

Inside This Issue:

Looking Back with 20/20 Vision and Ahead with Faith

In a transition year, we reflect on our recent past and peer into our future.

It Seems Like Only Yesterday... Thirty Year Reflection

Four *FaithSearch* evangelists bring passion to our mission of proclaiming the Gospel with evidence.

Classifieds

FaithSearch Milestone:

Thirty Years Old in 2009

Share with us how *FaithSearch* made a difference in your life.

What People Are Saying

Selected comments from individuals touched by the ministry of *FaithSearch*.

FaithSearch Field Reports

Personal reflections from our evangelists.

Prayer and Praise Items

www.faithsearch.org

Looking Back with 20/20 Vision and Ahead with Faith

It is often said that hindsight is 20/20. With our "mind's eye" we can see behind and ahead at the same time. We invite you to use your mind's eye to see the recent past of *FaithSearch* and to peer into our future with your eyes of faith. That's the best way to understand the ministry of *FaithSearch* right now—in 2008, a transition year.

Looking Back: Extending the Vision (2003-2008)

Even as recently as 2002, in our twenty-third year, we (and others) thought of *FaithSearch* as a Twin Cities, United States, English only, white Anglo, ministry—because that's what it was!

Then God intervened—resulting in the conviction that the Gospel with evidence He entrusted to us was for all peoples everywhere. Extending the Vision was born.

- In five years, our message went from English only to twelve other languages
- In five years, our mission field went from the U.S. alone to people in fourteen countries, on four continents
- In five years, our messengers went from



English only to the addition of full time evangelists who are native Russian- and Spanish-speakers

- In five years, our methods went from a white board to digital PowerPoint®, DVDs, Internet, audio books, and CDs

No other *FaithSearch* endeavor has impacted the ministry in a greater way than "Extending the Vision" has over the past five years. During this time our evangelists presented 1,082 outreach events to 144,000 people with 13,049 commitments to Christ. Also during this time, the expansion of the *FaithSearch* Gospel with evidence was multiplied by equip-

ping 2,411 pastors and lay leaders to teach Discovery. We also prepared 326 men and women to disciple others using our *Growing Faith* materials. The book *Surprised by Faith* and a *Participant Guide* are now in thirteen languages, available to serve nearly three billion people. We have produced five DVDs; a manual for each of our three main outreach events; a 112-page *Surprised by Faith Study and Discussion Guide*; three evangelistic Pocket-

(Cont. on page 5)

It Seems Like Only Yesterday...

Thirty Year Reflection

FaithSearch International will celebrate thirty years of ministry next year: 1979–2009. That's quite a milestone. Jesus himself was about thirty years old when He began His ministry (Luke 3:23) so perhaps we are just getting started. With our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus, and intent on running with endurance the race set before us (Hebrews 12:2) we may perhaps also afford a brief reflection on our first three decades.

Our ministry has grown in scope from an individual basement office, to a local ministry hosted in homes, ultimately to have a global impact touching thousands of lives on four continents. The common thread in all phases of our three decades has been evangelism: God's call to His followers to share the Good News with a dying world.

The ministry which would later become *FaithSearch* International began as a Bible study developed by Dr. Don Bierle. As a result of the surprising discoveries during his skeptical investigation into the validity

of Christian faith, Don wrote what he called "Faith Dynamics." He and his wife Vernee opened their home to college students, leading them through the material. As a professor, he hoped to help young people avoid the pitfalls of doubt about faith which had ensnared him. "My thought at that time was only to help Christians to grow deeper in their faith," he said.

(Cont. on page 2)



Dr. Don Bierle presented "Faith Dynamics" to guests invited to a Twin Cities home early in his ministry.

GOD AT WORK

FaithSearch Ministry Year*

"By the Numbers"

Outreach Events	158
Outreach Attendance	18,716
Recorded Faith Commitments	1,642
Training Events	30
Training Attendance	158
USA States with Events	19
Countries with Events	14
Donors	571
Web Page Views	389,967

* *FaithSearch* Ministry activity during the previous twelve months to the most recent report date: from November 1, 2007, through October 31, 2008.

FAITHSEARCH

This *FaithSearch* newsletter is published by *FaithSearch* International, an interdenominational, donor-supported, 501(c)(3) organization, committed to proclaiming the Gospel with evidence to all peoples everywhere. This is done through outreach and training events, media resources, and discipleship programs. *FaithSearch* International is not denominationally affiliated.



For information call:

(952) 401-4501 / toll-free 1-800-964-1447

Address:

105 Peavey Rd., STE 200, Chaska, MN 55318

Visit our Web site at www.FaithSearch.org

E-mail: info@FaithSearch.org

Board Members:

John Parenteau, *Board Chairman*

Larry Balmer • Don Bierle • Fred Bills

Jim Rasmussen • Lawrence Schram • Elmer Wedel

© 2008 by *FaithSearch* International

CLASSIFIEDS

FAITHSEARCH MILESTONE: THIRTY YEARS OLD IN 2009

Break out the kazooos and let the party begin? No, not really. *FaithSearch* has no big party or celebration planned for 2009.

Since the founding of our ministry, our biggest celebration has been YOUR STORY!—each life touched by the power of the Gospel. So to celebrate this anniversary, we are measuring the impact of our thirty years in changed lives. Thousands of men, women and youth have indicated that they first made a faith commitment to Jesus Christ at a *FaithSearch* event. Others rededicated their life to Christ, or found their faith strengthened as a result. For some, it was a spouse, a son or daughter, neighbor, or work associate whose life was impacted.

Will you celebrate 2009 with us by telling us your (their) story? How has *FaithSearch* made a difference in your (their) life? Perhaps it was *Surprised by Faith*; or new knowledge of the reliability of the Bible; or evidence for the existence of God, of intelligent design, of life after death; or the testimony of one of our evangelists.

In these financially difficult times, as we trust God for the future of our ministry, we long to hear your word of encouragement. We yearn to know that we have made a difference for God's Kingdom through our faithfulness to the Gospel and to the task before us.

Call our office (952.401.4501, or toll free 800.964.1447); send an us E-mail (info@faithsearch.org); write us a letter, or stop by in person (the coffee is usually on).

We look forward to hearing from you so we may truly celebrate the spiritual victories God has wrought.

Thirty Year Reflection

(Cont. from page 1)

After moving to the Twin Cities in 1973—and after “accidentally” discovering that “Faith Dynamics” (becoming known as “The Faith Study”) was very effective for evangelism—Don and others offered the material in private homes and in area churches. Several Minneapolis businessmen encouraged the formation of a ministry to support this effort. **H.I.S. Ministries (Home Inspirational Studies)** was incorporated on **January 12, 1979.**

In the 1980s, Dr. Bierle presented the material on a blackboard in family rooms as many as ten times a year, with a handful of individuals professing faith in Christ each year. Don decided to leave his college professorship to give full time leadership to the ministry in 1992, after more than ten years of part-time service. In that year, *Surprised by Faith* was published, capturing Don's story and the evidence which led him to faith in Christ (the text of “The Faith Study”). In 1994, H.I.S. moved from the Bierle home to real office space, and began to look like an established ministry. That year also marked the beginning of a new period of strategic and intentional planning for the ministry. The “**Harvest 2000**” plan sought to produce printed evangelism and discipleship materials that would maximize and equip the ministry for a bountiful harvest for God's Kingdom by the year 2000.

The name of the ministry was changed in 1998 to Faith Studies International, reflecting the ministry's widening scope and its movement from ministering in individual homes to partnering with local churches for outreach. By 1999, the ministry had grown in visibility and in impact, with 136 outreach events that year, reaching over 30,000 people. This resulted in 2,105 recorded faith commitments.

Over the course of Harvest 2000, we held a total of 387 outreach events—on three continents, in seven countries and twenty-eight states. These events resulted in 7,760 known faith commitments to follow Christ. **To put this in perspective, in the watershed year 2000, both attendance and commitments to Christ were greater than our previous twenty years combined!** God truly honored “Harvest 2000.” Further reflecting the extension of our ministry impact, that year, 27% of our events were local; 27% were national (not Twin Cities); and 46% were international.

“The Faith Study” was renamed *FaithSearch* in 2001, to meet changing perceptions in the culture and the intended audience (skeptics and seekers). The message

of the Gospel, however, was not changed. Even as the United States mourned the September 11 tragedies, our ministry recommitted itself to battling the most insidious threat of all: a “spiritual terrorism” seeking to keep people from knowing and following Jesus.

The following year we launched “Extending the Vision.” This strategy, said Dr. Bierle, “crystallized our passion and resolve to fulfill God's call and vision for our ministry, by renewing our zeal to use the Gospel proclamation of *FaithSearch* to reach the diversity of people in North America, while extending His redemption to people in new geographic regions, languages and cultures.” The first notable area of this extension began through a partnership with India Campus Crusade for Christ, and the translation of our resources into the national language of Hindi, and eventually into several other regional languages.

In 2003, we thoroughly analyzed how we communicate and position our ministry, in order to continue “Extending the Vision.” As a result, we completely rebranded our ministry, becoming *FaithSearch* International, and updating our ministry resources. We also updated, expanded and republished *Surprised by Faith*, adding the latest scientific, archaeological and historical evidences, as well as significant photos to foster deeper understanding. At that point we also realized that our evangelist staff needed to reflect some of the diversity we were reaching out to. As a result, we invited native Spanish and Russian speaking evangelists to join us.

We have continued to hone our mes-

(Cont. on page 5)



Thirty Years of Ministry Logos



What People Are Saying

“I was an atheist most of my life... *FaithSearch* lit a fire in me to know the truth, and my search for the truth has brought me to Christ. Thank you.” —**GK, Osceola, WI**

“*FaithSearch* Discovery helped our people see the importance of being grounded in their faith. It helped them know that being a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's Word isn't a shot in the dark, but is altogether the right thing to do.” —**Pastor DH, Kerkhoven, MN**

“One of the most powerful presentations I've ever heard—fantastic!” —**SW, Apple Valley, MN**

“As a pastor with a heart for evangelism, I found the *FaithSearch* presentation on the accuracy and reliability of the Bible to be extremely persuasive. I recognize a good tool when I see it.” —**Pastor DS, Grantsburg, WI**

“I have been searching, but could not quite get there. This has helped to solidify my belief in the truth that is Jesus.” —**LK, Sidney, MT**

Celebrate the Birth of Jesus? Heaven Certainly Did!

By Dr. Don Bierle

Christians don't have to be convinced of the importance of the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas celebration is a well-established tradition.* Those who have any lingering doubt about whether there was anything to celebrate, however, may want to take a cue from the "insiders." I'm talking about the heavenly participants of the first Christmas: the Holy Spirit and the angelic hosts. After all, they should know how significant Jesus' birth was—they're "insiders." They have the scoop!

What was heaven's response to the birth of Jesus? Reading the eyewitness records of this unique event, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, you will be struck by the following observation: The Holy Spirit and the heavenly hosts were ecstatic with excitement. For example, the Holy Spirit filled the mouths of several people with exuberance:

- "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the Babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth... cried out with a loud voice..." (Luke 1:41ff.).
- "And Mary said, 'My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior'" (Luke 1:46ff.).

* **EDITOR:** Some debate the time of year at which Christmas should be celebrated; others decry any celebration as a sugar-coating of pagan traditions; many criticize the season as being over laden with commercial trappings. The point of this article is simple: Since Jesus was, in fact, born in history—God incarnate to earth!—we should consider how the event was celebrated by the true insiders, and whether it isn't, after all, truly a reason for us to celebrate as well. *Hallelujah!*



- "And... Zacharias... prophesied, saying: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people'" (Luke 1:67ff.).
- "...Simeon... said..., 'my eyes have seen Thy salvation... a light for Revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel'" (Luke 2:30, 32).

A baby leaps in the womb, a teenager is filled with worship and joy, an elderly priest becomes a prophet of redemption, and a devout saint has his eyes opened to see God's salvation unfold for all people. The Holy Spirit, clearly an "insider" to the event, set the tone for the celebration of Jesus' coming by infilling these proclamations.

Likewise, the angels' messages were filled with enthusiasm. For example, in Luke 2:10 the angel said, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people..." (Let us not ignore the heavenly host in this passage, which barely avoided interrupting the messenger with their sudden and frenzied praise to God for resting His favor upon the people of earth.)

Even one of the archangels, Gabriel, exudes excitement in his announcement to Zacharias (read it in Luke 1:13ff.) and to Mary, "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father

(Cont. on page 4)

Warm Christmas Greetings from FaithSearch

It is our prayer that you will be blessed in a new way this Christmas. Here is a selection of Christmas memories, thoughts and blessings from members of our "family" to yours.

Kristi Wanamaker, Director of Partner Services

A tradition I grew up with and brought into my family was our Christmas Eve celebration. Mom & Dad did the dishes while we kids prepared a program or family worship time. I don't remember my own creativity, but what a joy to watch my kids as they prepared each year. To watch them design their own programs and read the Christmas story touched my heart.

Just as Simeon waited for the Christ and declared: "For my eyes have seen your salvation!" (Luke 2:30) that is my heart at Christmas. Waiting with anticipation and joy!

Laura Miles, Director of Operations

"God loved us so much that He GAVE." Giving is at the heart of God. He gave up the Treasure of Heaven to make a new everlasting covenant with Himself that would give us eternal life. God is a giver. He loves cheerful giving. Jesus, spoke for the Father when he said, "freely you have received, now freely give."

I try to be a very thankful person. I try not to overlook a single blessing—always wanting to acknowledge the One who gives all good gifts and not take anything for granted.

Your investment in *FaithSearch* is an investment in the Kingdom of God. At this blessed time of year, when we think on our giving and receiving, let's think on how we show our

gratitude for the Greatest Gift of All, all year long. If it were not for Him, I would be lost.

And if it were not for you, and your investment in the Kingdom through *FaithSearch*—I would not have this job. This Christmas season I want to say THANK YOU to you and to God. Words are not enough to express how TRULY grateful I am.

Carlos Fernández, Evangelist to Spanish-Speaking World

We three kings of orient are... Following yonder star.

In the Spanish tradition, the Magi—those proverbial wise men from the east—are known as Magi Kings (Reyes Magos). With travel prices so high it is no wonder people think they are royalty and magicians! However, when one has the Lord's guiding, a calling, and is willing to go by bus, the most incredible things are possible. In 2008 the Lord enabled us to take the Gospel with evidence in eight countries where Spanish is spoken (Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Peru, USA). The joy of taking along a message far more precious than gold, training thousands, and seeing hundreds reconciled with the Lord is indescribable! I wonder with amazement where it will take us in 2009, that "star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright!"

Jason Gudim, Operations

"And from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace"—John 1:16.

I've been thinking about grace a lot lately. We're told in the Bible that "the free gift of God is eternal life..." That is grace in action. We receive grace because of who Jesus is and all that He did: His fullness. He led a sinless life as a human being, and He died on the cross for our sins, a punishment He did not deserve, but we did. He rose from the dead. Part of His fullness is that He came to earth as a vulnerable, dependent, little baby, born in the poorest conditions in

(Cont. on page 4)



FaithSearch staff: Front row (left to right): Laura Miles, Pat O'Hare, Vernee Bierle, and Kristi Wanamaker. Back row (left to right): Rick Wattman, Oleg Voskresensky, Jason Gudim, Don Bierle, and Carlos Fernández.

Christmas Objection?

Jesus couldn't possibly have been born in December, much less December 25, when many Christians celebrate His birth, right?

No one knows exactly the date of Jesus' birth. Critics of Christianity like to point to the celebration of Jesus' birth on December 25, as nothing more than another myth in which Christians believe. For example, atheist Oxford professor Richard Dawkins wrote for the socialist magazine *New Statesman* in 2007, "Certainly, nobody takes seriously the legend that he was born in December. Late Christian tradition simply attached Jesus' birth to a long-established and convenient winter solstice festival." Is it as certain as he claims?

Let's look carefully at the Bible, and see if there isn't some evidence which will shed light on this question.

1. First, the likely date of John the Baptist's birth *can be determined*. In Luke 1:5 we read that Zacharias was a priest of the division of Abijah, and he was serving "in the appointed order of his division." According to 1 Chronicles 24:10, the division of Abijah drew the eighth lot, that is, the eighth month, with the first service (lot) being the Hebrew month of Nisan (March-April). The result is that Zacharias must have been serving some time in October. Assuming Elizabeth conceived upon his return home (Luke 1:23-24) **John the Baptist must have been conceived in what we would today call late October or early November.**

2. Mary conceived, according to Luke 1:26-27, in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, which would be around April. If



it was early in the month, then nine months later, the date of Jesus' birth, would be in late December or early January. Why not December 25th when people were already accustomed to celebrating? (Though not among the earliest traditions of the church, the December date for celebrating Christ's birth goes back to the mid-fourth century. Some have noted that there is not a month in the year to which Christ's birth has not been assigned at some point!)

3. A second line of argument against Jesus being born in December was that it was winter, and shepherds—it is alleged—would not have their sheep out in the fields at night (Luke 2:8) in the cold. However, ewes in Israel conceive in July with a gestation time of five months. **Ewes start lambing in mid-December, which is why the shepherds are with them all night—to protect and care for the newly born lambs.** If Jesus was born in December, there is no surprise at all that shepherds would be "watching over their flocks by night."

4. Furthermore, Jewish tradition and Old Testament prophecy held that when the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) He would first be revealed from the "tower of the flock"—a special watch tower which lay close to Bethlehem but on the road to Jerusalem. **A rabbinic rule provided that any lamb born in a flock from Jerusalem to Bethlehem must be presumed to be for sacrifice.** Those who tended these flocks were not ordinary shepherds. They were those who tended year round the lambs destined for Temple sacrifice. How providential that the birth of Jesus should be announced first to those whose vocation would help them anticipate that this "Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11) would have a future destiny in Jerusalem. His birth would have been as the Lamb of God, with all the other intended sacrificial lambs. **Indeed, His ultimate sacrifice on the cross ended the need for further sacrifices on the altar.** Thus, Jesus' death meant that the other sacrificial lambs wouldn't have to die anymore. Truly, He is the Lamb of God who became our substitute to take away our sin and death (John 1:29).

Considering this biblical, historical evidence, you should feel free to celebrate Christmas in December without intimidation!

Warm Christmas Greetings (Cont. from page 3)

a manger, among the sheep and cattle. Amid all the gift giving and receiving, the time spent with family and friends, even time spent at church in worship, I would encourage you to see that because of this little babe born in Bethlehem some 2,000 years ago, "we have all received, grace upon grace."

Oleg Voskresensky, Russian Evangelist

Russians are storytellers and our Christmas reflects that. It is never a stand-alone, one-time event, but part of a continuous and ongoing divine experience. It begins with a forty-day-long fasting as the church prepares itself to the coming of the Lord into this world. This time is both solemn and joyous: We reflect on our current fallen condition in anticipation of Christ freeing us from it.

The very day of Christmas is also viewed in a whole sequence of the Theophany events—the story of God's revelation of Himself to His people which culminates in Jesus actually stepping into the human history. Even that is not where it all ends—a few days later we celebrate His Baptism—the moment of all three persons of the Trinity revealing themselves in a glorious scene.

May your Christmas story stay with you and bless you—the Russian way—continuously!

Patricia O'Hare, Administration

I love to celebrate the birth of Christ with music. I have sung in church choirs since junior high school and never tire of the rich texts of the carols and anthems. They are so full of the Gospel and point to the reality, the hope, and the joy of Jesus' incarnation—and the offered grace and redemption because of His coming. The late-night, Christmas Eve Candlelight service is one of my favorites, providing a time of personal reflection on the miracle of His birth while also celebrating with others who have experienced His new life and proclaiming the truth to those who have not yet experienced it. What an opportunity for outreach in the midst of celebration!

~ Merry Christmas ~

Celebrate the Birth of Jesus?

(Cont. from page 3)

David" (Luke 1:32). Luke also records Jesus' own later statement (Luke 15:10) that the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner who repents. It is understandable, then, that they should be ecstatic over the One who was coming and who made redemption of all sinners possible.

Should we not follow the lead of Heaven? The Holy Spirit Himself and the angelic hosts made it clear that the historical event which occurred 2,000 years ago was the advent of "Immanuel"—that is, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23) and a Savior besides (Luke 2:11). May I recommend that this Christmas you respond in two complementary ways: as Mary, who "treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19); and as the shepherds who were "glorifying and praising God" (Luke 2:20). Together they make a meaningful and appropriate celebration of Jesus.



Looking Back with 20/20 Vision and Ahead with Faith (Cont. from page 1)

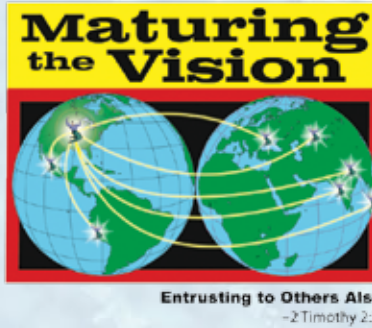
Guides; and a host of other literature. These achievements are offered as praise to the provision of our caring and powerful God.

Looking Ahead: Maturing the Vision

Oh, that we could see the hand of God as clearly when we peer into the future, as when we review our past! **Based on 2 Timothy 2:2, we believe God wants us to establish multiplying and sustainable Gospel with evidence ministries (using FaithSearch Discovery) which will last from generation to generation** in the countries and languages we have begun, i.e., to invest the message into many other messengers. As a donor supported ministry, the current national and international financial crisis is impacting us, too. **Fewer donors and less revenue have caused us to reduce our staff by nearly 40%** (our primary leadership is still in place). For now, we will have to be selective—focusing our efforts on the United States (English) and on Russian- and Spanish-speaking countries.

Even in this, God is still at work in some mighty ways. The door has just opened for Oleg Voskresensky (our Russian evangelist) to **train public school teachers in Russia to offer FaithSearch Discovery** as an elective course in the curriculum of public high schools beginning in 2009. Thousands of Russian high school students will be taught the manuscript and archaeological evidence for the historical reliability of the New Testament, the words and deeds of Jesus that demonstrate that He is God, the nature of Christian faith and how one becomes a Christian. **This could not even happen in the United States!**

Carlos Fernández (our Spanish-speaking evangelist) is becoming known as a passionate evangelist and trainer among the Spanish ministries of the United States, Mexico and at least six other Latin-American countries. **He is welcomed annually to the largest and most influential Spanish seminaries in those countries** (e.g., SETECA in Guatemala City) to train their students and faculty how to use *FaithSearch* Discovery in their ministries as they return to their homelands. These students come from literally every



Spanish-speaking country. Truly he is beginning the development of a multiplying and sustainable ministry throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

In America we will endeavor to strengthen the Church in its role as salt and light to a lost world. **There is a growing illiteracy both in knowledge of the Word of God (2 Timothy 4:2-4) and in the ability to give reasons for the hope we have (1 Peter 3:15).** If this trend continues, it will render evangelism ineffective and the lifestyle (testimony) of Christians will be indistinguishable from their secular counterparts. The most effective way to stem this tide is to implement change through current and future Christian leaders. Students at Christian colleges and seminaries (much of the future Christian leadership) get excited and motivated when they receive the Discovery materials and are equipped by it to strengthen the faith of others and make them more effective witnesses. This kind of partnership (we call it “Vision for America”) together with our ongoing outreach events and teacher training of current pastors and lay teachers, will result in **increasing penetration of biblical truth and the Gospel with evidence:** into sermons and classes at churches; in neighborhood small groups; in men’s and women’s ministries; in youth groups; in business “brown bag” groups—all across America.

Reinventing FaithSearch International

FaithSearch International will celebrate its 30th anniversary of ministry in 2009. The accomplishments and spiritual impact of this ministry have exceeded the founders’ wildest expectations and imagination. Along the way, periodic staff adjustments, emphases, name changes, etc. have been made. Nevertheless, there is a need right now to “reinvent” *FaithSearch* International in a way that results in a transition of leadership and a vitality that is relevant for another generation of ministry. Honestly, we don’t know exactly what that should and will look like. That is why Dr. Bierle is proposing some areas of “exploration” starting in 2009. **Only God’s eyes can see where He will take us in the months and years ahead.**

Thirty Year Reflection (Cont. from page 2)

sage, characterizing what we proclaim as “the Gospel with evidence,” and identifying ten “*Ah-ha!*” discoveries which result when evidence for Christian faith is thoughtfully considered. **Our flagship presentation is now billed as FaithSearch Discovery, and with Surprised by Faith, is available in Russian and Spanish.** We have trained 2,250 Discovery teachers and over 25,000 pastors, enabling them to use *FaithSearch* resources in their ministries. Through “Extending the Vision,” we have seen more than 20,000 confessions of faith in Jesus, from among the more than 2 million people who have heard or read the Gospel with evidence, and are now prepared to give an answer (1 Peter 3:15).

Our current strategic plan is called “**Maturing the Vision**” (2009-13). It continues on from “Extending the Vision,” identifying the importance of developing sustainable ministries in each target language and geographical region. Now active in fourteen countries on four continents, we continue to do direct evangelism, while also emphasizing indirect evangelism by training and equipping nationals to carry the ministry forward in their countries.

The *FaithSearch* message—the Gospel with evidence—has been developed and translated into forms which can be used effectively by other Christians for outreach and equipping ministry. The *FaithSearch* Discovery Curriculum is complete and self-contained, and enables anyone to clearly and effectively articulate an inspiring, astonishingly logical case for believing in the historical person of Jesus Christ. **Not bad for our first thirty years, but there is much more to be done.**

FaithSearch International, together with people from around the world, will continue—by God’s provision and favor—to call people to faith in Jesus, proclaiming that the Christian faith is supported by the greatest body of scientific, historical and biblical evidence the world has ever known! Just as we have done for thirty years, we hope to carry on until He returns.

FaithSearch Annual Themes

- 1993** Passing the Baton: Equipping people to run the race
- 1994** Entrusted with the Gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:3-4)
- 1995** By Faith... (Hebrews 11:1-2)
- 1996** ...A Door for the Word (Colossians 4:2-3)
- 1997** Whatever You Sow (Galatians 6:7)
- 1998** Building on the Foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11)
- 1999** Press on Toward the Goal (Philippians 3:14)
- 2000** Open Your Eyes! (John 4:35)
- 2001** Sharing Joy (Philippians 2:17)
- 2002** Extending the Vision... Through Faith (Ephesians 2:8)
- 2003** Extending the Vision... To All Peoples Everywhere (Matthew 28:19)
- 2004** Extending the Vision... united in spirit, intent on one purpose (Philippians 2:2)
- 2005** Extending the Vision... Through Multiplication (2 Timothy 2:2)
- 2006** Extending the Vision... Foundation for the Future (1 Timothy 6:19)
- 2007** Extending the Vision... on toward the goal... (Philippians 3:14)
- 2008** Maturing the Vision... Entrusting to Others Also (2 Timothy 2:2)

FaithSearch Field Reports

From Our Team of Evangelists

The Desires of My Heart



Dr. Don Bierle

The Psalmist declares, "Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). Though I spent a lot of my early years in athletics, was attracted to school and learning, and liked the creative rather than routine, I came to love the challenge of teaching more than anything else.

I loved the Lord, too, and wanted to serve Him in ministry, but couldn't reconcile the formal and liturgical role of ministers that was familiar to me growing up, with my desire to teach. So I avoided full time ministry and went into science research and college teaching.

The wonderful Lord I had met on my knees in my twenty's began to burn in my heart a passion for His Word. **Discovery after discovery had to be released, and the Lord called me to release it through the gift of teaching His Word that He had given me.** First H.I.S. Ministries, then Faith Studies International and finally **FaithSearch International** were God's provision to fill the desires of my heart. He has proven the promise of the Psalmist.

In 2008, I have again been privileged to be a minister, and a teacher—teaching the lost to find Him, teaching believers to find strength and to delight in Him, and teaching others to teach. **That's why I find our new 2009 theme of "Maturing the Vision" so meaningful and exciting.** Through it I again see the gracious hand of God further fulfilling the desires of my heart.

Real Zestiness



Carlos Fernández

This ministry has taken me to some very spicy places. In Mexico I have been teaching and preaching in Cholula, Tabasco, and the tropical village of Platano y Cacao (Banana and Cocoa). **The real zest, however, is in the joy of people who discover reasons for believing.** Embracing me and overflowing with joy a lady in Puebla shared "Now I can shout it from the rooftops!" Almost to the point of tears was the conversion of yet another prodigal son at the Palapas park in Cancun.

Not all responses are so effusive, yet they are still meaningful. **The reverent silence of hundreds of Sunday school teachers from all over Guatemala during long hours of training spoke just as loudly.** The thoughtful attention of people under the rain in a working-class neighborhood in Tehuacan, even stronger...

That people of all ages need the Gospel with evidence became evident to a public school teacher—of some 350 kids—who shared that when he told his students about the incarnation, one said, "Oh! So Jesus is just like Hercules." With **FaithSearch Discovery**, the teacher can now respond in all conviction that our faith is no tale.

Even more exciting is the multiplying effect of our ministry. In some of the Mexico and Central America Bible institutes are students who will return to their countries of origin—some from places where **biblical Christianity has not even begun to scratch the surface.**

The Gospel with evidence finds its ways into unusual places. This past year it was broadcast though **the airwaves of a Marxist university radio in Guatemala.** And speaking of hot places—with God's favor we may be in Colombia this coming year!

Exactly a Miracle



Oleg Voskresensky

Webster's defines "miracle" as "an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs." That was exactly what happened to the **FaithSearch** ministry this past year in Russia. Public schools education in the Russian Federation has so far been exactly that—"human affairs." Not any more! The Lord in His love to millions of the school children in Russia decided to intervene. **He brought FaithSearch into contact with some key persons in the Russian Teachers Continuing Education system and stirred their hearts with interest in our material and teaching strategy—presenting the case for Christianity with evidence.**

I have to be honest and to confess—it was not happening by my boldest and most daring prayers. Even if somebody had told me earlier this year that I need to start praying about offering the **FaithSearch Discovery** to the Russian public schools—it would have looked to me to be too ...unrealistic. Sorry, I cannot even claim the honor of being the greatest visionary for my own ministry and have to thank somebody out there for doing it for me. **All that was left for me to do was show up in front of the History and Humanities school teachers and to share what God had put on my heart. Easy!**

Have you looked at the map of Russia lately? Now it is time to start asking the Lord to send more workers into this field—hopefully, from among those several hundreds of Christian leaders we have trained in the Bible Colleges and Seminaries so far. **Would somebody please start praying for that?**



Praise

Rejoice with us!

1. Thank the Lord for thirty years of **FaithSearch** ministry! More lives have been touched than we will ever know until Heaven. Praise God for His sustaining this ministry and blessing so many through it.
2. Praise God for incredible growth and multiplication of the international ministry of **FaithSearch** in 2008! Praise Him for amazing doors of opportunity and the partnerships He has orchestrated for **FaithSearch**!
3. Praise God for His provision of support through investors of resources into **FaithSearch**. Time, money and prayer have made the way for God to see His vision for this ministry played out in our world today.
4. Praise God for a staff of godly men and women with a unity of vision and spirit, desiring to reach the hurting and spiritually dead in this world with the Good News, and to invite them into a victorious life with Jesus.



Prayer

Please lift in prayer:

1. Please pray for the continued provision for **FaithSearch** in all ways: financial, opportunities to minister, on-going spiritual growth and wisdom, protection from the enemy, the people to do the work, strength of belief to walk in the power and authority of Christ.
2. Pray for our international ministry—especially our Russian and Spanish ministries. The opportunities are great! Pray that we might take advantage of them, and that in His grace and mercy many might confess Jesus as Savior and Lord.
3. Pray for many USA events which would allow us to reach many for Jesus and let many know about **FaithSearch**, its resources and how they can invest in our mission to proclaim the Gospel with evidence to all peoples everywhere. Pray for our "Vision for America" strategy to reach and equip future Christian leaders with **FaithSearch** ministry resources.