

The Shalom MINISTRIES CHAMPION



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Your source for all the latest in Shalom Ministries News **Cham-pi-on n.** an ardent defender or supporter of a cause.

When Life (and Death) Gets In the Way...

In the course of the first weekend of December, Debbie and I experienced a move from the home in which we had lived for 14 years, into a new home on Saturday. Sunday afternoon, as Debbie loaded the last box into the van and we prepared to drive away from our former home for the final time, she got the call that her father, Jake Thesman, had passed away. Jake had been seriously ill for several weeks, but that did not mitigate the pain of his passing. On Monday morning, Debbie had a very difficult and stressful meeting with her supervisor, as the changes in her workplace accelerate. By Monday afternoon, Debbie was in the emergency room, suffering from a very serious pulmonary "event." Thanks to quick-thinking emergency room personnel, Debbie made a swift recovery, and Wednesday evening, she was released. Thursday, we traveled to Oklahoma, where we joined all the other siblings, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, plus scores of friends to lay the earthly remains of my father-in-law into the red earth of Northwestern Oklahoma.

Such a week for me can be measured in one of two ways. One way to measure that week was by all the things that did not happen. *Shalom Champions* did not come out on time. A Shalom Ministries Board meeting and the annual meeting of the corporation were postponed. Things I depend on, like certain books of reference, are now buried in a garage in a box.

I can look at the things that did not happen, or I can celebrate the things that did happen: my wife got over a major health scare; we joined with scores of loved ones in saying goodbye to a wonderful, decent, simple, Godly man; Debbie and I have had more time together just to talk in the last two weeks than in the last 12 months.

Someone once said, "Life is what happens while you are planning..." In the past days, I have learned in a fresh way that the to-do list is full of things that are not nearly as important as I would like to think they are. "*Be still, and know that I am God...*" sing the Sons of Korah in Psalm 46:10. Sometimes life and death have to get in the way of the lists and calendars, just so that we can hear God. When they do, and we stop, and listen, and join in the song, our lives take on new perspective.

This issue of *Champions* is coming to you after the Holidays, so on behalf of all of us at Shalom Ministries, let me say that I hope your holidays were holy and blessed and full of joy. May 2007 be a year of Shalom for us all...

Peace,

Jeff Wright

President & COO, Shalom Ministries



And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. - Matthew 6:5-8

The Practice of Contemplative Prayer

Without a strong inner faith, our outer witness will be insufficient, and prayer is the fundamental discipline for a rich, deep, firm foundation in Christ. Like compost, daily prayer creates fertile ground within us from which the seed of the Holy Spirit can take root and flourish.

Many types of prayers exist; prayers of intercession, thanksgiving, praise, and petition. These are all good forms of prayer. Another form of prayer is contemplative prayer. It is the practice of being silent before God. In contemplative prayer, we do not speak to God by bringing our requests or praise, but allow God to speak to us. We are silent before God in order to align ourselves with His will and to be filled with the Holy Spirit in our inner most being.

There are many ways to practice contemplative prayer. Below are a few guidelines to help you get started.

Begin with a devotional reading of scripture to focus your mind on God. If a word or phrase from the scripture speaks to you, focus on that. If not, you may choose a more generic phrase such as "Come Lord Jesus" or, as you sit in silence, take slow, deep breaths to relax your body and clear your mind. If your mind wanders, that is OK. It takes much practice to silence our busy, cluttered minds so we can hear clearly the voice of God. Let your thoughts pass by, and repeat your word or phrase to focus back on Christ.

Start by spending 15-20 minutes in silence before God. As you improve in this discipline, you may choose to extend that time. End by re-reading your scripture passage, or by saying the Lord's Prayer.

May God bless you with an enriched, meaningful prayer life.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The School for Urban Mission: Course Offerings in Early 2007

The Anabaptist Witness (CAL – 110)

Instructor: Bishop Jeff Wright

This course is an investigation and assessment of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition from historical, theological, pastoral and missiological points of view in light of an urban, post-modern context. Students who successfully complete this course should be able to meet the following objectives: 1) Develop an appreciation for the history of the Christian movement from a non-Constantinian point of view; 2) Describe the Anabaptist-Mennonite story from the 16th century to the present as a story of a church in mission; 3) Explain the confessional tradition of the Anabaptist theological movement; 4) Offer a constructive critique of the Mennonite movement in light of the urban, postmodern setting of Southern California, paying special attention to the intersections of Anabaptist and Charismatic approaches to the Christian Way; 5) Define and explore pastoral leadership as informed by Anabaptist-Mennonite theological and missiological perspectives.

Dates for this course are

- January 20, 2007
- February 10, 2007
- March 10, 2007
- May 5, 2007
- May 19, 2007

Course Sessions will take place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in room L 15 of the Latourette Library on the campus of William Carey International University located at 1530 East Elizabeth Street, Pasadena CA 91104.

The Kingdom of God in the City (CAL 130)

Instructor: Rev. Valentina Satvedi

This course seeks to engage the urban practitioner in their role as God's agent for missional transformation in the city by exploring human relationships from multifaceted experiences. Special consideration will be given to the ethics of the Kingdom of God, exploring Christian responses to urban problems and tools for confronting the powers of the city. Drawing on Biblical, historical, and applied sources, students who complete the course should be able to meet the following objectives: 1) A deeper appreciation for the "diversity" of the city; 2) Ability to clearly articulate an ethic of the Kingdom of God for the city; 3) Ability to critically reflect on what a Christian response to urban problems might look like in the city; 4) Be better equipped to confront the powers in the city.

Dates for this course are

- January 13, 2007
- February 10, 2007
- March 3, 2007
- March 24, 2007
- April 21, 2007

Course Sessions will take place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Room L 15 of the Latourette Library, located at 1530 East Elizabeth Street and in room M 12 of US Center for World Mission, located at 1605 East Elizabeth Street. Both are on the campus of William Carey International University, Pasadena CA 91104.

Qualifying students can take these courses for credit through an arrangement with Hesston College and its Pastoral Ministries Program. Courses are taught using lectures, classroom discussion, and writing projects.

Attendance in all course sessions and completion of writing assignments in a timely manner are necessary to obtain credit. If you wish to register for either of the courses please contact our office at (626) 720-8100.



Joel Shenk

Transformed Through Prayer

Based on the teachings of Father Richard Rohr, O.F.M – Founder and Director of the Center for Action and Contemplation – at the Politics and Spirituality Conference, Pasadena, CA, 8-10 September 2006.

By Joel Shenk

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written:

*"No eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those who love him— but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.*

How do you see the world? This is a deeply philosophical question, but also a very vital question because how we see will determine what we see.

Much of the world, especially the Western world, operates with a calculative, dualistic mindset. It is one of definition and classification where the world is broken down into categories and choices. In this mindset, human interaction is reduced to competition and opposition with the end goal of preserving one's self or one's group.

As a result of this way of thinking, people find their identity within their own groups and fight for the well-being of their group. In the political realm, we see the Democrats and the Republicans opposing one another and competing for control. Sadly, we also see this posturing in religion too. In the Gospels we see the Pharisees and Sadducees vying for religious and political power, and throughout church history we see this pattern repeated.

These are the ways of the world, not the ways of Christ. Christ did not come with new laws and new codes of righteousness which people could use to boast in their own accomplishments. No, Jesus came to fulfill what the law was unable to accomplish. He offered a new way of thinking in contrast to the world; one that started with human suffering and offered grace and mercy to the humble, broken, and weak.

Christ calls us to a better way. Christ does not create more divisions, he breaks down the societal divisions that offer privilege and power to some while denying it to others (Gal.3:26-29). Christ does not create new way to exclude, he creates unity for all who have faith (Eph.2:11-22).

This can be very difficult for human minds to accept. It requires that we put off our false self and put on the mind of Christ. And it is only through prayer that this can be accomplished

Peace Out: The Shalom Ministries Champion Signs Off

The Shalom Ministries Champion is a monthly venue for sharing the good news about Shalom Ministries. You are invited to submit articles for consideration to Jeff Wright. Articles should be sent no later than the 10th of the month for possible publication in the next month's newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you and wish you and yours peace. Send your submissions via email to wrightstuff@pacificsouthwest.org.