

My Meeting With Obama

Who would have thought one year ago that the election for president this year would be between John McCain and Barack Obama? During the primaries only Gov. Mike Huckabee seemed to reach out to the conservative Christian base, which was slow to support “one of our own”—a man who heartily agrees with the biblical positions on life and marriage I’ve discussed here many times. Though Huckabee got further than anyone thought, it was clear by March that McCain would be the Republican choice. Because he’s strongly pro-life, supports traditional marriage and strongly supports Israel, I was relieved.

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Pastors Rally to Support Marriage Amendments in Three States

Led by pastor Jim Garlow, the Protect Marriage campaign was launched in response to California's legalizing gay marriage in May



[] Roughly 3,000 pastors in California, Florida and Arizona joined in a conference call Wednesday to develop a strategy to rally Christians in support of marriage amendments on the November ballots in those states.

Hosted by pastor Jim Garlow of Skyline Church in San Diego, the meeting included such speakers as Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, Bishop Harry R. Jackson Jr. of the High Impact Leadership Coalition and Prison Fellowship founder Charles Colson, who quoted a Princeton professor as saying the battle for marriage is “the Armageddon of the culture war.”

“This is where if we lose, it would be very hard to turn the ship right again,” Colson said. “If we win, we might start rolling back the other side. This is a major, major struggle, and we should spare nothing in defining marriage the way every civilization has as the union of one man and one woman joined together as one flesh, as we believe in the Scripture in order to procreate.”

Responding to a May 15 California Supreme Court ruling that legalized gay marriage in his state, Garlow launched the Protect Marriage campaign () to unite pastors in support of Proposition 8, which would amend the California state

constitution to define marriage as between one man and one woman. The lobbying effort has since spread to Florida and Arizona, where voters also will decide on marriage amendments on Nov. 4. Similar marriage amendments have passed in 27 states.

To drum up support for the marriage amendments, Garlow is encouraging pastors to host voter registration drives, raise money for marriage campaigns and commit to prayer and fasting. California pastors also are urging their members to pray for eight minutes each day at 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. for the passage of Proposition 8.

A 40-day fast is scheduled to begin Sept. 24 in the run-up to Election Day, and on Oct. 1 an iProtect Marriage youth rally () advocating for Proposition 8 will be simulcast to churches nationwide free of charge.

“Let’s get all that [youthful] passion going in the right direction,” said Teen Mania founder Ron Luce, who is one of the leaders of the iProtect youth rally. “If we don’t give them something to do, the world will.”

In all three states, major prayer events are being planned for Nov. 1. In Arizona, a prayer meeting will be held at the state Capitol, and in California Lou Engle will host TheCall San Diego, which he hopes will draw a capacity crowd of 75,000 to Qualcomm Stadium.

“This is a spiritual battle; it must be won in prayer,” Engle said, calling on church leaders to participate in the 40-day fast. “We believe the pastors across California and the nation need to lead the nation in these 40 days of fasting and prayer. We need to take away the rights of the powers of darkness to bring this kind of resolution forward because it’s a spiritual battle.”

California’s gay marriage ruling states that ministers who object to gay marriage will not be required to officiate at

ceremonies for same-sex couples. But Christian leaders say redefining marriage could severely limit religious freedom.

“This is ground zero in a culture war that the California Supreme Court just declared on Christianity and every single faith,” said Maggie Gallagher, president of the National Organization for Marriage and co-author of *The Case for Marriage*. “Yes, you won’t be thrown in jail if you refuse to marry same-sex couples. But I’m here to tell you the consequences to the liberty of the church and other faith traditions are very real and serious. What this decisions says is that people like you and me who think marriage is the union of husband and wife are exactly like racists who oppose interracial marriage.”

Gallagher said that thinking could affect churches’ tax-exempt status, the ability of Christian universities to teach that gay marriage is unbiblical and even the licensing of those who oppose gay marriage to teach, counsel or practice law or medicine. “Tell me how people who are racist and oppose interracial marriage, how does the government treat them? By the way, I think that’s great on the racial issue, and I think it’s absurd that they make this connection. But this is what they are saying. ... You can’t be a teacher, attorney, a social worker, a medical doctor, a marriage counselor—you cannot have these licenses if you are an open racist. Can you run a university that teaches that interracial marriage is wrong? No you cannot.”

Religious liberty attorneys say cases in New Jersey, where a Methodist ministry is being sued for not allowing a same-sex couple to use its pavilion, and New Mexico, where a Christian photographer was fined more than \$6,000 for refusing to photograph a lesbian couple’s commitment ceremony, are signs that gay rights is already beginning to trump religious liberty.

“We have an opportunity to turn this around, not only by

talking to people and praying and preaching about it but by actually going out and voting [and] donating money to these constitutional amendment campaigns in Florida and Arizona and California," Alliance Defense Fund attorney Jordan Lorence told *Charisma* shortly after the May 15 ruling.

A recent Field Poll showed that only 42 percent of California voters support Proposition 8, but traditional marriage advocates say that data is skewed. "The Field Poll is notoriously wrong on marriage," said Proposition 8 campaign manager Frank Schubert of Schubert Flint Public Affairs.

He noted that in 2000, Field Polls showed no more than 50 percent of Californians in support of Proposition 22, a proposal to enact a statute defining marriage as between one man and one woman. That measure ultimately passed with 61 percent of the vote, but the state Supreme Court decision nullified the law. Proposition 8 supporters say judges could not overturn a constitutional amendment.

Schubert said a recent *Los Angeles Times* poll showing 54 percent of voters in favor of Proposition 8 offers a more accurate picture of the initiative's support. "We feel very confident we can win this campaign if we get the resources, if we get that volunteer army, if we keep the prayer chain going, if we implement the plan that's been laid out," Schubert said. "It's all up to us. We can't turn to anybody else. God has given us this opportunity on this day, and if we seize it we will be victorious. If we are lazy, if we think someone else is going to do it, then we're going to wake up on Nov. 5 wondering what the heck happened to our state."

Last week California Attorney General Jerry Brown revised the wording of Proposition 8 to say the amendment "eliminates right of same-sex couples to marry." Amendment supporters said they planned to file a ballot challenge.

Garlow admitted that the vote in California could be as close

as 50 percent plus one vote. "Every single vote counts," he said, noting that churches large and small must make protecting marriage a priority.

Church leaders in Florida and Arizona echo that sentiment. In the Sunshine State, Amendment 2 will have to pass by more than 60 percent of the vote in order to become law. Current polls show that more than 60 percent of voters in all but South Florida are in support of the measure.

"We are believing God and praying and working hard so that we can get that bump that we believe is going to come from the church," said John Stemberger, president of the Florida Family Policy Council and an Amendment 2 advocate (). "In Florida, we're no strangers to close elections, and we believe this will be a close one."

Leo Godzich, pastor of special projects at Phoenix First Assembly of God and a leader in his state's traditional marriage campaign (), said the journey to get Proposition 102 on the November ballot was a battle in itself, with the measure passing in the Senate by just one vote. He noted that a previous marriage amendment failed to pass in a 52-48 vote.

"We learned the primary reason we lost was because we did not mobilize our base," said Godzich, who is also president of the National Association of Marriage Enhancement. "We need prayer that some of the apathy among the pastors in Arizona will be washed away this time. ... We need men of God to stand up and declare that this is not just an attack on marriage. God chose to define the relationship with the church as a bridegroom and bride. This is really a battle for the identity of the church." **–Adrienne S. Gaines**

Conference calls will continue through November, with the next scheduled for Aug. 27.

Video Bible School Trains Indigenous Leaders Worldwide

Nearly 250,000 Christian converts in 140 nations have completed the International School of Ministry's curriculum



[] A California-based ministry is spurring church growth around the globe thanks to its video-based Bible schools that are used in more than 140 nations.

Started a decade ago by Good Shepherd Ministries International in Redlands, Calif., the International School of Ministry (ISOM) offers indigenous church leaders instruction from such well-known pastors and teachers as Jack Hayford, Joyce Meyer, Reinhard Bonnke, A.R. Bernard, John Bevere, Marilyn Hickey and T.L. Osborn.

Founder Berin Gilfillan, a former pastor and television producer, developed ISOM after experimenting with grass-roots academies in Nigeria in 1992 and 1993. When he returned to the U.S., Gilfillan persuaded prominent ministers to let him film teachings for the curriculum.

"I shared the vision and our heart, wanting to reach the underground church," Gilfillan said. "I said, 'If you want royalties, I don't want you on the program.'"

Today Good Shepherd estimates that at least 250,000 students in 141 nations have completed the ISOM classes, which are divided into five trimesters of 32 lessons each. The videos have been translated into 65 languages.

In the last four years, Reuben Ramirez's church has tripled in

size, with more than 110 people now attending Iglesia Gethsemani in Matamoros, Mexico. He said the material helped train leaders to work alongside him, such as the women overseeing the children's department and women's ministries.

"Before that time I was alone, trying to do it all," said Ramirez, also the president of an ISOM regional center in Mexico. "Through the school, our students have heard the voice of the Lord. He has called many into ministry."

In 2006 the ministry launched "Women of the World," a separate, 33-lesson course reviewing social and spiritual issues. Nearly 200 churches have used it so far, with a second volume expected to release next year. After learning about the series, Canadian pastor Cheryl Koop and her husband, Dave, sensed it was the key to helping women in their church grow by equipping them with sound teaching.

"The response and the results still astound me," said Cheryl Koop, associate pastor at Coastal Church in Vancouver, British Columbia. "The women that attend are from many nations, and knowing that the DVDs we're receiving could be shown in their country is encouraging as well as unifying."

Gilfillan's passion is helping fulfill the Great Commission, which he says will occur by training people to share and teach the gospel in native environments. And though ISOM doesn't track numbers, Gilfillan can rattle off nations where graduates have started more churches than the number in their class. Despite its successes, the ministry maintains a low profile because 60 percent of its schools operate in Islamic or other nations where Christians face persecution.

However, missionaries from places free to talk about ISOM say it is bringing a soundness and depth to Christianity in many regions. J.C. Sterley, director of a regional center in the Philippines, said a lack of theological training following an evangelistic explosion in the 1970s and 1980s led to

considerable error creeping into Filipino churches.

“A lot of doctrines are being corrected,” Sterley said. “Students can read and study the Bible in a clearer way. Real character building is taking place.”

They also learn about miracles. In one area so lawless it had been dubbed the “killing fields,” pastors at a nearby school would study for a week, then go there to practice what they learned. “It totally changed the atmosphere in that area,” Sterley said.

In Russia, missionary Steve Wildman forged links with ISOM after seeing a need for curriculum because he couldn’t respond to all the requests he received to lead conferences. Today there are several thousand students in at least 150 schools there, including two at the church Wildman co-pastors in Russia’s third-largest city.

“It gives them a vision,” said Wildman, an Oral Roberts University graduate who has been in Russia for 15 years. “We see normal Russian people coming in with a basic survival mentality and they [learn] they have a purpose. God has called them to reach their nation and the world.”

Rather than aiming to impart deep theological truths, ISOM’s founder said the classes offer practical, Spirit-filled application, which he hopes will promote the Word of God and move the church away from a personality-driven ethic.

“The kingdom [of God] is built on process, discipleship, leadership and character formation in the lives of God’s people,” Gilfillan said. “The star mentality in the church is not accomplishing the job in the neediest places.” **–Ken Walker**

What Makes You Happy?

by Linda S. Mintle, Ph.D.

I had to laugh when I read this USA Today newspaper headline: "Psychologists now know what makes people happy." I didn't know happiness was a secret to be discovered by my noble profession! Curious, I kept reading. What were these exciting new findings?

If you are a student of the Bible, you won't be surprised. Research only validates God's way of doing things.

1. The happiest people are those who spend the least time alone and pursue intimacy and personal growth. When I read this, I immediately thought of Jesus. He was proactive when it came to community. He poured His life into a faithful band of followers and developed an intimate circle of 12 men. And through those men, He established the church. The early church was all about community, intimacy and personal growth.

2. Happy people don't judge themselves by what others do or have. That is, they don't compare themselves with others. The Bible is clear that we are not to measure ourselves by the yardstick of others, only by the Word of God. As we obey God's Word and choose to please Him, blessing and contentment follow.

3. Materialism is toxic for happiness. The parable of the rich young ruler in Matthew bears this out. Despite this man's riches, he wanted something more—eternal life. Jesus stressed the importance of keeping the commandments but told him something more was required—he must sell his possessions and follow Him. Sadly, the young man chose material possessions over Christ and walked away feeling "sorrowful."

4. Optimism is important, even in dark times. Because of Christ, hope abounds. Jeremiah 32:17 proclaims: "'Ah, Lord

God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You'" (NKJV). In the last chapter of Job, after Job suffers much and has been tested, he cries out, "'I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You'" (Job 42:2).

Over and over, we are given biblical examples of people who refused to be downtrodden because of circumstances or events. Their hope was in the Lord. The end result is rest and peace.

5. Actions matter. It's not just what you believe or your outlook on life that contributes to happiness. People who give to others and aren't self-absorbed are more satisfied with life. No surprise here. God gave His only begotten Son, the ultimate sacrificial gift. Giving is a biblical principle whether it involves finances, service, food, shelter, time or talent. The result of giving is blessing.

6. Happy people know their strengths and use them. We are stewards of God's gifts and are to use them for His glory. When you move in those gifts and do what God has equipped you to do, you are happy. Psychologists call this moving in the "flow." People of faith "flow" in the Spirit.

7. People who feel gratitude are happy. We are eternally grateful for Jesus and His sacrifice and for all God has done in our lives. Out of that genuine gratitude flows happiness.

8. The strongest link to happiness is a willingness to forgive others. The benefits of forgiveness are well-documented psychologically. For the believer, forgiveness is not an option; it is a command from Jesus. We forgive others because He forgave us.

After revealing these secrets to happiness, the article concluded with the following comment: "We should have more trust in our own resilience and less confidence in our predictions about how we'll feel. We should be a bit more

humble and a bit more brave.”

The researcher got it half right. We will never find happiness when we trust in our own resilience. Instead, we must trust in God and His promises.

The search for happiness will fall short if it doesn't lead to the One in whom contentment can be found. As the Scriptures declare: “Happy are the people whose God is the Lord” (Ps. 144:15).

If you want to find happiness, trust in God's sovereignty and omniscience. Obey Him and believe that He works all things for your good. It's not about you or your resilience. It's all about Him.

Rally for Bibles

Rallies are being held cross-country to raise funds to place Bibles into the hands of soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.



[] “Yellow-Ribbon” rallies are being held cross-country to raise funds to place special-edition Bibles into the hands of soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Since January, Revival Fires Ministry, an evangelism organization based in Branson West, Mo., has traveled to 11 states and 27 cities to hold rallies.

“These rallies are dedicated to celebrating our freedoms, supporting our troops valiantly serving our country in Iraq, honoring our veterans and providing Bibles for our soldiers, deployed to Iraq,” said Cecil Todd, 77, the ministry’s founder

and president.

Todd said communities are packing venues across the country to support the effort dubbed "Bibles for Our Troops," which since January has raised enough money to produce 25,000 Bibles for U.S. troops.

In July 2003, shortly after the Iraq War began, Todd said the chief chaplain of the Pentagon asked his ministry to help obtain Bibles for troops, offering to send and distribute the Bibles by military transport free of charge.

The Pentagon-approved Bibles are small enough to fit in a soldier's pocket and cost \$4 to print. The Bibles have a camouflage cover and contain the Old and New Testaments, the insignias of all five military branches and a military helps section with photos.

Now more than five years later 125,000 Bibles have been distributed resulting in dozens of changed lives.

"It is amazing to see when one is faced with their own mortality how even the nonreligious turn to the Word of God and prayer to find hope in their time of need," said Brian K. Waite, a naval chaplain who was stationed in Iraq, in an appreciation letter sent to Revival Fire. "I saw hardened men literally devouring these small Bibles as if it were the last sustenance known to mankind!"

Waite said 60 soldiers accepted Christ and were baptized after receiving Bibles, adding that he had to baptize some in the Tigris River at midnight to avoid enemy fire.

Todd, who comes from a long line of military officers though never served in the Armed Forces himself, said the ministry would not stop providing Bibles for troops.

"We will continue providing Bibles for our soldiers as long as they are being deployed by our government to Iraq and Afghanistan," he said.

The ministry had rallies scheduled into next year in states including Florida, Texas, Tennessee and Arkansas. **-Felicia Mann**

Loaves and Fishes™ Miracle Reported in Egypt

More than 2,000 boxed-lunches inexplicably turned up at a pastors' conference in Cairo, according to Marilyn Hickey Ministries.



[] Bible teacher and evangelist Marilyn Hickey's recent 10-day trip to Cairo, Egypt—described by organizers afterward as the largest gathering of Christians to ever assemble in the ancient city— included a report of something more astounding than the several hundred who claimed healing and salvation: 2,400 meals from Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) apparently appeared out of thin air.

The reported incident, which if true is a miracle nearly unheard of in modern times, occurred during Hickey's citywide leaders conference in May, attended by nearly 10,000 pastors and local leaders—from curious Muslims to orthodox Coptic Christians.

According to Hickey, 77, whose ministry organized the meetings in conjunction with the Egyptian Evangelical Association, 3,500 boxed-lunches from KFC were ordered and accounted for. "There were tickets distributed for the lunches," she said. "The boxes were given out, leaving none in the room."

After the food was completely distributed, and after the crowd swelled to about 5,000, she said volunteers were astonished to return to what should've been a room of empty tables to

discover 1,200 more lunches. She said after they handed out the mysterious extras, another 1,200 appeared, leaving a surplus of food and dumbfounded witnesses. Hickey's staff called it a "loaves and fishes" miracle.

"I am fully convinced that this was a supernatural occurrence," Hickey told *Charisma*.

"It is something I have believed to see on my ministry and am overjoyed that it happened."

She said she feels confident in promoting the miracle because independent Egyptian and non-Christians sources verified the mysterious incident, which apparently occurred sans the hype and exaggeration normally associated with wild miracle claims. "It happened in such a way that [my ministry] was not at all associated with it, which left local volunteers and non-Christians marveling at what had happened."

Though the unusual miracle was one of the main highlights of her trip, Hickey said her favorite memory was of Father Samaan, a Coptic Christian who ministers to the outcasts of Cairo's slum settlement called Garbage City. Because of his work, Hickey said more than 90 percent of the poor inhabitants of Garbage City are born-again.

"What Father Samaan has done there is nothing short of a miracle itself," she said. "It was humbling and inspiring to witness such an unusual place and unusual work of God."

Hickey has spread the gospel in more than 100 nations during her four decades of ministry. She often travels overseas with her daughter, Sarah Bowling, who just returned last week from ministering in Ethiopia. The two also have a TV program together—*Today with Marilyn & Sarah*—and they are planning a trip for India this fall. —**Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**

The Art of Waiting

by Judy Jacobs

Waiting rooms are not my favorite places. I get impatient. I sit there and jiggle my feet. I sigh. I have so many other things to do. Besides, those magazines are so old.

Waiting for God to show up can be a lot harder than waiting for a doctor's appointment. Even on the doctor's slowest day, I know I will get out of that waiting room after a few hours. Waiting for God is a little different. Waiting for Him can take an entire lifetime, and the magazines are optional.

You can make a whole career of waiting for God.

So, although it seems contradictory to say so, waiting is part of pursuing God's moments in your life. Waiting—and being willing to wait—is a very important and practical part of any divine appointment.

It's not a passive thing at all. Oh, no. When you are waiting, you are quite active. On the negative side, you are busy fending off all of your impatient fretfulness. On the positive side, you are busy growing in your faith and trust. You are getting rid of distractions and refining your focus on Jesus. You are listening—waiting for your name to be called.

The Bible says, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10, NKJV). If you want to know God better, then you have to get still, get quiet. When you have hushed your soul and spirit and body, you will start to put down roots and draw up strength.

The Bible also says, "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15). You have to get to a special place, alone with God. If you are really serious about laying hold of your destiny, you have to realize that it will be a process, one handhold at a time, and a lot of it will happen when you're closeted with God, waiting, pondering, soaking up His presence. It's part introspection, part prayer, part sitting at His feet where you learn and grow and get transformed so that you reflect His image.

It is not something you can achieve in your own strength. You know already what will happen if you think your own strength

is sufficient. (You will fall flat on your nose—in public probably.) God wants to provide for you, but to do that He needs you to be aware of your insufficiency. You need Him.

Waiting is an expression of your desire for more of Him. God is stronger than any obstacle or any human being, and He wants to have an opportunity to show you how strong He is. That can't happen if you're noisily charging around full-steam ahead, acting like you have everything you need already. Sure, once in a while He will knock you off your high horse as He did with Paul on the road to Damascus, but normally, that's just not the way God works.

The humble English preacher Smith Wigglesworth (who was known for saying, "Only believe!") explained how God works with us:

"Sometimes we are tested on the lines of faith. For twenty-five years Abraham believed God. God said to him: 'Thy wife shall have a son.' Every year his wife grew weaker. He saw the wrinkles and her puny, weak condition. Did he look at it? No—he looked at the promise. For twenty-five years God tested him; but he gave glory to God, and considered neither Sarah's body nor his own. And as he did so, God said, 'Yes, Abraham.'

Listen to what the Word of God says: 'Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification' (Romans 4: 23–25).

All who believe are blessed along with faithful Abraham. God wants to show us that nothing is impossible to those who believe."

Waiting is also an acknowledgement of God's times and seasons. Very often, we wait simply because it's not time yet. The prophet Habakkuk said: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3).

Sometimes you have to do like church folks did in the old days—you "tarry" until He gives you what you need. You wait patiently, faithful to the vision He has already given you even as you seek for more vision. The apostle James wrote,

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8). Jesus said, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).

This waiting/seeking thing seems to be one of the most basic principles in the kingdom of heaven. You may feel like you’re doing nothing. You may feel like you’re in kindergarten. But hey, there’s nothing wrong with kindergarten! The Bible says, “Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin” (Zech. 4:10, NLT).

You will grow. And the person who has already gone on up to a higher “grade” needs to wait and seek some more in order to grow too. The thing about God is that He keeps beckoning you to go higher. That’s all well and good, but the glorious problem is this: just when you think you are about to get to that point where you have finally reached your place in God, He moves on you and takes you higher still.

All you need to start with is your mustard seed of faith. Just get away to your place with God and plant that seed. It will start growing steadily. Take care of it and keep waiting for it to grow to full maturity.