

Building Houses of Belief

These days I'm questioning my faith. It's something I should've done a long time ago. But before you assume I'm another crazy charismatic jumping ship on solid biblical theology, hear me out.

I once wrote a book for a Christian apologist wanting to help believers refute the typical arguments lobbied against our faith. I wasn't the best candidate to explain why we believe what we believe; I had no theological schooling, was far from being a Bible scholar and could barely argue my way out of a paper bag. But I was exactly the kind of person he was trying to help.

Like countless Christians in the Western world, I'd been in church for most of my life yet never truly wrestled with what I believed. On the surface, I knew enough Christianese and had done enough Bible studies to, as 1 Peter 3:15 says, "be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you." But if someone had uncovered the framework of my belief system, they would've found the equivalent of a camping tent filled with lumber, power tools, and every nail, nut and bolt imaginable.

Despite my flimsy exterior of belief, I had all the right tools and elements inside; I'd just never taken the time to build a structure that would last through serious storms.

That can't go on much longer—for me or any other believer. The cultural storms are already raging in this country, and they threaten to topple any disciple of Jesus whose foundation isn't firmly in God's Word. But it takes more than just spouting out familiar verses to stand against the winds of this age; it requires engaging Scripture to know why you believe what you believe.

There's a reason why people talk about Bible engagement more than ever today. To engage is to draw into something, to hold or occupy its attention. Webster's says it is "to interlock with or cause to come into frictional driving contact with."

In 2011 we must interlock with God's Word as it comes into "frictional driving contact" with our flesh (that tentlike exterior) on a regular basis. It's through such wrestling with Scripture that we unveil its practical and spiritual tools and thereby use these to fortify the Holy Spirit's home in us.

You'll notice two distinct emphases in this month's issue: forgiveness and Scripture. Both are all about starting off the year right. I hope the powerful stories and teachings on radical forgiveness inspire you to, as Brian Zahnd says (p. 38), break the cycle of revenge and, ultimately, evil in your world. By the same token, we're also challenging Charisma readers to engage God's Word like never before in what we're calling the "Year of the Bible." Let's not just read through as many Bible pages as we can in 365 days; let's truly delve into Scripture, question our faith and unveil the truths of why we believe what we believe. Then, despite storms growing stronger, our houses can stand.

CONTRIBUTING TO THIS ISSUE ...

An avid outdoorsman, **Bruce Goolsby** loves hiking, walking, jogging, riding his bike and playing basketball (if there's enough Bengay!). He lives in Chandler, Ariz., where he and Michele, his wife, co-pastor Mosaic Church of Arizona.

Rebecca Nichols Alonzo's friends are now used to hearing the same line almost every time they talk to her: "Hey, I just

read this great book. You've got to read it!" Her love for reading is like her love for chocolate—endless.

The wait is over for Missouri pastor **Brian Zahnd**. After almost a year of people telling him how incredible Unconditional? is, his book releases this month. True to form, the man's already finished with his next writing project.

Though not technically featured in these pages, **Kristi Shores** (our copy editor's twin sister) contributed to this issue by inspiring the Charisma staff with her hope-filled fight against stomach cancer. We love you, Kristi!