him

at the station just to vent or cry out my frustration over the phone.

Then, when I was reading another recent spouse's column, God spoke to me so clearly. **“My child, you say you believe that I'm an awesome God and that everything is under my control. You trust me to take care of Don on his job. Do you not think I can meet the needs of you and your children in his absence?”** Wow! That hit me right between the eyes. What I was doing, without realizing it, was resenting Don's job and the role that I had so earnestly desired as a stay-at-home mom.

As I'm writing this, it is the week of Valentine's and I'm reminded of what God said in Jeremiah 31:3-4, **“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. I will build you up again and you will be -- you will take up your tambourines and go out to dance with the joyful.”** So for those of you reading this who are experiencing the same feelings I have experienced, remember that **“my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus,”** (Phil. 4:19).

Let's take up our tambourines and start dancing!

Spouse's Column

Fire service/ EMS spouses face a unique life style that only they can share and use to encourage others spouses. Following are some questions to help motivate a regular column. You can answer the questions and we'll write the article, or you can use these questions to motivate you to write an article. Let's encourage other spouse in the Lord.

- † How long has your spouse been a firefighter?
- † What does your spouse tell your children (you) about the job?
- † Do you like to discuss his fire work with him?
- † How do you support your spouse?
- † How can your spouse support you?
- † Do you get together with other firefighters wives, like a support group?
- † Does it bother you when your spouse is called out and misses dinner or special occasions?
- † Do you have any fears?

- † Are there any specific times when your faith and God's word, love, grace and / or mercy have helped you deal with
 - † Long shifts
 - † Unexpected overtime
 - † Household honey do's that never get done
 - † Second job demands
 - † Fears and dangers (real or perceived) that you have regarding the dangers your spouse is exposed to
 - † Disappointment when you miss special events
 - † Spouse's closeness with others at the station
 - † Feelings of exclusion
 - † Handling being a part time single parent
- † Do you have Scriptures you lean on?
- † What are some ways you keep your marriage to a firefighter strong?
- † How does your relationship with Jesus help you as a firefighter's wife?
- † Please share encouraging words you would like to share with other firefighter's wives to help them with their unique role as a Firefighter's Spouse

CHIEF ISSUES

By Lee Callahan

WHAT IS YOUR BENCHMARK?

Don't you love a good healthy firehouse kitchen table debate about who is the best ball player? Name a baseball position and the debate rages about who stacks up as the best now or in the past. In my day, basketball was great fun and its popularity was unbelievable in Boston, including the Bill Russell era and the Larry Bird days. However, their greatness was always subject to comparisons with great peers like Wilt Chamberlain in the sixties and Magic Johnson in the eighties. No matter what side of the debate you came down on, it was apparent that all the players mentioned set high benchmarks for their particular times (and arguably, in all sports history) in the sport they played in.

Civil War buffs will compare General Robert E. Lee (I always liked that name) to General Ulysses S. Grant. Both set standards in warfare due to their ability to win battles, especially against seemingly great odds. All other generals that served during that war are known by how they met the standards set by those two military men. In fact, today officers are taught some of the tactics and strategies employed by those generals of a past century.

In this season of presidential politics, it is common to hear comparisons of some candidates to presidents of the past. Names like Reagan, Roosevelt and Kennedy are often heard as the standards to which the candidates should aspire.

Of course, there are standards set so low that nobody wishes to meet them because they are known to be negative. How many people in presidential politics want to be compared to Richard Nixon or Andrew Johnson? In sports, does an athlete really want to be compared to Bobby Bonds, Mark Maguire, or others thought to be involved in the misuse of steroids? That is a benchmark that few, if any, are seeking (at least publicly).

Recently, I've been reading about some of the Kings in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (remember that David's kingdom was split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, after the death of Solomon). A recurring theme continues throughout much of the Bible books of First and Second Kings. When describing the way the kings lived their lives and how they ruled their kingdoms, most descriptions compare the lives of the kings to a standard that King Jeroboam set. It is common to read something like; "**He did evil in the site of the Lord and walked in the way of his father.**" (I Kings 15:26), when talking about Nadab, Jeroboam's son. That scripture speaks to the standard set by Jeroboam because of his failure to walk in a way pleasing to God. Jeroboam led Israel away from God by worshipping idols. Omri was described as "...**He walked in the way of Jeroboam...provoking the Lord God of Israel with their idols**" (I Kings 16:26). Even the evil king, Ahab, was compared to Jeroboam in chapter 16:30-31, "**He did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him...He walked in the sins of Jeroboam.**" As bad as Ahab was, with the help of his wife, Jezebel, he still managed to get the negative comparison with Jeroboam. How low must Jeroboam have been?

Our FCF brother, Bob "Goose" Washburn, compiled the following statistics:

Out of **19** Northern Kingdom rulers, **6** were murdered; **15** were specifically sited who "did evil in the sight of the Lord" with **3** more were implied to fall into the same category; and **13** were specifically described as "walked in the way of Jeroboam".

What a standard to be compared to. An astounding benchmark that nobody could be proud of.

Now, what about an application to our lives? At the firehouse or at your own house, what standard do you meet? We are all about meeting standards in the fire service. The National Fire Protection Association, or NFPA, as we all know it, is chalk full of standards that we fall all over ourselves striving to meet. Why? Because, for the most part, the standard is established to try to make our jobs safer. Everybody knows that the standard is there to protect us against unsafe practices, manufacturing, processes and procedures, or other concerns. It is a set of standards that we, as a fire service and individuals within the fire service, try to meet. It is a "high" standard, as compared to a low standard as mentioned in some of the examples above.

At home and in the fire station, what standard do you meet? Are you a mature Christian that exemplifies Christ in all you do? Are you someone that "walks the walk" and are a testimony to the goodness and love of Christ? Does your firehouse family or your loved ones at home know which benchmarks are important to you? Although not a lot of description is given to us about them, we have some New Testament examples of those that meet the Christ-like standards in Phoebe (Romans 16:1), Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16: 3 & 4). And what about Melchizedek, who after a couple of thousand years after his death is seen as a benchmark setter by the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 7:1-3, 21)? According to scripture, all the saints meet those standards set by Melchizedek. If you are a Christian, that standard is yours, but shouldn't we strive to meet other standards such as those set by Priscilla and Aquila; and Phoebe? Shouldn't we want to be named in the same set of benchmarks set by them?

I trust that the standard that is important to you is the one that is important to the Lord. We can live a life, that when over, can be compared to Jeroboam (or some modern likeness of him: known for his sinful ways). Or we can strive to hear the words of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, "**Well done, good and faithful servant...**" (Matt. 25:21). What standard will you be known for?



MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW

ANNUAL BOARD MEETING APRIL: 23, 2009

FCFI SECOND ANNUAL APPRECIATION DINNER: APRIL 24, 2009

The board meeting is open to all and provides you with an opportunity to see how God is using FCFI. The dinner is followed by an award presentation program complete with music and a speaker. Food, a fantastic program, and time to fellowship with firefighters from across the nation — you won't want to miss this event.

Photo by Joe Casey,
BLM Butte, MT.

By Rick Barton
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What Does The Word Say?

By Dwayne Clemmons,
Bumpass, VA



"Prescribed Fire or Wildfire"

"Barton, is everything OK up there? The Buena Vista district just called and they can see quite a bit of smoke coming from your location." "Affirmative, everything's fine", I answered. Actually, I was scrambling to hold a section of line that the rapidly moving fire was threatening. And, the problem was, I had lit the fire!

One of the more enjoyable tasks of wildland firefighters is conducting prescribed burns. Under the right conditions, we mark off a section of ground that would benefit from fire. Typically it's one that has a lot of dead trees or dangerous brush. Then, we set a fire under controlled circumstances. We do the ecosystem a lot of good, it's much cheaper for the taxpayer than mechanical thinning, and we get to see some pretty spectacular fire activity.

The downside is that prescribed burning is as much an art as it is a science. And even then it's not a precise one. Just a slight miscalculation in fuel moistures, a change in wind speed or direction, or an unexpected weather system and things go crazy. Even the best fire managers have been caught off guard. And I wasn't one of the best. I was a green Forest Service employee who had been entrusted to burn off a small corner of land on Waunita Pass. I had lit off too much at once and it seemed like the whole world was on fire. Not only was the adjoining district office in Buena Vista beginning to worry, I was sweating bullets!

Isn't life like that sometimes? Aren't there some pretty good things in our lives that if left unmonitored can become destructive? Maybe it's being a hard worker. Obviously that's a good thing! But what happens when we spend so much time and energy at work that we begin to neglect our family and our church? Perhaps it's a hobby, sporting activity or even video games. Not necessarily bad in themselves, but bad when we lose control and they consume us. I've found that the simplest acts can go from productive "prescribed fire" to destructive "wildfire" if I don't keep watch over them. I can even spend so much time doing ministry that I don't have time for the One I'm ministering for.

I guess that's what the Apostle Paul was talking about in Hebrews 12:1 when he says, "...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and run with perseverance the race that is marked out for us".

Just a few miscalculations and lack of oversight can turn a beneficial prescribed fire into a tragic wildfire in our lives. Shouldn't we be careful about the activities, even "good" ones, in our lives and be sure that they stay beneficial for our families, God's kingdom, and us?

What happened on Waunita Pass that day? Well, the Lord gave me grace. When the fire hit my control line it stopped. And I learned a lesson. Don't light off more than you can manage and keep watch all the time. Not a bad lesson for life is it?



"Many preachers are preaching the message that, "God is going to be great in 2008." They say, "It's not too late in 2008." I've heard, "Let's elevate in 2008." How about, "We must meditate in 2008." Well, I don't know about you but I have to ask,
"What Does The Word Say?"

Psalms 119:14-16 say, **"I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word."**

Glory to God! There should not be any difference in one day to the next, one month to the next, or one year to the next. We are commanded to love God with all of our heart and love our neighbor as ourselves. We are commanded to meditate on the Word day and night. We are commanded to seek first the kingdom of God. We are commanded that to whom much is given much will be required.

Is God your first love? Is developing your relationship with Him extremely important to you? Is He the first thing you think about in the morning and the last thing you think about before you go to bed at night? Is He always on your mind? When you're responding to a call do you thank Him for allowing you to serve? Do you tell Him how much you look forward to being used by Him to be a blessing to the person you are responding to? And on the way back when all has turned out well do you thank Him for just being God?

We are ambassadors for Christ! We are chosen by Him and for Him! We must execute His plan for our life. We have a responsibility to be ready at all times to BE Jesus to the world! It is so bizarre to me to think that God needs us and is waiting for us to step up to the plate and allow Him to do great and mighty exploits through us. That's just the way it is because He loves us immeasurably, unconditionally, and undeniably!

I challenge you to make today, tomorrow, next week, next month and next year all the same because you have made a conscious decision to live 100% for God. When you have made that decision you will rejoice and delight in following His direction and there will be no neglect because you meditate on His Word day and night. Many who are called will become those who are chosen because they chose to answer the call after being introduced to God through you.

Consider the following questions:

- † Am I prepared each day to represent God?
- † If not what must I do to be prepared?
- † What area of my life do I need to work on submitting to God?
- † As a firefighter or EMS provider am I totally reliant on God to help me accomplish the call on my life?

Meditate on this until the next time. Be blessed and

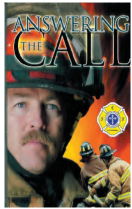
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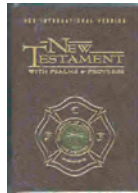
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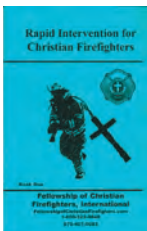
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- To share locally in planned fellowship meetings, individual contact, and prayer.
- To share nationally through participation in fire conferences and expositions.
- To bring all Christians in the fire service to a common goal of praying for the fire service and its members.
- To share on an international basis through an Annual International Conference.
- To have contact, internationally, with fellow Christian firefighters.
- To care for widows; meeting spiritual as well as physical needs.
- To care for firefighters in times of need.
- To place Bibles in fire stations.
- To distribute New Testaments to individuals in the fire service / EMS



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