

What the Scroll Can't Contain

Almost 1,000 years ago, a rabbi in Germany wrote a poem amid what was probably the threat of mass execution for his entire Jewish community. Fast-forward hundreds of years and a portion of that poem wound up scribbled on the walls of an insane asylum.

Still years later these words were quoted at a Nazarene camp meeting and left an indelible mark on a struggling pastor named Frederick M. Lehman, who adapted a version of the stanza (along with two verses and a chorus) and penned the hymn "The Love of God" on a scrap of paper. The powerful words, which you've undoubtedly heard, came as Lehman was making ends' meet by working hard manual labor in California:

Could we with ink the ocean fill/And were the skies of parchment made/Were every stalk on earth a quill/And every man a scribe by trade/To write the love of God above/Would drain the ocean dry/Nor could the scroll contain the whole/Though stretched from sky to sky.

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!/How measureless and strong!/It shall forevermore endure/The saints' and angels' song.

I was experiencing a "Job season" when I first heard these words. Mind you, it was nothing compared to facing possible death for my ethnicity, nor was I locked up for mental illness, nor was I forced into grueling labor just to pay the bills. But somehow, in my relative "suffering," a similar joy exploded within me when my soul connected to the spirit song continuously echoing throughout the universe in honor of God's love.

Whatever seasons of life you've been through or are currently in, I know you can relate. God's love is universal in its application; He extends Himself to us in any situation, at any

moment of triumph, despair or even mundanity. His love is found in the ashes of life and upon its mountaintops. Paul spoke of it penetrating death, life, principalities and powers (see Rom. 8:38-39). It truly knows no bounds or limits.

In this issue of *Charisma* we've highlighted various facets of God's love—seven, to be exact. The list began with 27, but we quickly realized that when it comes to writing about the love of God, no magazine, book or volume of printed pages can “contain the whole,” as the song says. So here, in part, is our attempt to express a few of the dimensions of this unrelenting, forgiving, crazy, unconditional, furious, adoptive and pursuing love.

God's love isn't the easiest thing to describe, after all; like a never-ending treasure hunt, one precious element leads to another. You can't mention God's forgiving love, for example, without bringing up the facets of His love that are merciful, kind, passionate, unconditional, redemptive or faithful. For that reason, I'm sure we missed mentioning aspects you feel are vital to understanding God. But rather than bemoan the limitations of this or any other “scroll,” let's revel in the uncontainable love of our Father.

CONTRIBUTING TO THIS ISSUE ...

After 30 years of helping the best (and worst) ministries raise millions of dollars, **Mary Hutchinson** wrote *The 21 Best Ways to Raise Less Money*, known as the funniest book on fundraising. Writing it was cheaper than going into therapy.

Our sister magazine, *Ministry Today*, first ran a story

on **Francis Chan** months after *Crazy Love* released in 2008. Since then, the former pastor's book has sold more than 1 million copies—with every cent of his royalties going to the poor.

Only days after sending us her profile story on evangelist Rosita Martínez (p. 40), Florida freelancer **Sarah Stegall** decided to move to Jerusalem for the next six months to teach English to children. Now *that's* a change of scenery!

As one of the original intercessory missionaries for Kansas City's International House of Prayer, **Misty Edwards** has been an integral part in leading 102,936 continuous *hours* of worship—and counting. (She's not, but we did the math.)