

10 Ways to Share Your Faith During the Holidays

Christmas is one of the best times of the year to put your faith into action. Throughout Scripture, we are exhorted not only to be “salt and light” in a dark world, but also to help those in need: the poor, orphans and widows. James, the brother of the One we celebrate at Christmas, told us plainly that “faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless” (James 2:17, NLT).

Because of our hectic schedules, it’s often hard to think of ways we can bless those outside our family or circle of friends. This Christmas, why not reach out to someone you normally might not consider? Here are some ideas to help get you started. The Web site can help guide you to trusted charities.

1. Purchase Christmas cards from Joni and Friends (or 800-736-4177), and help minister to families affected by disabilities. The cards are designed by the organization’s founder, Joni Eareckson Tada, who became a quadriplegic at age 17 after a diving accident. (She paints with a brush between her teeth.) While you’re at it, ask a ministry staff member how you can organize a wheelchair drive in your community. To date, Joni and Friends has distributed more than 50,000 wheelchairs to 102 countries.

a pair of shoes for a child through LIFE Outreach International’s “Christmas Shoes Project.” The cost of manufacturing and delivering each pair of shoes is \$, and LIFE’s goal is to provide 200,000 pairs for kids in more than 40 countries. To contribute, call 800-947-5433 or visit .

3. Bless a single parent. Give the gift of time by offering to babysit while a single mom or dad goes Christmas shopping or

to a work party. If it's in your budget, treat a single mother to a facial or pedicure while you watch her children.

4. Make an orphan's Christmas special. Open Door Bulgaria, founded by Christ for the Nations alumni Niki and Michelle Stefanov, plans to provide toys to some 300 Bulgarian orphans this Christmas. To help, call 813-527-4149 or visit and click "English" for ministry information.

Orphan Voice founder Tony Brewer, who now lives in Vietnam with his family, reports that the winters there get chilly. To help provide orphaned children with coats this Christmas (approximately \$10 per coat), e-mail Brewer at tony@orphanvoice.org or call 800-525-0871.

5. If you are capable of covering a larger-ticket item, transform an orphan's life with surgery. A \$600 cleft lip or palette surgery, or a \$3,000 heart surgery, can be arranged through Show Hope, the foundation established by Steven Curtis Chapman and his wife, Mary Beth. For information, visit www.showhope.org or call 615-550-5600.

6. Adopt a family in need. Fill a laundry basket with basic foods, toiletries, a few favorite "luxury" items and perhaps a gift card to a local grocery store, and deliver it to someone who has lost a job or fallen on hard times. Enclose a Christmas card with a note of encouragement. If you need a referral, talk to your pastor or a school administrator.

7. Purchase gifts that make a difference. An impressive selection of handmade baskets, trivets, ornaments and serving trays is available at www.rwanda.org. Proceeds go to Rwanda Partners, a Christian nonprofit organization dedicated to working for Rwanda's healing and reconciliation. If you're shopping for people who have everything—or would prefer blessing others—consider providing a goat or chickens for an impoverished Rwandan family on their behalf (www.rwanda.org).

8. Invite someone to your home for Christmas dinner. Think of

a college student who has no family in town, someone in your church who is new to the area or a family that is struggling to make ends meet. Do you know of someone nearby who is from another country? Get together and share Christmas traditions.

9. Spread the good news—the true meaning of Christmas. Through The Voice of the Martyrs (, 877-337-0302), you can distribute New Testaments to some of the most closed areas in the world. The cost per Bible is \$6, and you can decide at what level you want to participate.

10. Look at your budget for 2014 and determine if you are able to make a monthly donation to bless someone in need. You can sponsor a child's education for \$35 a month through the African Children's Choir, a powerful ministry that is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Correspondence opportunities will enable you to connect with your sponsored child in a life-changing way. For information, go to or call 877-532-8651.

Carol Chapman Stertz *is a Dallas-based journalist. College students from China and Russia joined her family for Christmas dinner several years ago, making it a truly memorable one.*

Why Singing Isn't Enough

How worshipping God has less to do with music than we think—and more to do with the 'doing'

Secular bands such as U2 aren't the only ones promoting social justice these days. Many worship leaders recognize the importance of being the hands and feet of Jesus and are actively recruiting believers to help change society.

One of the largest endeavors is “Do Something Now,” created by Passion founders Louie and Shelley Giglio. Passion worship artists Chris Tomlin, Matt Redman and Charlie Hall have helped raise awareness for this movement at conferences and on tour. They’ve raised more than \$3 million, providing funds to build wells in India, set up loans for families to start their own businesses in Afghanistan, sponsor children in Third World countries and more.

“The heart of Passion,” says Tomlin, “is seeing worship and justice walking side by side. Passion will always champion songs of worship to God and will always stand in the gap for the least of these in the world.”

Redman points to the underlying reason for combining worship and acts of justice: “Biblically it’s been made clear that injustice and poverty break God’s heart, but working toward justice and caring for the poor brings Him pleasure.” Redman is gearing up to partner with The Message a group in Manchester, England, that works with youth in various schools and young-offender institutions.

“The plan is to raise up some young urban evangelist worship leaders who have a heart for the poor and are writing some brilliant songs from within that environment,” he says.

Fellow British worship artist Vicky Beeching believes Isaiah 58 clearly describes the link between worship and justice. “It tells us that the kind of offering God wants is acts of justice and mercy,” she says. “Often, we think He wants songs—but really, He wants us to change society and bring it into line with His kingdom values and love.”

Worship pastor Daniel Bashta of RiverStone Church near Atlanta has founded a nonprofit called Go Motion Worldwide, which has a threefold ministry: music, media and missions. “God has commanded us to take care of the widows and orphans,” he says. “If we are not living out our faith in motion, then we are

dead.”

Bashta and his wife recently adopted their first child and launched “Project Gift” to provide financial assistance to couples wanting to adopt. “It would be an injustice for me to just write nice little worship songs and to live a comfortable existence. We are on a ferocious mission to see an adoption revolution erupt in our local churches worldwide.”

Charismatic believers have often been at the forefront of giving generously to feed the hungry, provide Bibles in closed countries and countless other outreaches. Yet a social justice movement that grasps the “doing” part of worship can take this to another level.

“I hope it’s an awakening,” Tomlin says. “If it’s just a response to the materialism and self-centeredness, then I’m afraid it may just be a passing trend. However, if it is really something birthed from vision and the calling of God, it will be a life work. It’s surely not a passing trend to the heart of God, so it shouldn’t be for those who carry His name.”

Ministry Leaders ‘Get Real’ About Nation’s Future

As Christians increasingly come under attack, how should we respond?

In light of today’s volatile economy and nonprofit concerns dealing with everything from charitable giving to Obamacare, the American church faces many serious questions about the future.

“We are in a progressively anti-faith environment, and there is a tremendous shifting of churches that really believe the fundamentals and those that don’t,” says Bishop Harry Jackson Jr., pastor of Hope Christian Church in Beltsville, Md. “Fewer churches are teaching the truth than we realized.”

But Jackson is optimistic that these troubling times will bring positive change in America. “I have confidence that the great soul-winning churches are going to take up the trumpet to speak out about social issues,” he says, noting that in the past, churches were either focused on winning souls or social issues—never both. Jackson feels that churches increasingly recognize the need to embrace both camps, and he believes this shift will become evident before the next major political election.

“If the church would lead, there is a biblical way to solve the immigration problem that is not uniquely Democrat or Republican—it’s kingdom,” he says. “There is a biblical way to deal with racism [and] to defend life so we aren’t having more abortions.”

Tim Tiller, chief operating officer of Jewish Voice Ministries, believes the U.S. is at a turning point. “[Christians] are no longer the home team, so we have to be careful how we communicate our beliefs,” he says. At the same time, he feels Christians “should not stand on the sidelines and just watch everything unfold.”

Jack Hoey, chief operations officer of Seacoast Church in Mount Pleasant, S.C., encourages churches to focus on the apostle Paul’s mission: to help people’s love grow more and more in the knowledge and depth of wisdom (see Phil. 1:9).

“Why are Christians under attack?” Hoey asks. “Because Christianity is dangerous. It’s dangerous because it’s true. So being under attack isn’t necessarily a bad thing, though it might be uncomfortable.”

Believers need to buckle their seatbelts and, at a time when the nation is divided, seek to walk in unity with other believers. Ultimately, Hoey says, “If you are walking with God, He can redeem any bad situation.”

The Church’s Marketplace Merger

Why more ministries are handing over operations to corporate leaders—and why that’s a good thing

Not every ministry leader is willing to be candid about the sluggish economy and its direct impact on the church. But Mark Walker, a fourth-generation Pentecostal pastor, likely represents many church leaders when he refers to the past four years as “the most challenging” he’s seen in his lifetime.

The biggest contributing factor? Unemployment. North Georgia, where Walker has served for 21 years as senior pastor of Mount Paran North Church of God, in the Atlanta suburb of Marietta, has been one of the hardest-hit areas in the nation since 2008. A number of veteran small-business owners who attend Mount Paran have had to shut their doors. Others, concerned about Obamacare, realize that if they opt out of the health-care mandate because of religious convictions, they will have to pay a tax—which means laying off staff.

Walker is all-too-familiar with such layoffs. For the first time in its 25-year history, Mount Paran recently had to trim its staff.

“Any time there was an economic hiccup in the past, we cut budget—but we never had to lay off people,” Walker says. “It

has challenged every ounce of leadership, business and biblical skill I have—and beyond—to try to make it work.”

As churches and nonprofit ministries nationwide have grown exponentially, so too have the challenges, which today often include legal, human resource and technology issues. As a result, many pastors and ministry leaders are recruiting trained business professionals—like Walker, who holds a doctorate in organizational leadership and spent the first several years of his career working in business—to help guide them and provide the expertise they lack.

And it's created a point of convergence, as a growing number of corporate executives are willing to lay down their stock options and use their skills to benefit the work of God in the world.

When Business Meets the Pulpit

When Bishop Harry Jackson Jr. earned his MBA in the 1980s, few MBA grads specialized in nonprofit work. For himself, Jackson set his sights on sales and marketing—and with a degree from Harvard, the sky was the limit.

While serving as the national sales and marketing manager for one of Corning Glass Works' divisions, Jackson started a Bible study in his home that unexpectedly grew into a church, which he led bivocationally for four years. But then, with a second child on the way, Jackson's wife, Michele, approached him about his demanding schedule. It was time to choose: business or full-time ministry.

By staying in the corporate world, Jackson could have amassed a fortune. But he accepted the call to the pastorate instead, which he says “revolutionized” his life because it forced him to walk by faith.

“I dropped from a huge salary down to whatever 100-something people could pay me in a fledgling work,” he says.

Jackson's Ivy-League education didn't go to waste, as he began using many of his business skills in ministry, starting with market segmentation. In the predominantly white church he pastored in upstate New York, Jackson emphasized evangelism—and the church grew. In 1988, he was called to Hope Christian Church, just outside Washington, D.C., and it became known—and popular—for its Hosanna! Integrity-style worship instead of traditional black gospel.

Applying his business sense to the pastorate, Jackson says “mission drift” can occur in churches when pastors try to meet every need rather than focus on the areas where they're called, just as businesses go astray when diversifying their brand to the point of dilution.

“I've had opportunities where resources were offered that would be distractions,” Jackson says. “If we go outside the areas where we're called, we can get ourselves in trouble with the Lord and move outside our skills.”

Experience Both Timely and Valuable

Named one of the 50 most influential leaders in the U.S. glass industry, Jack Hoey, now chief operating officer of Seacoast Church, a 12,000-member congregation based in Mount Pleasant, S.C., previously served as president and CEO of Coastal Glass Distributors in Charlotte. After selling his business, he was asked by Greg Surratt, senior pastor of Seacoast, to share his business expertise on matters concerning the church—an invitation that led Surratt to invite Hoey the following year to come on board and implement his suggested changes.

“I feel like I've been able to really help move staff who were in roles that didn't fit them so well,” Hoey says.

When Seacoast's human resources director retired a year ago, Hoey took over most of the director's responsibilities, which has given him the opportunity to coach and mentor the staff.

Today he manages the staff, finances, facilities and security at Seacoast. And although Hoey's corporate experience was tied to a completely different industry than the work he does now, his experience managing an organization of more than 100 people serves him—and Seacoast—well today.

In Arlington, Texas, experience as a facilities and services manager at Amoco Corporation helps Joseph Davis streamline the day-to-day business operations of High Point Church—a critical skill, given the lean staff of 28 that serves a congregation of 3,500 people. As the church's associate pastor, Davis helps High Point manage its finances responsibly by outsourcing service providers—everything from accounting to facility services—and relying heavily on volunteers.

“It definitely impacts the bottom line and improves efficiencies,” Davis says.

When Nathan Buss began attending Substance Church in Minneapolis, Minn., its membership ran about 200. Today, the church has blossomed to 2,100 members and serves four campuses, none of which the church owns. Accordingly, as the finance administrator of the church today, one of Buss' future responsibilities will be to locate land or a building at an existing site that Substance Church can purchase. With 10 years of commercial real estate experience and an MBA under his belt, Buss is well-suited for the task.

And at the Rock Church in San Diego, Calif., which draws about 12,000 people a week under the leadership of Miles McPherson, James Lawrence is the newly appointed chief of staff and innovation. When Lawrence joined the church full-time in 2010, the executive team consisted of nine people; now, it has been reduced to four.

Lawrence, who was instrumental in putting together a finance committee “to make sure we have a solid financial reporting structure that interfaces with our auditor and executive

team," he says, has utilized every ounce of leadership experience he accrued over 15 years—first as the founder of GrepNet, a software engineering company that developed the first commercial in-memory database technology, and then as co-founder of Mogiv, a mobile and cloud-based giving technology for churches—to make the difficult decisions that are par for the course when leading a church in these lean economic times. Like Jackson, Lawrence believes leadership—whether in ministry or in the marketplace—is critical in the church today.

Revitalization at Nonprofit Ministries

Just as churches desperately need skilled business leaders, particularly in today's tough times, so do nonprofit ministries—and many CEOs and corporate executives who have gained skills in cutthroat environments are eager to leave the secular world for the "sacred."

One such leader is Jonathan Reckford, CEO of Habitat for Humanity International. Reckford began his career at Goldman Sachs in New York but soon discovered his role there didn't align with his personal values. So in 1986, he applied for a number of fellowships and was awarded the Henry Luce Scholarship, which led him to spend a year in Seoul, Korea, where he worked in marketing for the Olympic Organizing Committee and coached the Korean rowing team.

Upon his return, Reckford began an MBA program at Stanford University, focusing on public and nonprofit management. "The slight surprise was that I came out of school thinking I ought to work in the private sector first and then take those skills across," he says. Reckford served in executive and management roles at Marriott, the Walt Disney Company, Circuit City and Best Buy.

Following a trip to India, Reckford was intent on directly serving the poor, but there was to be a long waiting period

before a door opened for him in the nonprofit world. In the meantime, he rolled up his sleeves and volunteered at his church, Christ Presbyterian, in Edina, Minn., which soon led to a full-time job as executive pastor.

A couple years later, a recruiter who had previously called Reckford about for-profit jobs, contacted him out of the blue about Habitat for Humanity.

“It was the kind of role that met all of my hopes, in terms of service,” Reckford says.

And all the corporate experience Reckford gathered over the years served him well in his new, auspicious role. The breadth of Habitat’s work is enormous. The organization has 1,553 independent chapters or affiliates in the United States and works in 80 countries. About 700 staff members serve the global umbrella organization, and more than 1 million volunteers helped with projects in 2012.

Even in a tough economy, Reckford says Habitat has quadrupled the number of families they have been able to help each year since 2005. Since taking the helm at Habitat, Reckford has implemented housing microfinance, which influences banks to create home improvement loans for low-income families. The organization has also focused more of its attention on helping families rebuild their homes after a disaster.

Like Habitat for Humanity, Bible League International has made major shifts in recent years to become more effective and efficient—a goal they’ve been able to achieve under the leadership of Robert Frank, who brought to the organization in 2009 a rich 30-year history working with large international corporations. With an MBA in international business development, Frank grew his understanding of diverse cultures and economies in his work outside the United States with the apparel division of Fruit of the Loom. At Rawlings Sporting Goods, he served as part of the IPO team that took the company

public.

Upon joining the Bible League, Frank brought his global experience and business sensibilities to bear, first by restructuring the organization through decentralizing and then by moving operations to locations nearer the various divisional offices. For instance, the Asia-Pacific office is now run from Sydney, Australia, instead of Chicago.

While U.S. and European markets are waning, the economies in other countries are booming, Frank notes. As a result, the Bible League plans to boost its development efforts outside the United States, where the church also tends to be thriving and there is real growth potential.

Spiritual at Its Root

When Tim Tiller came to Jewish Voice Ministries in 2010 after serving as president of Multi-Systems, Inc., a leading provider of technology to the hotel industry, his learning curve was steep. Immersing himself in a new industry that specialized in multimedia and fundraising posed challenging enough—but he also discovered other delicate, complex issues in a ministry setting.

Though working at Jewish Voice is a dream for Tiller, he is realistic about some of the hurdles.

“I realize that because I’m working for the Lord, the enemy would do anything he could to bring me or the ministry down,” he says.

Accordingly, Tiller has initiated spiritual warfare training for new staff. “I really see the enemy working double-time in ministry now,” he says. “We tell staff, ‘You’re joining a Jewish evangelistic ministry, and because of that, you are likely going to be under attack spiritually.’”

Indeed, there is something bigger at stake for those involved

in nonprofit ministry, notes Tony Meggs, who served in management posts at American Express before heading up a health-care-sharing organization called Christian Care Ministry. “We carry the banner of Jesus Christ. Everything we do has to be worthy of that name,” he says. “Ministry needs credible, godly leadership—people who live their lives with integrity. If we really want to affect culture and win people ... we need to present to them godly men and women who can lead and be people they can trust and follow.”

From his vantage point at Substance Church, Buss can quickly point out the similarities and differences between the church and corporate worlds. In business, he says, the focus is on the bottom line and making money. In a church, managing the money properly is important, “but your ultimate goal is the people and saving the lost.”

Davis echoes this point. “I have fiduciary responsibilities to fulfill [at High Point Church], but God is the one who brings in the people. It’s His kingdom.”

With God as the true leader of these churches and nonprofits, its stewards sometimes find themselves being led to unexpected pastures—especially in this downturn economy. For instance, Mount Paran launched a new campus in Canton, about 20 miles north of Marietta, in January 2012. The church held its first official service with a team of about 200 people and is “financially holding its own,” says Walker. “During such trying economic times, it sounds absolutely asinine to open a new campus, but we felt like it is what God wanted us to do.”

This type of ministry decision is perhaps where the “faith dynamic,” as Jackson calls it, comes into play. “God provides the resources when we don’t understand how we can possibly do it at all,” he says.

Ultimately, it takes a balance of faith and wisdom earned by experience. Frank, commenting on the challenge of working for

a nonprofit, says there can be a tendency for people to lead with their hearts, not with their heads.

“You’ve got to do both,” he says. “You have to have passion for what you do, but the decisions you make at the top affect the health of the organization.”

And what lights up these leaders more than anything are the lives they see changed in the places they’re called to serve. Davis says the greatest joy of his job is seeing people walk down the aisle week after week, accepting the invitation to follow Jesus. “When they are standing at the altar with tears streaming down their face and you know they have really had an encounter with God,” he says, “it makes all of the other challenges and opportunities we face worth it.”

Carol Chapman Stertzer is a Dallas-based journalist who has served at two local nonprofits over the past 16 years.


Behind Every Good Man...

Meet the ‘better halves’ of 10 well-known ministers

There was a time when the role of a pastor’s wife was virtually set in stone: She was expected to serve as pianist, choir director or children’s director—or all of the above. She attended every service and sat near the front, carefully groomed to avoid scrutiny. She was required to be part of most midweek meetings and host after-church socials. Remember the day?

Today's booming churches illustrate that times have changed for such women in ministry, whether their husbands are pastors, presidents or founders. The 10 women featured here serve in areas where they are gifted. Though most of them aren't in the pulpit regularly, they have a profound impact on their church's culture. Some were called to be a pastor's wife as a child; others willingly took on the role after marriage. *Charisma* celebrates the way in which they use their God-given talents while honoring their husbands and making a difference for the kingdom.

The Show Is Over

Church music has never sounded so good ... but a growing  number of worship pastors want nothing more than true worship

The elaborate flags and banners that adorned many charismatic churches 15 years ago have since been replaced with lights and cameras. The focus on being relevant and producing quality music has increased significantly, and along the way, churches have struggled to balance entertainment and worship.

"We are all such technological junkies," says Daniel Bashta, worship pastor of RiverStone Church in the Atlanta area and president of Go Motion Worldwide. "We love the bright lights, the big screens, the sexy Vegas shows. Somehow our churches now represent all of these things. How many HD projectors and LED walls must we have?"

Like Father, Like Daughter

When Priscilla Shirer steps into a pulpit, you don't have to wonder if she's related to Texas pastor Tony Evans. She carries his mantle with grace.

When 35-year-old Priscilla Shirer stepped onto the platform at LifeWay's Deeper Still conference in Orlando, Fla., last September, she was dressed stylishly yet casually, as a woman her age might be if she were going out shopping or to visit a friend. But there was nothing low-key about her message—or her presentation of it.

For nearly two hours she held the attention of thousands of women as she expounded on a solitary passage of Scripture—Ephesians 3:20-21—with captivating power. It was clear that this dynamic teacher truly believes her God is “able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,” and through demonstrations, object lessons and multiple real-life examples, she made certain her audience came to believe it, too.

“[Priscilla] is quite possibly the most gifted communicator I have ever witnessed,” says consummate Bible teacher Beth Moore, who has ministered alongside Shirer and Kay Arthur at Deeper Still events for the last three years and has been on a ministry circuit for more than 15.

Shirer's gift of communication comes as no surprise to those who are acquainted with her father, Tony Evans, founder and pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, who is known for his powerful preaching. Clearly, Shirer has the same penchant he does for public speaking and a similar passion for studying and sharing God's Word.

Evans has been both a model for and a mentor to Shirer from the time she was a child, and she continues to rely on him for counsel. "To have access to the mind he has and the revelation God has given him from the Word of God is a blessing," she says.

He is also one of her greatest supporters and delights in seeing his daughter use her gifts. "Her ability to communicate is extraordinary," he says. "She not only can teach, but she can host events because she has such an engaging personality and communication skills."

Not surprisingly, Shirer receives more speaking requests than she can accept. Besides sponsoring her own events, she ministers regularly at the Deeper Still, Colour, and Pink Impact conferences held in the United States and abroad. She also ministers powerfully in print, having written numerous books and Bible studies, including several about communicating with God: *He Speaks to Me*, *Discerning the Voice of God* and *Can We Talk? Soul-Stirring Conversations With God*. Her upcoming book, *One in a Million*, releases next month.

Shirer considers it an honor to teach nationwide alongside Moore and veteran Bible teacher Kay Arthur—whom she sees as mentors—in the Deeper Still conferences, which draw tens of thousands of women per event. The three leaders are each about 20 years apart in age. "What an incredible blessing to be able to pattern my life after women who have done their marriage well, parenting well and ministry well," she says of Moore and Arthur.

As a younger woman in ministry, Shirer connects particularly well with single women and busy mothers. Her messages are Word-based yet filled with humorous real-life illustrations that often include her husband of 10 years, Jerry; and sons Jackson, 7; Jerry Jr., 5; and Jude, 1.

Because of her African-American heritage, she has strong ties

with the black community and sees herself as a bridge between black and white audiences.

“There is a need in the African-American community for there to be someone who is teaching the Word of God who looks like them,” she says. “While they love Beth Moore, Anne Graham Lotz and other women who run in those circles—and use their resources—they have told us that they find it refreshing to be able to present Bible study curriculum to their women’s ministry that [has] been created by someone who looks like them.”

Going Beyond

Shirer believes she is becoming a bridge between conservative and charismatic audiences as well. About eight years ago, God began to bring people into her life who “were led by the Spirit of God, heard the voice of God, expected the power of God, believed in miracles from God—those kinds of people who had a radical faith and were willing to take risks,” she says.

“It was so foreign to expect the Holy Spirit to be that bold ... to anticipate miracles in my everyday living, not just with the big things but with the little things,” she says. “These people opened my eyes to see what was available to me because the Spirit of God lives within me.”

During this season, Shirer went to speak at an event and was dismayed when she discovered that only about 50 women were present. But the event turned out to be life-changing—one of the most powerful spiritual encounters of her life.

“It was one of the first times I can recall actually feeling the presence of God in a tangible way,” she says. “It reminded me ... of what Isaiah may have been talking about in Isaiah 6 when he said, ‘The train of God’s glory filled the temple.’”

Shirer says God reminded her that day that He would rather be

with 50 women who are serious about honoring His presence and going with the flow of what He wants to do than with 4,000 women who are worried about the program.

Shirer's inner revival led to the official launch of her Dallas-based ministry, Going Beyond Ministries. The name comes from Deuteronomy 1:6-8, a passage that records Moses' telling the Israelites, who had been camped just outside the Promised Land, that God wanted them to move on and possess the land He had promised to their forefathers.

Moses told them that they had been at Mount Sinai long enough and needed to "go beyond," Shirer says. In her case, God was speaking to her about going to "the place of abundant living—an *experiential* relationship with God."

"He said: 'Priscilla, you've been at this mountain long enough. There is a new place that I want to take you to,'" Shirer says. In light of God's challenge, Shirer naturally desired to "go beyond" personally. Her prayer, however, is that she will also inspire other women to anticipate more in their Christian journeys—to not only "know the uncompromising truths of Scripture intellectually" but also "experience them practically by the power of the Holy Spirit," she writes on her Web site ().

"I believe God can do whatever He wants to do through whomever He wants to do it," she says. "A lot of the demonstrative gifts of the Spirit aren't used all the time in my church—almost never—so I could easily box God in and say because that is not my experience, God must not operate in that way.

"We need to accept that the body of Christ is full of other believers who have experienced God in equally relevant, equally reliable ways. Sometimes I'm amazed at how much we miss out on in terms of our relationship with God because we amputate another part of the body of Christ simply because

that part is different than ours.”

Although Shirer embraces new experiences, she believes balance is critical. “We have a tendency as humans to lean toward extremes,” she says. “We’re either heavy on the truth of the Word and we lack the experience of the Spirit, or we’re heavy on the power of the Spirit and lack the foundation of the Word of God.

“There has to be a marriage between the two—God’s Spirit and His Word coming together to teach God’s people what life can be like when they are founded in God’s Word and yet fully anticipate the experience of that Word in their lives by the power of God.”

A Speaker Is Born

Shirer credits an aunt, Elizabeth Cannings, who has served as Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship’s director of children’s ministry since Shirer was a child, for recognizing her gifts and potential as a teacher. When Shirer was in the sixth grade, Cannings occasionally asked her to teach. “I enjoyed figuring out a fun way to share the Bible in a way the children would remember,” Shirer says.

Though she accepted Christ as her Savior in first grade, Shirer admits that she became very rebellious as a teen. “Whenever my parents said, ‘Don’t do that,’ I took it as a green light for me to go that direction. I was probably the one out of all my siblings who gave my parents the most worry and concern.”

During high school, Shirer prepared for a future in radio and television. She went to the University of Houston to study. She admits that she made numerous bad decisions during these years.

“No longer was I surrounded by the cozy comfort of my church home and Christian friends,” she says. “[But] I remember for

the first time really beginning to hear the voice of God and feeling that stirring conviction—and knowing it was God Himself.”

In Houston, she had an internship at a Christian radio station and began to receive invitations to speak at Bible studies and emcee events. She found herself enjoying these assignments so much that she wasn't sure what to do after she graduated from college.

Wisely, she sought her dad's advice. Evans asked her which vocation she would focus on if she weren't getting paid to do the job. Shirer immediately responded, “Teaching.”

“She was loving teaching the Bible, and she was loving communicating—so I said, ‘Why don't you go deeper so that you can go further?’” Evans says. He directed her to his alma mater, Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), where he earned his doctorate.

Shirer's experience at DTS was rich and life-changing. She earned her master's degree in biblical studies there in 1999.

Sue Edwards, assistant professor of Christian Education at DTS, notes that God has “graced Priscilla with all the ability to bring the Bible alive in the minds and hearts of countless women of all ages, stages and races.”

A New Legacy

While she was in seminary, Shirer received a call that would ultimately impact her future. The Zig Ziglar her to speak at one of their Monday morning devotionals. Shirer accepted. It went so well that later in the day, she received a call inviting her to join their small team of motivational speakers.

“Priscilla certainly has a unique talent,” says Bryan Flanagan, director of corporate training for the Zig Ziglar

Corp., recalling that the organization has asked only a few young speakers to come on board. “She can give a message that will move you, but with enough logic and reinforcement that it makes sense—it’s not just hype.”

One of Shirer’s speaking events for Ziglar took her to a quarterly luncheon that Hilton Hotels was hosting for its executive team. There she met Jerry Shirer, who at the time was a Hilton vice president responsible for international operations. To her surprise, Jerry had been a member at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship for several years. They began dating and were married in July 1999.

As Shirer’s ministry began to grow, Jerry partnered with her, focusing on the business side. He takes care of the details while she does the ministering.

But one detail Shirer had to grapple with after she married was her name. Though she had been known as Priscilla Evans for years, she felt as if God told her not to use her maiden name any longer. Letting go of it, she says in her book *And We Are Changed*, was a painful experience.

“My difficulty in releasing this to the Lord indicated there was a problem,” she writes. But God had a purpose in asking her to make the change. She believes He gave her a mandate to create a new legacy: to help make the Shirer name one that represents integrity, character and honor—and not just on the ministry platform.

Though Shirer loves her role as teacher and author, she is focused on being a good wife and mother and stewarding her time well. “I’m sure this [emphasis] was heavily influenced by my mom,” she says. Her mother, Lois Evans, put a lot of things on hold—including her college education—to raise four children.

Her father, too, made a point of being available to his children, despite his full schedule. “Although Dad was very

busy with the church and speaking engagements and writing books, I have no recollection of my father not being around," Shirer says. "What I remember is Dad being at a speaking event, and me having a cheerleading competition, and him flying home to be there—and then flying back to finish the event. He didn't want to miss those important things in my life."

Shirer is deliberate about being available for her three sons, just as her parents were for her as a child. When she travels, a close family member takes care of the boys.

But the Shirers try to be home on Saturday evenings so they can be involved in their home church, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, where her three siblings also still attend. "We can't just be all over the place doing ministry and pouring out, and not receiving and pouring into the storehouse that is feeding us," she says.

Shirer feels it is important for her sons to see their dad taking pride in getting dressed, being on time for service and serving in ministry at Oak Cliff.

In what little spare time she has, Shirer enjoys going on a morning jog, reading a good book and watching "nonsense TV" for 30 minutes or so. Not surprisingly, she loves to study God's Word.

And she looks forward to the day when she can take her sons on the road more frequently. One of her greatest joys is being able to see the body of Christ in all its diversity in various places, including at events such as the 2008 Hillsong Colour event in Sydney, where some 30,000 diverse women gathered—and she wants her sons to witness the same thing.

"I want my children to see that God is global—that there are people everywhere who are so different from us, who look different from us, who talk different from us and yet who are all worshiping the same God," she says. "To travel and

instantly be connected with people who are on the other side of the world or different side of the country is an amazing opportunity.”

For now she is concentrating on stirring in them and the women she ministers to a desire to be “one in a million”—someone who wants to go beyond hearing about God to experiencing Him personally.

Approximately 2 million Israelites were delivered from Egypt and followed Moses, she explains. They all had the same opportunity to walk into and reap the benefits of the Promised Land, but only two went.

“That’s one in a million,” she says.

“It’s kind of like the church today. There are millions of us on the church pew, hearing and knowing about God. But there’s only a handful walking on Promised Land soil.

“If there is going to be one in a million, I surely want to be the one. ”

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She’s on a Rescue Mission

Pam Cope didn’t close her heart when she learned about vulnerable African orphans. Today she is reaching children around the world.

 Some people can read an article about an alarming human

rights issue without giving it a second thought. Not Pam Cope.

On October 29, 2006, *The New York Times* reported that a 6-year-old named Mark Kwadwo and other young children were working as slaves on fishing boats in Ghana. Cope and her husband, Randy, read the article during a trip to New York, and Cope was so moved that, upon returning to their home in Neosho, Missouri, she tracked down the reporter and put the wheels in motion to rescue Mark and six other children who had been sold into slavery.

Nine weeks later, the mission was accomplished. The children were safe in a Christian-run orphanage in Accra, Ghana, where they would receive an education.

Oprah Winfrey noticed the same newspaper article and sent correspondent Lisa Ling to investigate. Much to Ling's surprise, Mark and some of his friends had been rescued by the time she arrived. She reported her findings on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* in February 2007. Oprah invited Cope to appear on the program and honored her for her heroism.

"The next time you see a story and the story grabs your heart and it haunts you, you'll think about Pam and what one woman can do to make a difference," Oprah told the audience.

Cope, now 47, made her seventh visit to Ghana this fall. She and her team rescued 13 more children and placed them in three homes, where they will be cared for, educated and provided life skills. Village of Life, a new center built by donations Cope helped raise through her Touch a Life Foundation, celebrated its grand opening in March. It is located in Kete-Krachi, a fishing town near the Lake Volta region, and can accommodate 24 children and house-parents.

Led by the Spirit, Cope is following the biblical mandate to serve orphans and those who have no means to return a favor. To date, she has helped free 69 children by working closely

with George Achibra, a former teacher in Kete-Krachi who now holds an administrative position in the region's educational system.

Careful negotiations with the fishing village's "master" have enabled him to rescue the children; no money changes hands for their release. Achibra explains to the masters that their activities are against the Human Trafficking Act, a law passed by the Ghanaian government in December 2005.

Russell Simmons, who was recently appointed United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Permanent Memorial to Honor the Victims of Slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, says some 27 million people worldwide are being exploited through human trafficking. This broad category covers child labor, migrant smuggling, sex worker trafficking, debt bondage and "old-fashioned slavery."

In Ghana, part of the challenge in rescuing children is finding good homes for them. If returned to their parents, they will likely be resold. "Unfortunately, we don't have the money to care for all of them long term," Cope says. "We budget for approximately 10 years of support per child [\$100 per child a month]."

Investing for Eternity

If she had not experienced deep sorrow herself, Cope might not be rescuing kids on the other side of the world. But her son, Jantsen, died unexpectedly on June 16, 1999, from an undiagnosed heart ailment when he was only 15 years old. The tragedy rocked the Copes' small Missouri town, where Pam owned a hair salon and Randy worked as a publishing executive.

After Jantsen's death, Cope spent time re-examining her life, as she details in her book, *Jantsen's Gift* (Grand Central Publishing/Hachette). "When tragedy comes, you are forced to sit and reflect and evaluate what has been driving your life, what your focus and true core values have been—and it can be

pathetic," she told *Charisma*.

"As I was going through that process, I asked myself, 'What am I investing my life in that truly doesn't have any eternal impact?' I discovered that, when I was really honest, most of it *didn't* have any eternal impact. I was ready to turn things around."

Her journey initially took her to Vietnam. She and Randy had decided to give a portion of Jantsen's memorial fund to some family friends involved in adoption and missions work.

While in Vietnam, they became enamored with a baby abandoned by his mother and living in an orphanage. Their own 11-year-old adopted daughter, Crista, begged them to adopt him. They finally relented, and Van Cope became part of their family in August 2000.

Shortly after that trip, Cope and her husband decided to donate the remainder of Jantsen's memorial fund to a woman named Mai Lang, whose focus was getting children off the streets in Vietnam and providing them with an education and a safe place to live.

Cope's big turning point occurred in late 2000. She had been trying to raise more funds to benefit Lang's efforts in Vietnam (without much success) and came to grips with the fact that she had personally not made any huge financial sacrifice. She felt it was time to give up something she valued: her diamond solitaire wedding ring.

"My decision to give up that ring was the moment that things really started to happen," Cope says. "At that point, I began to take my work—and myself—seriously."

In 2001 Cope learned about a 2-year-old girl in Vietnam who lived in the same orphanage Van had come from. The child had developed mild cerebral palsy as a result of physical abuse

the mother experienced while pregnant. After seeing pictures of the little girl, Cope couldn't stop thinking about her. In October she and Randy adopted her and named her Tatum.

Since the inception of Touch a Life in 2000, Cope has gone the extra mile to alleviate suffering, one child at a time. Early on, she established what she calls "The Fixer Fund" to help meet the serious medical needs of children who might otherwise die or spend their lives crippled. For example, she lined up a sponsoring physician in the United States and obtained a medical visa for a Vietnamese girl named Phoo Twee Do, whose legs had been blown off by a homemade bomb and who was battling a serious infection.

Phoo received prosthetic legs—and was adopted by a loving couple from Tulsa, Oklahoma. Without Cope's intervention, Phoo might have become another sad statistic.

An Expanded Worldview

Cope didn't grow up in a churchgoing family. Her faith journey stems from a prediction in 1980 that the world was coming to an end. At that time, Cope was a senior in high school. She remembers going to a revival every night with her friends—hungry and searching for answers.

"I can remember one night when the pastor asked who wanted to become a Christian, and I felt this magnetic pull. I went forward and said, 'I'm ready to do this.' " Unfortunately, Cope did not have an intimate relationship with Jesus, and for years she struggled with her faith.

"Up until the point of losing Jantsen," she says, "there was this constant struggle of wavering back and forth between not being worthy, not being knowledgeable enough of the Word, and really trying to get my arms around forgiveness. I wasn't sure that forgiveness was something that was truly for me.

"When Jantsen died, I was forced to reflect on everything I

had read in the Bible and my relationship with God up to that point. I was desperate for an authentic relationship.”

Cope says after Jantsen’s death, she would beg God to fill her with His presence. “I would feel His peace wash over me and know it was His presence,” she says. “Even though it was such a painful time of grief, it was so powerful with God.”

Cope admits she was a performance-oriented perfectionist before Jantsen died. “Everything was focused on my immediate family, my needs. My world was pretty small,” she says, noting that Jantsen and Crista had most things money can buy.

Since then, traveling to Third World countries has opened Cope’s eyes. It is hard to justify spending \$150 on something as frivolous as matching pajamas and slippers after seeing three generations of the same family living in a one-room apartment in Vietnam, she says.

In recent years, the Copes have made some significant financial adjustments to help support more children in need. For example, they got rid of their credit cards and committed to an all-cash budget. They also downsized by moving into a smaller house.

Cope sometimes struggles to find a balance between work and family life. But she hopes her children will learn through her example that we have a responsibility to take care of people in need.

Being Jesus’ hands and feet starts with a simple prayer, says Cope: “Jesus, break my heart for what breaks Yours.”

A few weeks after Jantsen died, Cope says her brother-in-law told her, “Your life will definitely be sad, but it’s also possible that it will be richer and fuller than ever before.” Neither of them had any idea how prophetic his words would turn out to be.


Cope, whose family now lives in a Dallas suburb, never dreamed she would be involved in global outreach. Last year in Ghana, some 7,000 miles away from home, she felt God's presence in a special way, she says. Standing under a tree on a 110-degree day eating banana Laffy Taffy, she knew she was right where she needed to be, doing what God called her to do—rescuing children who otherwise had no hope of a normal life.

Carol Chapman Stertzler is a journalist living in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex.

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Out From the Rubble

When the World Trade Center was attacked eight years ago, a  young Indian-American escaped the collapsing concrete and steel. The words he prayed that day changed his life forever.

The morning of Sept.11, 2001, was sunny and clear on the U.S. East Coast. Sujo John, an ambitious 26-year-old who had moved from Calcutta, India, to New York City in February, had settled into his office on the 81st floor of the World Trade Center's North Tower. He had finished reading *The Prayer of Jabez* by Bruce Wilkinson earlier that week and on this particular morning was reflecting on how God might "enlarge his territory," as Wilkinson discusses in his book.

Love Comes in Boatloads

Since 1982, the floating Christian hospitals of Mercy Ships have delivered food, healing and salvation to countless people around the world.