

McCLAIN MINISTRIES

Monthly Newsletter Publication

January 2006

**GLORIFY
HIS
NAME**



2006

Melva's Corner

**ARE YOU SURE YOU MEAN ME
LORD?**

Bible Text: Philippians 2:5-11

Central Truth: Can one person really make a difference?

Last year I picked up a copy of an interesting book entitled *The Legacy of Luna*. The cover photo showed a young woman in her 20's sitting in the lofty crook of a giant tree with her face looking into the wind. Her name was Julia Hill, and she was given the name "Butterfly" by some environmental activists. Julia was looking for a way to make a difference in her world. She climbed into a giant tree in the Pacific Northwest to protest actions by the lumber industry in that area. This article is not about her cause, nor about the lumber industry. The point is simple: One person made a huge difference and so can we!

The book explained where Julia came from, what she tried to do, and the day to day experiences of a long term "tree-sit." She sat in that tree for over a year. She never came down. Food and supplies were

Life Events

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



**Celebrating a Special Day with
Denise Jones**

New Year Blessing

May God bless you with a happy, fulfilled, prosperous and wonderful New Year!

May His favor be on you and your family as you experience the strength and power of His everlasting love.

May you seize all of your daily blessings and challenges with passion and character.

May you reach out and embrace new opportunities with renewed expectation.

And May you welcome the dawn of a brand new year with anticipation and courage, remembering God's promises and the reassuring words of Jesus to His storm tossed disciples, "Fear not for I AM!"

This is your 'due season,' claim it right now to the glory of God for the Harvest is truly Great!

Have a blessed New Year from all of us at McClain Ministries.



provided to her by a support team on the ground. She braved storms, freezing weather, rain, sleet, snow, and sun. She had a small makeshift platform on which she lived the whole time. As time went on, she became more and more determined to stay in her tree, and went so far as naming the tree "Luna." After receiving national notoriety, visits from celebrities, along with a great deal of popular support, she received assurances the forest would be protected. Julia came down and wrote the book. Whether or not you believe in her cause, let's remember that Julia is one person who took a stand, decided on a course of action, and made a difference.

Maybe you can see where this is going. Jesus was the one individual who made the most difference of anyone who has ever lived. In [Philippians 2:5-11](#), we are given the cycle of Jesus' life.

He was in Glory He became a Servant in Humility He was obedient to God and let Himself be used by God at great personal cost He was raised up and exalted. He went back to Glory.

Jesus made a difference by being a humble servant to others and obedient to God. You and I can do that, too. We have God's Glory shining in us and through us because He is our Father, He lives in us and shines through us by His Spirit. Yes, each of us is **JUST** one person... but each of **IS** God's one person. He wants to make a difference through each of us. He is asking us to make a difference in our world by having the attitude of Jesus. Will we let Him use us? Will you let Him use you?

I know you're probably thinking, "How can God make a difference through me? There are a lot of more important people out there that can help; why would He ever use me?"

God says that we should have Jesus' attitude — we should take up "our cross" in a cause greater than ourselves, serving

others and obeying our Heavenly Father in humility. He asks us to look beyond our own lives and see ourselves as part of something bigger and greater than ourselves. There is no more meaningful life than one given to a great cause. What greater cause is there than the grace of God shared with broken people?

Not only that, God has promised that He will exalt us in His own way, at the right time, as we serve Him and others. We will even get to go back to Glory and be with Him, along with those with whom we've shared His grace.

Bottom line: We only have a limited amount of time here, so let's use our lives to make an eternal difference! Let's serve others and obey our Father, trusting that He will make our efforts effective and life-changing for others. After all, that's The Legacy of the Lord!

My Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for your incredible grace displayed in Jesus. Help His attitude of service, obedience, and sacrifice to pervade my soul and to influence my daily life. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Memory Text:

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:5-11)

RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS!

Bible Text: I John 4:20 Mark 12:31

Central Truth: Your personal fulfillment depends on your ability to manage and nurture healthy relationships.

When the crowds asked Jesus, “What is the greatest commandment?” He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.” That raised no eyebrows and rocked no boats. It was merely the familiar ancient **Shema**, which ended all synagogue meetings.

The crowd nodded in agreement. It was comfortably abstract. And as long as loving God is an abstraction aimed at no target in particular, we are all OK. Ho-hum religion. Business as usual.

But then Jesus added a line. **“Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:31)**

Oops! Things changed. Hackles went up. Now, wait a minute. Everything was fine like it was. “Love God” has a nice ring to it. Sounds religious. And it can be kept comfortably abstract. But that added line from Jesus dispelled the vagueness and slammed the abstract down onto the concrete. Now Jesus had gone and targeted that teaching. He’d made it practical. He’d aimed it at real people.

As long as loving God is one of those vague abstractions, we are all OK. We can put on and take off our religion like we do our Sunday clothes. We can set our faith up on the shelf beside our dusty family Bible and still feel holy. But when Jesus targeted that teaching, well, things got practical and personal.

The way Jesus put it; our love for God is expressed, not in pews, pulpits, and stained-glass tones, but in relationships

with people — in the way you and I get along with him and her and them.

If being with God on Sunday doesn’t make us better at being with people on Monday, then we’ve missed the point. Real Christianity shines in right relationships.

The grist of Christianity is ground out in the mill of marriages, friendships, partnerships, neighborhoods, communities, property lines, and sales contracts. Or to simplify it, if we really love God, the first ones to benefit will be family, friends, and neighbors.

Hmm. That complicates things a bit, especially when you think about our neighbors! Grumpy ones. Mean ones. Lazy ones. Bosses who demand the impossible. Secretaries who can’t perform the minimal. Wives who don’t appreciate what wonderful husbands they have. Husbands who think they are too wonderful. Relating to people with “the Jesus touch” is easier said than done. As the old saying goes,

To live above with those we love, now that will be glory. But to live below with those we know, is quite a different story.

We come into the world in families. Then we must fit into society, schools, and other organizations. And as Stephen Covey says, “We must interact with others for success to come to us in any personally effective way.” Covey cites a study conducted by the Carnegie Institute that found that 60 to 80 percent of job dismissals in the business industry are caused by social problems, and only 20 to 40 percent are due to technical incompetence. In other words, most firings were because of relationship trouble. This study showed that in the field of engineering, only 15 percent of one’s success is due to technical knowledge; the other 85 percent is due to one’s ability to get along with other people. What does all this mean? It means that not merely your success, but also your personal fulfillment

depends on your ability to manage and nurture healthy relationships. But it sure seems hard for us to get along with each other.

Doing right by people should be the Christian's forte'. Isn't our mission the same as Jesus' mission? Touching people? Didn't John say, "For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen"? (I John 4:20)

So we come to an important personal question: How are your relationships? Think for just a minute about the people in your world. Some are in your life by choice: your mate, your best friend, perhaps a business associate. Others you inherited by chance: your relatives, your next-door neighbor, maybe your boss. But no matter how you became connected with them, they all have one thing in common:

They are vulnerable and woundable people who need someone to love them unconditionally — just like you and I do!

Could you use a little help in doing right by people? I guess we all could.

The plan?

Simple. Jesus will be our coach. We will track down the way Jesus treated people and we'll learn the art of relationship from the Master. We're going to learn from Jesus how to treat people! Stay tuned more to come in future messages.

PARTNERSHIP COMMITMENT

THANK YOU partners for doing your part in **2005**. You are truly a blessing to McClain Ministries. Your faithful commitment and support is greatly appreciated. If you have not yet made a commitment to partner with us for **2006**, please ask the Holy Spirit to speak to, and guide your heart about it. If you will do your part God will do His part.

HIGHER MOUNTAIN...HIGHER PRAISES

GOD IS SO GOOD

Lena Williams

Let me tell you all about Jehovah Jireh!!!

I have been praying for the salvation and needs of my family and love ones to be met for sometime now.

My youngest brother, who lost his job and had been battling alcohol addiction and behavior problems for some time, willingly went through the detox program several months ago. When he came home he even walked to the AA meetings at the church. Volunteers now pick him up and take him back home from the meetings. He is doing so great! He has his driving license back and he even got a job last week (week of November 27, 2005) and is working again. He studied the bible and researched the Word of God at a very early age and knows the Lord and the Word well with much wisdom. He has been running from a call that is on his life. He is back in Church with a changed attitude and so peaceful and joyful now.

My youngest sister had lost her job and had been going through a state of depression.

She began to backslide due to the pressures in her life. The tremendous progress she had made by giving her life to the Lord was at stake. She finally has another job and is on her way back to moving forward in Christ with her life. Continue to pray for her and her four children.

My Son Jarrett, who has been through so much, (I will write a book one day) started his own recording studio several months ago. He stated he would like to work at Best Buy between studio times. Last week (week of 11//27/2005), Best Buy called him.

He interviewed and was hired. The Lord spoke to my heart regarding his faith to start his own studio he calls "AIG", (ALL - I - GOT) Productions. He commanded me to prophesy over it because it will be used to glorify The LORD of Lords, and Jarrett will be directed by the Holy Spirit and guided to good success in 2006! I see it happening now!

My daughter Kenesha (recently married) and has to locate a position in the city of Memphis where her husband lives. The position she applied for at St. Jude Children's Hospital, in Memphis, TN, over a month ago is still vacant. The job belongs to Kenesha...thus said the Lord. Her patience to wait on God is being developed. She is learning that and called last night to let me know that she understands why I have been encouraging her to use her faith and trust God ...so she can receive her answer. Her BA and MA degrees will not be the deciding factor...God will get the glory!

I applied for a position at FEMA. I had not heard anything from them. They called recently to inform me that my resume had been set aside because I was qualified to interview for the Technical Writing Field Position. They wanted to know if I was interested in setting up a scheduled time for an interview. Writing is my gift from God, my love and my specialty. The Holy Spirit confirmed to me that I love reading and writing because it is my purpose. Our Lord reserves the best for us because He loves us.

I could go on and on...because truly the Holy Spirit is moving upon the face of the waters. I know that it is not just in my family...He is pouring out His glory upon all believers...and truly "Father Knows Best" so don't miss your moment!

The windows of heaven are open and the blessings are no longer just there...but here and NOW!

Everyone who asketh - receiveth. The righteousness of God delivers us releases and His blessings. **JUST ONLY BELIEVE - (Because Emmanuel Lives I Expect Victory Everytime).**

HIGHER PRAISE UPDATE

Archeater Hampton, By Lena Williams

My friend Carmila Hampton's husband Archeater is on our prayer list for healing...

Since his surgery back in May. Ches had a successful surgery in May to remove a cancerous kidney...and is currently being treated for a spot on his lungs that was 3 cm. large...good news is the tumor has shrunk to 2cm. Praise God...glory to God! And the other spots (which were very very small...Carmila said the doctors are saying are dead cells) (inactive).

Carmila and Ches have been traveling to Tupelo every week where he is being treated. Please continue to pray for Ches to be completely restored...I see that kidney coming back that was taken from him. I see him whole and better than before. Pray for his healing their peace and their family's peace of mind and pray for divine traveling protection each week.

Don't we serve a great merciful God?! All things with Him are possible. If we only believe. His goodness and His mercy and truth endure forever. Whose report will you believe? I believe in VICTORY every time...no matter what...I am still going to believe God. He cannot lie.

I can't help but to brag on our Father God...and depend on His Son Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to resurrect every dead thing.

Have a great day.

BELIEVE AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE

Gean Tucker

I have a praise report! My mom was released from the hospital last week (week of 11/27/2005) and we moved her to Manhattan Rehabilitation which is located in Jackson, MS for my out of State prayer partners. Praise God she is eating soft food by mouth and drinking by mouth. She is trying to talk. We can understand some words. I thank God for her progress. She has come a long way and still has a way to go but the God we serve is The Great Physician. I claim her total healing daily.

I thank all of my prayer partners for their prayers. I know individuals are praying because I see my mom's health improving. I also thank you for praying for my strength. Once again, my family and I thank each of you.

OUR GOD REIGNS

Mary Simpson

I had my annual angiogram follow-up test the first week in December for the Cerebral Aneurysm Surgery that I had February 17, 2004. All was well. I had no doubt because Our God Reigns in everything. He is in total control. Nothing happens unless He permits it. He does not allow me to get into fear when this time comes around; His Spirit is with me every second and keeps me in His perfect peace as only He can give. I thank God everyday because I know HE IS IN CONTROL.

THANKS FOR 2005

Jannice Horton

I give Glory and Honor to God the Father for all that He has given to me and my family in 2005. Every Blood Covenant prayer answered. Glory to God for my husband retiring from work after 28+ years of service this past October.

This means our son; Joel can come home from school instead of coming to work with me after school. The things that I use to do he will fill in sometimes for me and give me a break.

Thank you Father for every life and it more abundantly. In Jesus Name.

MY DADDY SAM

(Always In My Heart)

Melva McClain

Many of you will say, "How can the passing of a love one be a praise report." For Christians it should be a time of rejoicing - for a fellow Saint has utilized their passport home.

"Daddy Sam," that's what his grand and great grand children, affectionately, called him. This earth passed quietly for him at 11:05 Thursday morning December 15th -- just like he always seemed to know it would -- and I'm thrilled beyond words that now he's walking and talking with God in what is now his permanent home, throwing back his head and scrunching up his eyes and mouth in delighted laughter like he always did, best of friends with his Creator for eternity. But he didn't stumble into that by accident.

My 96-year-old grandfather had "a good life. Not an easy life, but a good life. There's a lot of power in those words, because we live in a time when "easy life" and "good life" are considered equivalent. Despite a Depression, hard work and a World War he had a good life. He loved many and was loved in return and that makes a life good?

As we celebrate his life, we will remember the good times and probably laughed more than is polite during his earthly funeral. You see when a person you love is just going home; it's easier to feel good about his departure.

It occurs to me that maybe there's serendipity to the death of people we love. In losing family and friends, our eyes are drawn away from this world and toward what's beyond it.

I want to live that way, I really do. Daily, finding my way home. I want to consider myself an alien and a stranger here, traveling lightly and just passing through on my way home.

I know we would like to think that we are longing for a better, heavenly country, but too often we are content with the world. Bringing our hypocrisy into sharp focus. Unfortunately, life has a way of alluring us, sucking us in and we too often give in without a fight. We put down roots; get too attached to what this world offers. But now, as my love one's transition into eternity I have one more reason to live with my eyes locked on the distant horizon, not so easily distracted by the world's shiny things. A traveler just following a trail marked out by those who have gone before me. That's what lives of faith do; they motivate those who are left to imitate them.

If I know my grandfather, he'll be waiting for me, eyes fixed straight ahead. Expectant. Waiting. Anticipating. Ready to share with me the "good life" he now knows. Eager to share with me the place that will finally be home for me as well. In the meantime, join with me in celebrating both his life and his legacy.

QUARTERLY TELECONFERENCE 2006 TELECONFERENCE



**Saturday, January 28th
8:00 A M. CST**

**Toll Free Dial-In Number
1-888-422-7124
Participant Code: 730940**



SPEND TIME PRAYING FOR OTHERS

6:00 P. M. HOUR OF PRAYER

Use this wonderful supernatural tool the Lord has blessed us with the **6 o'clock hour of power**. This is the time to intercede for the needs of others, the concerns of the ministry, and to pray for the leadership within our community, our nation, and our world.

Bring all of your cares and burdens to the altar and encourage others to do the same. Lives are being changed. Breakthroughs are happening.

HOME BIBLE WORKSHOP SCHEDULE



Mark your calendars for the **January 2006** dates. Please plan to attend.

January 7th and 21st

✉ **1050 Ridgeside Drive
Brandon, MS 39042**

☎ **Phone: 601-824-7498**

WEBSITE OFFERINGS

(Article Excerpts)
www.mcclainministries.org

IT'S TIME TO STOP RUNNING

We can never get away from God. We can't hide from Him. He fills the heavens and the earth. "You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my every thought when far away...Every moment you know where I am." (Psalm 139:2-3) David wasn't sure what to make of that. Sometimes, he was moved to wonder and gratitude that God was so near him: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to know!" (Psalm 139:6) Other times, he pulled the darkness around him like a security blanket and scuttled for the shadows when God's dazzling light split the night.

Can you relate? I can. Many times I praise God for knowing what I need, for coming to earth in Jesus, for giving me His Spirit. I'm grateful that He knows my intentions and my desire to please Him. I even pray, at times, that He scour my soul for hidden sin.

Other times, I'm horrified that He knows me so well. It seems intrusive. But only when I'm trying to hide. Only when, like Jonah, I'm running from what He wants. When I don't want to deal with the messier parts of my soul, I run. When I don't want to change my thinking or my attitude, I hide. Yes, I know I can't get away from Him, but sometimes I try just the same. I try because I don't know what else to do.

ARE YOU IN A WAITING PLACE?

The Waiting Place. Yeah, you know it, don't you? Some of us have season tickets for the Waiting Place. Earn points for Frequent Waiters. Maybe waiting characterizes your life. You wait for clarity of purpose. You wait for a better job. You wait for Someone Special, or Something More Exciting, or

Somewhere Nicer. You wait for someone to give you a fair chance, or for someone to notice you. Maybe you wait for a cure, or a glimmer of hope, or forgiveness. Maybe you sit behind steel bars, day after day, waiting until the system says you've done your time.

Maybe you aren't a regular in the Waiting Place, but I bet you know it. You've been there, haven't you? If a doctor's ever told you, "We'll know in 72 hours," then you've been in the Waiting Place. You've been there if your company's ever been bought out and you've wondered if you'll be getting a paycheck a month from now. If you've ever struggled in a class, you know it. You've visited the Waiting Place if your body's ever broken down, if someone you trust has failed you, or if God has been silent.

If you've ever faced an outcome you couldn't foresee and couldn't control, you've been in the Waiting Place. It's not a pleasant place to be. You're forced to sit still, impotent, while circumstances swirl around you. Life, though it may go on, doesn't move forward. Too much is in doubt, too many questions unanswered, too many ends left loose.

If you're in the Waiting Place, the good news is that you aren't alone.

GRACE GUARANTEE

Grace is great to experience. It's wonderfully liberating to know that God forgives us and accepts us just as we are. It's thrilling to realize that our sins don't make us too vile for God to love, and that He loves us enough to wear flesh and carry a cross and enter a tomb to save us. It's a blessing to know that we are not judged on the basis of our faults.

It frees us to forget the past and push on toward the future that God has promised us.

It's wonderful to experience grace from another person, too. You know what I mean if you've experienced the forgiveness of an offended friend, the unconditional love of a spouse, or the admiring gaze of a child who thinks you can do no wrong. Another human being can give us no greater blessing than the assurance that they love us in spite of our frailties, that they believe in us in spite of our failures, and that they don't judge us on the basis of faults.

Grace is wonderful to talk about. Everyone loves John 3:16. Christians throughout the ages have rejoiced in the Bible's insistence that Jesus came to save the wicked, not congratulate the righteous. And the church has long benefited from reminders that we are to be instruments of grace to the poor and undeserving of our world

Yes, grace is inspiring to talk about and wonderful to experience. Giving it, however, is another story.

THE GIFT OF A MARGIN FOR ERROR

Some of you have spent much of your lives beating yourself up for every sin. You've limped along with no certainty that God loves you and accepts you. I wouldn't want you to take your sins lightly.

But I want to say to you that because of what Jesus has done, I can offer you absolute certainty that you're forgiven. That certainty lies in you putting your trust in Him. Be baptized, if you haven't been, as a sign of the end of your old life and the beginning of a new one with Jesus.

Repent of ongoing sins, if you need to, and receive the assurance that in Christ they are forgiven.

Or just give yourself a break. Trust that Christ is in the presence of God, asking, "Father, forgive him." And trust that God is graciously and without hesitation doing just that.

IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE

May the Lord remind us that home isn't about where we live or who lives there with us. To be at home, ultimately, is to be with God. To set our eyes on "a better place, a heavenly homeland." (Hebrews 11:16) Even the happiest of earthly homes will change. Houses get sold. People move, and eventually die. In spite of our illusions of safety and security, none of us are anything more than "foreigners and nomads here on earth." Only God can give us the security, certainty, peace, and love that our earthly homes only hint at. That's why "home" for you needs to be where He is, His house.

FEAR NOT

The memory will always sicken us. Pictures of those twin towers that launched us into the Middle East war. We can't forget. Likely it would be impossible, but even if we could we'd consider it treasonous, a desecration of the memory of those who died. We can't forget.

But neither do our foundations have to be shaken. Our lives don't depend on the security of the American way of life. Our hope doesn't rest on buildings or armies or the economy. Evil, even horrendous evil, doesn't carry the day. And the universe isn't held together by governments, rulers, or political alliances.

The writer of Lamentations, as horrified as he was, never lost sight of the foundation his life was built on.

Or, maybe more accurately, in the devastation he remembered. "Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: The unfailing love of the LORD never ends! By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each day. I say to myself, 'The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!' (Lamentations 3:21-24)

The one thing you can count on each day is His mercy and unfailing love. The one thing you can believe in is His faithfulness. He is the one asset that you can believe will never fail you. That is the message of the Bible: God's relentless love for human beings. That is the gospel: God will go as far as necessary to rescue you from evil, sin and death -- even your own. Even a cross can be redeemed. Even a tomb can be opened.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?

You have missionary opportunities every day as you cross cultural boundaries at your office, or your school, or in your neighborhood, or in your home. And that's the responsibility of the church in general. And of you specifically. You meet people, you talk to them, you learn how they think and what matters to them and how they see the world. You have the privilege of helping them come to the point of "this I believe." You won't always get it just right. But you're not on your own, either. God through the Holy Spirit is with you and in you and will help you. It is, after all, God's desire that every person come to know Jesus. "This we believe."

WHAT MAKES MINISTRY REAL?

God made us for fellowship — real, genuine, share our lives with others fellowship. While this fellowship may involve our participation in a big worship experience, it definitely must involve our participation in smaller gatherings where people know us, love us, and we share our lives as well as our meals together. God made us with a need for fellowship and He has called us into His forever family to have that need met. Don't settle for merely going to church and gathering with a bunch of strangers, but search until you find a place and a people where life is shared and fellowship is restored.

HIS GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

You might know his name. It's more likely that you know his nickname. John Merrick as a 19th-century oddity, a carnival-show headliner who was made famous by a book and a movie about his life. Merrick was horribly deformed from birth, treated cruelly as a freak by those few who didn't turn away from him in disgust and fear. "The Elephant Man," they called him. In one of the film's most wrenching scenes, Merrick is cornered in a train station restroom by a mob, surrounded by pointing, gaping, laughing people who shout insults and obscenities. Exhausted, shamed, he sinks to the dirty floor. "I am not an animal," he insists. "I am a human being." True, yes. But sadly, treated more like an animal in his lifetime.

The exception to that rule is Doctor Frederick Treves. Treves, who is initially interested in him as a medical case, helps to uncover and grows to love the sensitive, compassionate, kind, intelligent, articulate human being under the animal exterior. Through Treves, Merrick gets to live the last part of his life in relative comfort among London's wealthy elite. At one point, the beautiful actress Mrs. Kendall visits Merrick. They exchange some lines from "Romeo and Juliet," she reading Juliet and Merrick reading Romeo. As the lines conclude, Mrs. Kendall smiles gently and maybe a little sadly. "Oh, Mr. Merrick," she whispers breathlessly. "You're not an Elephant Man at all!"

Oh, no?" he responds, afraid to agree, afraid not to.

"You're Romeo!" she says, sincerely and sweetly. Then she leans close and kisses his deformed cheek.

Jesus, amazingly, came in all His beauty to our world. He was not put off by our ugliness, or fooled by our attempts to cover

it up. He came and gave His life, His blood, His body to us. He came to make us believe that we aren't twisted, broken freaks. He came to make us believe that there is beauty and value inside us, that the image of God in us is not lost under our deformities. He came to give us full life, a kiss of God's grace on our ugly cheeks.

That's the way the gospel transforms us. Through the love of God given to us through the crucified Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit, we rise above our sin, our pettiness, our ugliness. We become who we were meant to be. We gain ourselves. We are not defined by our past ugliness. We are not animals. We are human beings, created in God's image and loved deeply by Him.

TIRED OF JUNK FOOD?

Some people live their lives in a perpetual quest for the equivalent of fast-food. All of us, maybe, have this tendency to chase all the things that promise to satisfy quickly and easily. Human beings habitually scarf down what amounts to junk food for our spirits, unaware that though we may feel temporarily satisfied we're not really being nourished. And while it may be OK for awhile, there is no way we can thrive on a steady diet of Big Macs, there is no way that we're going to thrive the way we were intended to on a steady diet of fast-food for the spirit.

Oh, that kind of food's easy to find -- a lot like a Big Mac. It's there on your coffee table within easy grasp, looking remarkably like a TV remote. Flip it on, sit down at the table, and stuff yourself with junk food for the soul. It's there at movie theaters, bookstores, and on-line. Pornography, hot off the griddle. Mindless magazine layouts on the home decor or parenting philosophy or political opinions or romantic lives of this or that celebrity. It's there at the mall, where models and mannequins and smiling sales people entice us into believing that

this shirt or that gadget or those shoes or that underwear will transform us into the people we secretly want to be. It's there in doctor's offices, where we're told that a new nose or larger breasts or smaller hips or fewer wrinkles will change our lives.

Some people go to a bottle looking to be filled. Some go to a needle, or a pipe. Some go to food. Some go from romance to romance. Some live for the weekends. Some get involved in causes. It's hard to know, sometimes, when you're filling yourself with spiritual junk food. Sometimes it's obvious. Some of the things we try to fill ourselves with are illicit, immoral, and/or illegal. Some seem perfectly acceptable. But the common denominator is the human tendency to try to replace the food God offers us with other stuff. We've been doing it since Eden, and the consequences are always the same. Paradise lost.

But God offers us what will truly fill us, nourish us, and satisfy us, and He offers it freely and generously. He offers us love without conditions. He offers us acceptance. He offers us purpose, and value, and hope. He offers us forgiveness from our sins, freedom from shame, and the promise of transformation. He helps us learn to value ourselves just as we are while at the same time helping us to change those things we don't like. He offers us a new perspective in which evil and injustice and death don't have the last word. And maybe most importantly, He offers us the ability to see the world around us, other people, and ourselves through His eyes.

WHY DO I FEEL OUT OF PLACE?

Churches have too much devolved into institutions, and so we equate living in God's house with being at church when we shouldn't.

The two go together, but they are not the same.

To live in God's house is to put all your trust in Him, to order your life around faith in His promises and obedience to His commands. Nothing else will suffice. But if that psalmist found reason to trust God when he saw a sparrow's nest in the temple, surely we have more reason. We have a cross and an empty tomb that bear silent witness to the fact that we belong somewhere. "In my Father's house are many rooms," said the One who hung on that cross and inhabited that tomb for just a little while. "I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. " (John 14:2-3)

It's really a blessing, this feeling of discomfort. It reminds us that we aren't at home unless we've put our faith in Christ and have set our hearts on the place He has prepared for us through His death and resurrection. Perhaps that feeling comes from the Spirit of God Himself; a holy discontent that can only be quieted by the porch light of our Father's house. If you can't quite feel comfortable anywhere, let that discontent push you toward God's house. When you feel that you can't get comfortable anywhere, respond to that feeling by turning toward God through His Son, Jesus.

HOME BIBLE WORKSHOP

GOD'S POWER PRINCIPLES

We will conclude the study manual on "Change" January 21, 2006 and a new study manual will be introduced on February 4, 2006 entitled "God's Power Principles."

Currently the new study manual contains twenty chapters with a total of 253 pages.

In various forms, some of the information contained in this manual is located on the

Spiritual Warrior's page of the website. However, with this new manual, the Holy Spirit has placed all of His power principles into one comprehensive reference source.

The study manual will be like no other we have presented in the past. It will be more of an instructor's guide for training others. It will be totally self - contained, with specific teaching instructions. Our hope is to eventually obtain accreditation of the course material so those taking the course can apply for college credit.

The first 22 pages of the manual can be viewed on the Bible Workshop Page of the Website. I urge you to invite your friends and love ones to this life changing study starting Saturday, February 4, 2006.

The truth of the Gospel is two-fold. First, it is the Word of God as revealed in the Holy Bible. To know the Scriptures you must study, understand, and apply them.

But the truth of the Gospel is more than the Scriptures. It is also the power of God. To know the power of God you must understand and apply power principles. The power of God must become a reality in your life through experience.

The world is not interested in what you have done for God. The world is attracted to Jesus when they see visible results of the power of the Gospel that has changed your life. The world is attracted by the demonstration of spiritual power as the Lord works with you to confirm His Word with miraculous signs.

Power principles taught in this course will enable you to experience the spiritual power taught in the Bible. This course answers the heart cry of those who have hungered for reality instead of religion.

It will move you from being a spectator to a demonstrator of the power of God.

THE LEARNING TREE

ABORTION-RIGHT OR WRONG?

The subject of abortion is one of the nation's hot button issues. The United States Supreme Court will be hearing 3 abortion cases in the next several months and it is imperative for Christians to have a thorough understanding of all aspects of this issue and respond appropriately.

There are 46 million abortions performed globally each year. And these abortions are occurring on our watch. This article will help you to become informed on the subject of abortion as well as understand it from a Biblical perspective. Please invest the necessary time and energy to get yourself up to speed on this world crisis. Also, accept the responsibility of making copies of the article for those who may not have access to the Internet.

HOLY CITY

The Apostle John concludes the Book of Revelation with a benedictory prayer for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with those who desire to enter the Holy City given by God. Let us, too, become the saints who enter the Holy City given by Jesus Christ through faith without fail.

ARTICLES BY OTHERS

LOUDER THAN THUNDER

"In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son," wrote one person who had been captured by God's voice. (Hebrews 1:2) And this:

"You have not come ...to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was

commanded...But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." (Hebrews 12:18-24)

God has spoken, not in a booming voice that could be explained away as thunder, but in the cry of an infant. In the grace-filled words of a teacher. In the tortured cry of Gethsemane. In the hoarse whisper of "Father, forgive them..." And in the promise of a man who should be dead, now alive: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 12:29)

No wonder the writer of Hebrews warns, "See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks." (Hebrews 12:25)

See to it. Because human beings have the capacity to not hear even the voice of God in Jesus Christ. Even Jesus can be dismissed. Even the cross can be ignored. Even the resurrection can be denied. See to it that your life doesn't speak refusal in the same way as Christ's life spoke invitation. See to it that the voices of your world, your responsibilities, and your own desires don't drown out the gentle whisper of God spoken through Jesus. See to it that the incessant chatter of legalism and sectarian pride don't keep Christ from your heart. Receive what He wants to give you, and pour out your gratitude with every act, every thought, every word.

That ain't thunder. God speaks. Can you hear Him in the depths of your heart?

MULTIMEDIA FEATURES

WINTER WONDERLAND

NEW YEAR: BEATING BAD HABITS

"The harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, and self-control...If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct its course." (Galatians 5:23, 25, REB)

I really pondered over our New Year message. The subject matter that came to mind was overwhelming-then the Holy Spirit stepped in and of course He had the final word. So here we go:

It's fairly well-known, I think, that there are no species of snake native to Ireland. It's probably because of the cold, wet climate, scientists say. More entertaining (if less plausible) is the popular legend of St. Patrick, who supposedly preached a sermon in the fifth century that made all the snakes leave the island. However you want to explain it, snakes don't raise their scaly heads or flick their forked tongues on the Emerald Isle.

Until recently. Snakes are showing up in increasing numbers in Ireland these days. People are finding them in attics, in basements, in cupboards, and under sinks. One family recently reported seeing one slither out from under their TV while they sat watching one evening. Apparently, snakes have become popular pets among the Irish. It's especially fashionable to have one on St. Patrick's Day! When some of these pet snakes get misplaced or released, they seem to seek out nice warm places to live. Unfortunately, most of the warm places are also inhabited by people.

Maybe it's not surprising. We human beings seem to have a talent for importing problems into our lives. Here it is a new year, and maybe you've made some resolutions. Chances are, at least one or two of those resolutions have to do with

eliminating a problem that shouldn't have been in your life to begin with. Maybe you've resolved to conquer the temper that strikes with deadly venom at your relationships. Or maybe your target is the immorality and lust slithering in your soul.

Maybe you want to control the forked tongue that hisses out careless or hurtful or dishonest words uncontrollably. Maybe it's the addiction coiled around your heart, slowly squeezing the life out of you. Call them bad habits. Call them faults. Call them sins. Call them what you want, but you've allowed them into your life and now you're sorry and you want them gone.

Easier said than done, isn't it? Easier resolved than realized. Breaking bad habits can be frustrating, painful, and disorienting. In fact, it can be nearly impossible. You will receive this message just over a week into the new year, how are your resolutions coming? Finding the going rough? Maybe you've already found it to be too hard, and the anger or lust or bad language or impatience or whatever has already reared up, bared its fangs, and struck. I can relate. So can everyone else in the world. But I want you to know that you can break your bad habits. You can. Chances are, you're just skipping a step.

Let me suggest that it's foolish to depend on ourselves to break the power of the bad habits that have really wormed their ways into our hearts and minds. Look at your history: aren't there some things that remain in your life despite all your best efforts to eliminate them? Yet we keep butting our heads against the wall until we finally give up. Maybe you don't make resolutions anymore for that very reason.

Maybe there are some things down in the depths of your soul that you know need to change, and yet you also know that they won't. If you haven't changed after all this time, you reason, you never will.

Well, you can. The Bible says that God is still active in our world through His Holy Spirit. That Spirit lives in believers -- if you're in Christ, the Spirit lives in you. And one of the things that Spirit does is change you. Paul thinks of it in terms of a harvest: the Holy Spirit brings out qualities and characteristics previously locked away beneath layers of sin and brokenness. Love is part of the harvest He brings about in your life. Joy. Peace. Kindness and goodness become evident. Fidelity, faithfulness is part of the produce. You don't develop love, Paul says, by trying harder to be loving. You can't will yourself to be joyful, or kind, or good. Oh, you can do kind or good things on your own. You can paste on a smile and pretend to be joyful. But these things aren't brought about by self-control; in fact, self-control is part of the harvest!

God, through His Holy Spirit, is the power for real change in our lives. Do you think maybe some of the characteristics that Paul calls harvest or fruit of the Spirit might help you to break your bad habits? Would a more loving attitude help you be more patient or corral your anger? Would a little more kindness help you stop speaking words that injure others? Would a little more fidelity help you keep your promises and meet your responsibilities? Would a little more self-control help you break the power of lust?

"After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" asked Paul. (Galatians 3:3) It is by God's Spirit that we can change. So instead of thinking about what habits you need to break, let me suggest that you think about habits you need to develop. One habit, in fact. Resolve this year to allow the Spirit of God to direct you. Resolve to do what you need to do to seek His will and bring your own will into line. Spend more time in prayer. Open the Bible more, and read it to hear God's voice for you. Make a

commitment to be more with the Body of Christ in worship, encouragement, and service. Find someone with whom you can build a relationship based on prayer and spiritual formation. Read some good books that lead you to think the things of God. Sign up for a Bible class. Take a spiritual retreat.

I think you'll find that, over time, you'll feel the Spirit's hand steering you more palpably. You'll hear His voice more clearly. He'll help you to see yourself as a beloved child of God, and He'll also help you to see what doesn't become a beloved child of God. And, over time, as the harvest of the Spirit is more apparent in your life, those bad habits will become less so. **"Live by the Spirit," Paul promises, "and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." (Galatians 5:16)** Like St. Patrick in that legend, God's Spirit can eliminate the crawly, venomous things that infest your heart and soul and poison your life. And that's even better than a snakebite kit.

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"WHAT TO DO WITH CHRISTMAS LEFTOVERS IN THE NEW YEAR"

Some anonymous writer put it this way: "Christmas is not merely a lump of sugar to take away the sour taste of reality. Christmas 'is' reality: a reality which will blaze eternally after man's last artificial light flickers out. If we unite ourselves with that reality, we will be given the courage to live joyously in the new year."

SPIRITUAL WARFARE HAS BEEN DECLARED 2006'



"...Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Ephesians 6:10-12)

We usual have a military article in this section of the newsletter. However, I thought it would be fitting to address spiritual warfare as we usher in the new year.

You've heard, no doubt, of the book and movie "Blackhawk Down." They tell the story of a US Army operation in Mogadishu, Somalia, in the early 90's. The Army felt that the soldiers, flying in on Blackhawk helicopters, were nearly invincible. They didn't count on street fighters being able to shoot them down. The soldiers become in engaged in a ground battle they weren't expecting and prepared for.

All of the soldiers had been issued body armor, but some of them left some of the armor inserts behind when they boarded their Blackhawks. Several died in the ground fighting, in fact, because they weren't sufficiently protected. They were brave. They had the resources they needed to survive. They had a commitment to their cause and to one another. Sometimes, however, none of that is enough

A soldier has to be prepared for the struggle.

Centuries ago, Paul cast about for a metaphor for the struggle of life as a Christian in a fallen world and settled on the image of a war. He imagined the church as a platoon of soldiers fighting a desperate battle, locked in a life-and-death struggle against "the devil's schemes" and "the rulers...authorities...the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Being a disciple doesn't solve all our problems, and in fact opens the door to brand new ones. To follow Jesus is to follow Him into battle, to continue His desert struggle with Satan. There are unseen, though certainly not impotent, spiritual forces at work that are seriously interested in our downfall and destruction. They wield official persecution, social pressure, false teaching, division, temptation, complacency, and sin as weapons against us. Their objectives are clear: they intend to undermine our faith, destroy our commitment, and cause us to abandon our hope. Hot lead flies around us. Mines dot the landscape. Artillery shells whistle overhead and rip craters through the world we live in. Spies lurk in the shadows.

And I wonder if we even know we're at war.

I certainly wonder how prepared we are. The brand of Christianity that is peculiar to 21st-Century America as a rule doesn't equip us for war. It provides us therapy. Helps us cope with stress. Surrounds us with family when we're isolated and lonely. Gives us opportunities to feel good about serving others. Unfortunately and I speak as an insider here, it doesn't call us to arms. The sounds of reveille do not ring in our churches. I'm afraid that too often the enemy has us pinned down before we even see him. Too many of us fall in battle to weapons of spiritual destruction that we don't even recognize.

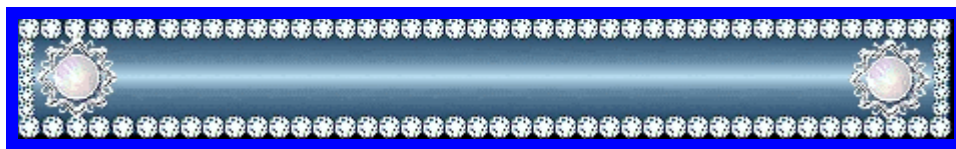
Look around. Another Christian has fallen victim to complacency, drifting out the church's back door before anyone even knows he's gone. Another man has exchanged his faith for another woman who makes him feel what his wife no longer does. Another single woman has decided that Christian sexual ethics no longer fit the realities of the world. Another student has been brought down by the temptation to take a shortcut on a test, or take a drink. Another lie has leapt to the lips of another person who is supposed to know who the father of lies really is. Another church leader acts inappropriately toward another child. They fall not because the enemy is stronger, but because they are unprepared for the struggle.

"Be strong in the Lord," Paul urges us. It is HIS mighty power that helps us stand in the battle. The prophet Isaiah pictures God looking for justice, righteousness, and truth in the world, and not finding it. (Isaiah 59:12-15) Appalled that the spiritual battles are being lost, and not even fought, God takes matters into His own hands. He straps on His armor: righteousness as His breastplate and salvation as His helmet. He puts on clothing of zeal and vengeance and goes out to drive the devil back to hell. We can't win the battles against evil, but God can. So if we are to stand against Satan and the weapons He uses, it will only be if we stand in God's strength.

That's why Paul reminds us to put on the whole armor of God. Before we wade into the battle, we must be prepared. The armor that God wears fits us, too. **Consider this your call to arms.** Right now, while there is a break in the fighting, strap truth around your waist so that you know lies when you see and hear them. Put on righteousness as a breastplate to protect your heart and other vital organs from unrighteous-ness. Take the gospel to give

you speed and a place to stand. Hold tightly to your faith, so that when the bullets start flying you'll have something to hide behind. Be protected by the promise of salvation in Christ. Never go into battle without the Word of God at your side, sharp and ready to cut deeply into the enemy. And pray always, invoking the power of the Spirit against the armies of Satan.

In short, be prepared. Whenever you can, methodically check your armor. Are you acting with righteousness? Is your faith able to protect you? Is God's Word ready at your side? Don't get lulled to sleep by the world's illusions of peace, safety, and comfort; there's a battle raging. Make sure that you're ready "so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground." You can only stand when you fight with God's power, in His armor, consistently dressed for battle.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

We are having a party to launch our National Bulletin Board Service. The entire ministry is invited to meet and greet. We want to get to know those who have services to offer the global community.

With the vast resources available to the Body of Christ we should never need the enemy in our affairs. Whenever a need arises in our life we should find the resources both human and tangible to meet that need available in the "Body of Christ." For example, if you have questions regarding Income Taxes-you should be able to find answers to those questions in the Body of Christ. The answers to the questions may take the form of an individual simply supplying the answer or a Christian Business that specializes in Income Tax Preparation offering their services. Another example could be the fact that you need a cake prepared for a special occasion. I'm convinced that some individual or business in the "Body" could provide that service. On the same note, there are individuals and Christian businesses with valuable services that could be made available to the Body of Christ. For example, you may have a High School English Tutoring Service that you would like to make available. The 'virtual nature' of this ministry is perfect to showcase these needs and services

More details to follow, but for now mark your calendar:

March 4, 2006

**National Bulletin Board Party
107 Brookside Circle
Clinton, MS**

Encouragers

(McClain Ministries)

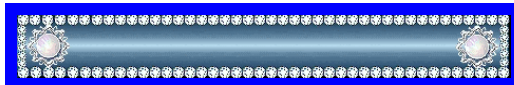
Most folks don't know his real name — it's Joseph. Even fewer know where he is from — it's Cyprus. Very few know which Jewish tribe marked his ancestry — Levi. Yet remarkably, this fellow is one of many Christians' favorite people of the Bible. However, most folks know him only by the nickname given to him by the apostles — which is Barnabas. This nickname means "son of encouragement" or as we would call him today, "The Great Encourager." (Acts 4:36-37)

Barnabas was generous with his financial and real estate resources. That is where he received his nickname. However, this trusted leader in the early church was also sent out to check on the rumor that non-Jews were responding to the Gospel message in Antioch. (Acts 11:22-24) He found that God was doing great things there and searched for Saul from Tarsus (who later became known as the apostle Paul) and asked him to join in the effort. (Acts 11:25-26) At this point, Saul had been converted, but most folks were afraid to include him because of his history as a persecutor of Christians. After spending time together building the great church in Antioch, Barnabas included Saul (Paul) as his traveling companion on a great missionary journey. (Acts 13:1-3; Acts 14:21-28) After securing the preaching of the Gospel to non-Jews, Paul and Barnabas would split up. (Acts 15:1-39) Barnabas not only found his emotionally wounded nephew, John Mark, he also restored him to useful missionary service. (2 Timothy 4:11)

Barnabas' life was a journey of encouragement, church building, people development, and faith. No wonder this "Son of Encouragement" was considered to be a man of faith and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 11:24) What an incredible life he lived! I'm not sure how I will be remembered, but I would sure love to be remembered as an encourager like Barnabas.

Over the six years McClain Ministries has been in existence, we have made it through good times and bad, primarily because of your encouragement. That encouragement has come in many forms — encouraging emails, a timely donation, an e-card, a note letting us know we are in your prayers, or testimonies about how the ministry has blessed you or those you love. You have often been our Barnabas! Thank you. Our commitment has been to offer our resources to folks all over the world without charge. God has blessed us in doing just that, but that would not have been possible without your many forms of encouragement.

As we enter this special time of gift giving and celebrating the greatest gift ever given, we want to thank you for your gifts. Over the next few weeks we will have our twice a year fund raising drive that keeps McClain Ministries going and growing. But today, let me just say thank you again for your encouragement! Thank you for being a Barnabas to us.



WANT TO ADD SOMEONE TO OUR MAILING LIST?

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Address _____

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**McClain Ministries
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Brandon, MS 39042**

