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Fiscal 2003 Year To Date

Here’s a snapshot of some of what God has been doing in our ministry lately.

FaithSearch

Events	113
Attendance	18,060
Faith Commitments	1,044

Supplementary Events*

Events	188
Attendance	116,587
Faith Commitments	11,346

* Includes India, where an estimated 10% of all participants will meet with local ministry workers for follow up.

Earliest Archaeological Evidence of Jesus Found In Jerusalem

What a scoop! Front page headlines appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, Canada’s *National Post*, *The Jerusalem Post* and nearly every other newspaper in the world. Lengthy articles appeared in all the national news magazines, and all the television networks had coverage, including CNN.

What story could possibly get the complete attention of the 21st Century world with such exclamations as “stunning,” and “the most important discovery in the history of New Testament archaeology”?

The answer is Jesus!

This may seem surprising to Bible-believing Christians, but it highlights the confused condition of our post-modern culture. A member of the theologically-liberal “Jesus Seminar” claimed the biblical Gospels are “imaginative creations,” as quoted in *Time* magazine. It is the frequent contention of skeptics and atheists that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written long after the events they describe, and had accumulated legends concerning Jesus. Certainly, they assure us, the Gospels are not to be trusted as eyewitness accounts of history. This view has filtered down, portrayed as the assured results of scholarship to our general society, even into the minds of some Christians.

Thus, the world is surprised by evidence that Jesus and His family are real.

A limestone secondary burial box (known as an “ossuary”) surfaced in Israel last year that bears an extraordinary inscription. Carved on one side in clear Aramaic letters are the words “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.” *Biblical Archaeology Review* announced the existence of the ossuary—20 inches long, 10 inches wide, and 12 inches high—on



Biblical Archaeology Society, Washington, D.C.

This ossuary was declared in 2002 as having been used to bury the bones of Jesus’ brother James in approximately A.D. 63. Inset: The inscription, reading in Aramaic from right to left, “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.”

October 21, 2002.

Sorbonne professor Andre Lemaire, one of the world’s ranking experts in Aramaic inscriptions from this period, studied the inscription in detail and concluded that it is genuinely ancient and not a fake. The Geological Survey of Israel did a complete laboratory examination of the ossuary, and found no evidence that would detract from its authenticity. So far, it appears to be the earliest archaeological attestation of Jesus yet found—dated at about A.D. 63.

James is referred to frequently in the New Testament (e.g., Galatians 1:19; Acts 12:17; James 1:1), but also in Flavius Josephus’ book, *Antiquities of the Jews*. The first-century Jewish historian identifies him as “the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ, whose name was James,” and states that he was martyred by sentencing of the Jewish Sanhedrin in A.D. 62. This was after he had become a follower of Christ, as a result of seeing the resurrected Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:7), and had been the leader of the Christian church in Jerusalem for years. Matthew, in

FAITHSEARCH

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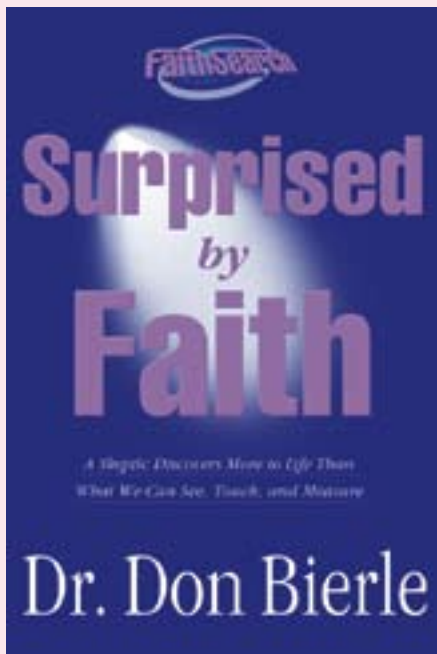
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CLASSIFIEDS

Surprised by Faith Cover



The cover design for the revised edition has been finalized. Look for it on our book table, Web site and in bookstores soon!

WANTED:

Classroom Tables

We are seeking the donation of several matching classroom tables to be used for training seminars. These are narrower than regular folding tables; 2' x 6' would be ideal. Call (952) 401-4501.

Facelift for FaithSearch

Discovering the “Ah-ha!” of Life

With this issue of our newsletter, we are “rolling out” our new look. You may not even recognize us! But rest assured, we have not moved from our mission to “call people to new life through faith in Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Christian Gospel with supporting evidence through *FaithSearch*.” In fact, we are hoping to do that even more effectively through these changes.

As we are “Extending the Vision” all across the country, **we have been praying hard and working closely with the Envoy Group to refine our message** and to communicate most clearly what it is we do. They have helped us identify the key components that will help churches, organizations and individuals understand and “catch the vision” for working with us and using our resources.

Evidence

(Cont. from page 1)

in his Gospel, identifies James as part of the family of Jesus: “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?” (Matthew 13:55, NIV).

This enormously important affirmation of the historical truth of Jesus and His family is joined by other recent discoveries confirming the historicity of the New Testament Gospels as well. For example, archaeology confirms the accuracy of the biblical accounts of Pontius Pilate (then governor of Judea) and Joseph Caiaphas (the high priest who tried Jesus).

The soon-to-be-released, updated edition of *Surprised by Faith*, as well as our own *FaithSearch* Festival, incorporates these and other recent archaeological finds to demonstrate that the New Testament is the most reliable writing of ancient times. **“I believe that God has preserved these artifacts for 2,000 years and reveals them now as evidence so that all might repent and believe,”** said president and evangelist **Don Bierle**. “It is humbling and exciting to be called of God in these days to stand for and proclaim the absolute truth of God’s Word and salvation in Jesus Christ alone.”

The apostle Peter calls us, to “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). *FaithSearch* faithfully fills that call, and we want everyone to know it. At every seminar, without fail, people’s lives are being transformed, and **many who arrive in doubt walk away in faith**, satisfied that their questions have been answered. People often joyfully report, “Now I see!” or “Why didn’t someone tell me this before?”

We are identifying this process as “Discovering the Ah-ha! of life.” It refers to that moment when we (whether literally or figuratively) slap our foreheads, jump for joy, and shout “Ah-ha!” Watch for this new look to begin appearing in our materials and events over the course of the summer.

Extending the Vision—and YOU!

To: YOU!
From: Dr. Don Bierle
Wanted: *FaithSearch* Teachers and Facilitators
Wanted: *Growing Faith* Disciplers

I have a vision that someday there will be Christian men and women who are sharing the life-changing message of *FaithSearch* in every city and town across America.

And I have a vision that someday there will be an association of Christian men and women who are using *Growing Faith* to nurture new believers in cities and towns all over America.

Interested in being part of this? – Pray and seek the Lord’s will.

Still interested? – Call or email for more information, including an application.

Our new *FAITHSEARCH* CENTER, with Dr. Don Bierle as the primary instructor, will soon be announcing training dates beginning late this summer and fall.

Both lay women and men, and pastors or seminarians are encouraged to inquire.

952-401-4501 (Twin Cities metro)
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FaithSearch Returns to India

A Billion to be Served

The number 1 billion (1,000,000,000) is hard to comprehend: a billion galaxies, a billion dollars, and a billion hamburgers all translate the same. The number is staggering in scope and impossible to imagine.

Two nations on our planet, India and China, each have populations in excess of 1,000,000,000 people. Considering the spiritual needs of these two nations boggles the mind. Yet both are in desperate need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

God has already graciously opened the door for our ministry into India through a dynamic partnership with Campus Crusade for Christ. For seven years, Faith Studies International has been conducting evangelistic tours throughout South Asia. In 2002, as part of "Extending the Vision," Dr. Bierle's books *Surprised by Faith* and *The FaithSearch Guide* were published and made available in India, along with the *FaithSearch* video series.

These books are offered in conjunction with training in the use of *FaithSearch*



The 2003 *FaithSearch* training events were offered in four cities in southern India.

resources. Last year, over 1,100 pastors and lay leaders attended seminars to learn how to use these tools in their ministries.

In this, the second year of the training strategy, the books and videos were translated into Hindi (the official, national language of India) and Tamil, greatly expanding their effectiveness throughout India (see sidebar on Languages of India). Toby Travis and Denny McKeever conducted the training events as part of another whirlwind tour, involving events in four different cities.

Denny, who recently returned to Faith Studies as an evangelist and director of



Denny McKeever (above) and Toby Travis (not shown) conducted *FaithSearch* training to over 700 in April, 2003.

international ministry, was catapulted to the front line before he had even unpacked. "I considered it a privilege to have joined the trip right away," he said. "I was pleased to meet the people we are working with in India, and to help train pastors in the use of *FaithSearch*. I wish everyone who loves, prays for and supports our vital work for the Kingdom could have been with us to see the response and hear the comments from the pastors."

Over 700 pastors were trained during ten days, and their comments were very encouraging. **These wonderful men of God spoke of the overwhelming blessing of having such a powerful tool for the sake of the Gospel in their hands for the first time.** They shared of the impact *FaithSearch* would have, not only on themselves but also on their congregations. They envisioned believers witnessing with confidence, and unbelievers coming to Christ in significant numbers when brought face to face with the evidence provided by *FaithSearch*.

This year, events were also conducted for community business leaders. Following one of these sessions, a prominent Christian businessman named David said, "This [*FaithSearch*] is the most effective tool with which I have ever been exposed in my personal witness for Christ." He refused to leave that evening without assurance that he could receive additional quantities of *Surprised by Faith* for distribution. One pastor commented that he had not wanted to attend a seminar during Holy Week (the tour dates were April 10-21) but when he saw it was sponsored by Campus Crusade he knew it would be good. He went on to say, "This training has rekindled my

passion and confidence in witnessing for Christ."

One after another, pastors and business people repeated these testimonies.

Also new this year was the opportunity to train Campus Crusade staff at their Great Commission Training Center. Toby trained some forty staff members, as well as a number of guests in attendance, in the use of *FaithSearch*. This included the first use of the Tamil translation of the video series.

Charlie Abro, who coordinates the training events for Campus Crusade, is already going to work on a plan to provide *FaithSearch* in every state of India—twenty-eight in all. Toby said, "His idea is for us to return to all of the major cities of India, and to provide training for trainers who would then take the material into all twenty-eight states."



Pastors and lay leaders eagerly received their free *FaithSearch* resources.

How do you reach a billion people? It is impossible for us alone. But by multiplying the effectiveness of people like these dear pastors and lay people through our resources, training them to use *FaithSearch* and to train others, tens of thousands — dare we say millions? — can be added to the Kingdom. Isn't it wonderful to be part of this great partnership in reaching our world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Amen.

Languages of India

Surprised by Faith and *FaithSearch* videos are available for the following language groups in India.

	<u>Estimated Population</u>
Total Population	1,045,845,226
English:	200,000,000*
Hindi – official language (as primary):	313,753,500
Tamil (as primary)	61,527,000

*Conservative number: Estimates vary from as little as 3-5% to "virtually everyone."

FaithSearch Field Reports

Dr. Don Bierle

The weeks of April and early May are some of the busiest of the year for us—and for good reason. Central to the *FaithSearch* message is the power and victory of the resurrection of Jesus. Why wouldn't we tell everyone we can? I spoke on seventeen occasions last month. Whether it's about our origins (Creation and Evolution), life (*FaithSearch*) or destiny (Life after Death), I proclaim Jesus as our Creator, our Savior and Lord, and our resurrected King.

In a five-day period this month **I rejoiced to see more than 75 people say "yes" in commitment to Him.** That's why I never tire of the busy schedule. Beyond speaking, preparing for the Celebration Dessert and administrative matters occupied my recent days. What a special night it was to see so many friends and guests gather and give their support at the Dessert. We are so blessed!

The surprise announcement of the evening was the coming release of the second edition of *Surprised by Faith*. I never imagined the first edition would have nearly 275,000 copies in print, with a readership of perhaps one million. **Thousands have testified of becoming a Christian or renewing their faith as a result of reading it.** Please pray with me that this book will likewise reach around the world in its new, second edition.

Hasnah Burdge

Ezekiel spoke well what is on God's heart. "For thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. . . . I will seek the lost. . .'" (Ezekiel 34:11,16).

At a youth rally in Willmar, God moved in a mighty way as 350 youth listened intently to *FaithSearch*! I had opportunity to interact with many students afterward, continually amazed at how responsive and hungry they are for the "reasons for their hope."

A young girl I will call "M" asked to speak privately. She rolled up her sleeve and showed me the scars on her forearm where she had cut herself repeatedly. **Through tears she said she now knew that God has forgiven her "once and for all."** With my hands on her scars, we prayed.

An exchange student from Venezuela who became a Christian four days prior to the event told me that with what she learned from *FaithSearch*, she can go home to her country and tell them about the "evidence" of her faith and be able to defend it!

These and other stories remind me afresh that God is a seeker of the lost, and encourages me to continue to labor while it is still called "today"! Thank you for your prayerful and financial support. You are truly partners in this work with me!

Denny McKeever

In many ways, **my return to the staff of Faith Studies has been like "coming home."** In 1996, my wife Joanie and I joined, having just returned from many years of missionary service. I served as an Evangelist and Director of Operations, and Joanie as bookkeeper, until 1999.

Those were incredible years of growth for me under Don's leadership, and I look back on that time as critical in my reentry into ministry in North America. We remained very close to Faith Studies, even while the Lord led us to other ministries for a time.



Very recently, **God wonderfully prepared the opportunity for me to return.** He has provided in miraculous ways for a smooth transition back into the Metro area and to ministry here. I have been "welcomed home" by a warm and loving staff that has embraced me as a co-worker harnessed together with them to reach the world for Christ. At the Celebration Dessert, I again felt the warm welcome of many friends I had known in earlier years.

At the same time, **I realize I have much catching up to do.** I am amazed at the changes here and the way God has blessed and expanded our ministry. I am so excited to be "back home," and for the privilege of contributing to the growth of the Kingdom through this ministry.

Toby Travis

Note: This is Toby's final *FaithSearch* Report, as he moves into service outside of Faith Studies International at the end of June. Please pray for God's continued blessing in Toby's ministry, even as we look forward to sharing our labor side-by-side for God's glory.

Upon my return from India I hit the ground running, with events, seminars, travel and meetings nearly every day. Not a conducive schedule for dealing with jet lag from going through a dozen time zones. Yet **in our weakness God always demonstrates His strength.** Although I did not "feel my best," God's timing was perfect. Over and over again I heard from folks attending that "this was just what I needed to hear." Or, "It's obvious I was supposed to be here tonight."

For one *FaithSearch*, I invited some new friends, whom I had previously helped when they were in need. I'm sure they only accepted my invitation out of obligation. Afterward, they shared candidly how they hadn't wanted to attend. Then they poured out their hearts for over an hour, about **how significant the evening was to them and how thankful they were for my invitation.**

This event illustrates the principle that was part of the passion that brought me to Faith Studies over four years ago, and that I will carry with me wherever the Lord may lead in the days ahead: The power of intentionally **giving of ourselves in relationship to others in order that we may gain opportunities to share Christ.** It truly is through "Friend to Friend" that the "*FaithSearch*" message has its greatest impact.



Praise

Rejoice with us!

1. The successful ministry and safe return of Toby and Denny from the *FaithSearch* training in India!
2. Many *FaithSearch* events scheduled now through December 2003!
3. For God's faithfulness to sustain the ministry in these lean financial times!



Prayer

Things to pray about:

1. For the encouragement and spiritual care of those who have committed their life to Jesus Christ at our recent events.
2. For an increase in financial gifts for operations, especially as we end our fiscal year.
3. For more opportunities in the evangelists' schedules to proclaim the *FaithSearch* message that calls people to new life in Christ.
4. Pray for scheduled events. For the host church and the lost they are inviting, for coordinating teams, for the presence of God, for the conviction of the Holy Spirit, for the nurturing of new believers.