



December 2008

Looking Forward to the Rest of the Story

Dear Friend,

I am always astonished at the dynamic nature of Scripture. I have read the Christmas texts of Matthew and Luke so many times I was sure there is nothing new there. But there was! **I read them this year with new eyes on the current, challenging situation facing FaithSearch, and the Spirit of God ministered to my heart.**

A New Christmas Lesson

I had always focused on the end result of the Christmas story—all's well that ends well! After all, a "merry" Christmas is a gentle snow falling, twinkling lights, sleigh bells and laughter. When I looked again at the Gospel story, I saw that Zacharias "was troubled" (Luke 1:12); Mary "was greatly troubled" (Luke 1:29); and the shepherds "were terribly frightened" (Luke 2:9). The *process* had its stress points. **Nevertheless, all were in the will of God.**

I'm comforted and encouraged by this observation, for I have had these same emotions this year. Fewer donors, less money, zero cash reserves and five fewer staff have left me "troubled"—even "frightened." Again this year **FaithSearch** has had the continued spiritual fruit of **salvation for many and the multiplication of teachers** to proclaim the Gospel—assurances that we, too, are still in the will of God. Zacharias eventually experienced "joy and gladness" (Luke 1:14) and prophesied as he was filled with the Spirit (Luke 1:67). Mary's eventual joy emanated in the great Magnificat (Luke 1:46ff.). The shepherds couldn't stop "glorifying and praising God" (Luke 2:20).

That's the rest of the story! And we aren't there right now. My prayer and faith is that we, with Zacharias, Mary and the shepherds, will emerge from this time—blessed and grateful and full of praise—being stronger, faithful stewards. In the meantime, as we experience our "stress point," how encouraging it would be **to hear from you this Christmas.** If you are able, give priority to **FaithSearch** in your prayers and year-end giving.

Two Messages

I want to talk to you out of both sides of my mouth, so to speak. On one hand, I can tell you that **our current ministry is exceeding even the wildest expectations and dreams of its founders.** They never imagined a ministry to thousands in fourteen countries on four continents, the Gospel with evidence published in thirteen languages, Spanish and Russian evangelists on staff, and thousands of people professing faith in Jesus Christ each year—many the fruit of second- and third-generation **FaithSearch** teachers whom we have equipped.

Unbelievable doors of ministry opportunity are opening for us in 2009. For example, Oleg has been invited to teach **FaithSearch** Discovery to the humanities teachers of the public schools throughout Russia. Our Gospel with evidence presentation will actually be an elective course for **thousands of Russian public high school students beginning next fall!** I have summed up the last five years of Extending the Vision and looked ahead to 2009 in an article in the enclosed newsletter. (See "Looking Back...") Please read it now—God is so good!

On the other hand, I speak from the other side of my mouth. Be clear on this: When I tell you about our affliction, it is not in an attitude of failure or doom. Instead, it is a measure of my frustration that though we have demonstrated an unusually effective ministry of evangelism and discipleship, **because of a lack of financial resources, we are forced to do less for God's Kingdom.** It is also a measure of my zeal to want to reach more lost people and put more laborers into the harvest field. I believe this is the heart of Jesus. Reaching the lost is all He talked about during the forty days after His resurrection and before His ascension (see Luke 24:45-51; Acts 1:6-9; Matthew 28:18-20). He said even the angels in heaven rejoice over every single sinner who repents (Luke 15:7,10).



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Be Part of God's Unfolding Miracle for FaithSearch Ministry in 2009

YES, Don, I want to join hands with you to make Proclaiming the Gospel with Evidence possible.

Enclosed is my donation: \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$ _____

Please send a FREE 25-pack of the Christmas PocketGuide (Gift of \$50 or more enclosed.)

Please process my gift through my credit card:

Visa

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Discover

3-digit code from back



Name on card: _____

Name: _____ Address: _____

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Phone: _____ E-mail: _____



The affliction of *FaithSearch* is its ministry-restricting financial bottom line. We have no cash reserves and income is down about 30% compared to last year. I have reduced our monthly expenses from \$65,000 to \$47,000 by reducing our staff from thirteen to eight last month (40%). Only five people who are essential to support the three evangelists of *FaithSearch* remain. These eight are courageous people who have chosen to forego the larger salaries they could get in secular jobs and who are willing to sustain a pay cut in order that the Gospel may continue to be proclaimed. This gives new realism to our prayer that God would “give us this day our daily bread.” Like the children of Israel who received manna in the wilderness, we are learning to trust Him for His provision one day at a time (Exodus 16:19-21).

One Answer

There is not one doubt in my mind that our future as a ministry is entirely dependent on God. I’m not babbling a spiritual platitude here. God could touch any heart or hearts at any time He wants, to financially provide for the proclamation of His Gospel through *FaithSearch*. The angel Gabriel expressed this truth well when he said about an old man and woman who were about to have a baby, “For with God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

Having this conviction, I’m still not one to “sit on my hands” and wait for God to do His miracle for us. Nor is anyone else on the staff. We are searching, praying, planning, marketing, calling—every day to strengthen this ministry which we believe in so much. Deep in our hearts we know that we are not the answer. There is only one answer: God! He alone can complete the rest of the story. We work hard because usually God unfolds His miracle by using our hands and feet. **For nearly thirty years now, your prayers and financial support have been God’s hands and feet for *FaithSearch*.** I pray that will be true again this Christmas.

Celebrate Jesus. He’s Always in the Rest of the Story

At *FaithSearch*, we don’t have an expectation of “entitlement.” We consider your partnership a privilege so we can fulfill the call of God to proclaim the Gospel with evidence. You know that for nearly thirty years now, when some others have slipped morally or compromised the truth, we have been faithful to God’s reliable Word and to Jesus as the only Savior. God be praised, Jesus will always be in the rest of our story!

If Jesus is central to your story as well, and you want to help make Him known so that by next Christmas He can be in the rest of the story for thousands more lost people, then clasp hands with me to make it so. God willing, your generous year-end gift will enable these 2009 endeavors:

1. **Train hundreds of Russian public high school teachers to proclaim the Gospel with evidence** (our Discovery presentation) to thousands of public school students. Pray with us that the Holy Spirit will take the truth they hear and apply it to transform their hearts to love Jesus.
2. **Equip hundreds of Christian students, who are the next decade’s emerging leaders, with *FaithSearch* Discovery**, the same Gospel with evidence presentation I use for evangelism and strengthening the faith of believers. I call this multiplication of teachers our “Vision for America.”
3. **Reach the lost and strengthen the faith of believers among Spanish-speaking people in the United States, Central and South America.** Spanish training institutions, Spanish missions, and churches are requesting our training, and sending out the trainees to proclaim Jesus to their homelands around the world.

Thank you for your prayerful consideration of a year-end gift to *FaithSearch*. To help you put Jesus in someone’s story as well, **with your gift of \$50 or more, I will send you a 25-pack of our popular PocketGuide, “Unwrapping the Truth about Jesus.”** A beautiful summary of our evidence message about Jesus, you can place it with your Christmas cards or just hand it to people you meet this special season of celebration.

Vernee and I, and the entire staff at *FaithSearch*, send our warmest wishes for you this Christmas as you celebrate the birth of Jesus, a story that makes our story meaningful and eternal.

Celebrating Jesus who IS the story,



Dr. Don Bierle
President, *FaithSearch* International