

Baja Christian Ministries Update and Prayer Letter 11/5/04

Dear Prayer Partners,

Lot's of good and encouraging news I have to share with you! I hope that if you're not able to read the entire piece now...that you'll consider printing it and reading it later, because I believe there are things I'm reporting that will bless you and encourage you in your prayers for us...for your prayers are truly making a big difference. Our mighty King is really moving through this work at this time and your prayers have been so vital! Praise His Holy Name!

I've also enclosed two poems I wrote targeting the importance of encouragement. These poems, I believe, have largely captured some of the ethos of the calling of this ministry. Along that line I want to say that over the years, I have come to realize how vital and indispensable encouragement is! Please allow me to say first, I believe encouragement gets us up and going, it fuels and vitalizes evangelism, it resurrects potential and destiny that might be dormant, awakens faith, empowers love, offers hope, inspires the downcast and emboldens the reluctant to gradually immerse their feet into heavenly waters. Encouragement inspires action, delivers from ruts, and lifts those who are weakened by the traumas of this world into a better place.

Encouragement jumpstarts our desire to run the race that is set before us and often spurs the weary back on course. It has ability to stimulate prayer and create high praises and thanksgiving for our Great King. I personally believe it is one of most important ministries in the body of Christ. Allow me to share this first poem I wrote about the role and potential of encouragement as I'm beginning to understand it. I hope this poem offers some encouragement to you:

The Power of Encouragement

Encouragement has bridging power to align us to Jesus the Vine
Like branch and sap
faith bonds and seals that graft
Encouragement opens the flow to and from this Abundant Tap
The Glorious King is very pleased by it's abundant opening
for sweet springs are bridged through encouraging
Sweet Holy Spirit rides on it's wings
Generous and precious is this priceless anointing
Heartwarming and penetrating enough
to usher large sums of reluctant ones into God's kingdom
Drawing abundance of His love from above
Striking heartstrings
Making the widow's heart sing
Powerful to build up and fill heart cups
It's so powerful the devil shatters
For it cuts through his hate like butter
It warms the frozen and ignites the chosen
It stirs and spurs the fire of holy desire
Yet, who will break the barriers to be it's carriers?
Who will honor the unseemly parts and associate with the lowly?
calling forth potential, destiny, and heavenly possibilities
holding out the cup of Living Water of Life as it could be...
Who will press these extreme limits
to bring forth it's heavenly benefits?
For encouragement greatly helps every woman and man
Giving dignity and a helping hand
Emboldening them to stand

Helping them to understand
The great value of our King's salvation
As it rebuilds broken foundations
lifting spirit and bringing joy
Hedging protection for vulnerable girls and boys
assaulted by the thief bent to kill, steal and destroy

Encouragement in-speaks courage when we're weak
It throws the rope of great hope
into the horrible pits that tempt us to quit
as it pulls us out of that trench of doubt
and reconnects us at our low points
when our faith seems out of joint,
putting us back on track
when knocked off by attack
shifting us back in gear
when taken out by fear
not a cookie and a pat on the head
but rather genuine Barnabas Encouragement instead
Opening that tangible reservoir
pulling victims from the floor
through the encouraging Jesus Door
to become triumphant victors
as it lifts us from the ground
when beaten down
re-enforcing rising bravery in our gut
to climb out of those nasty ruts
instilling fresh grace to run the race
that King Jesus has set before us
stirring a smile to go that extra mile
as His Spirit jump-starts our heart
to run again in fun
Holy Spirit filled sisters and brothers
Let us excel in encouraging one another
For we may never know or see
How vital that cup of cold water in His Name might be
For some... it might rescue from that final straw
So...from the well of encouragement let us richly draw
To give and receive that needed reprieve
Jump-starting multitudes through the instilled courage to believe
(1Cor 12:22-27, Rom 12:16)

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus is recorded first in Acts 4:36-37. It's recorded that he sold his land and gave the proceeds at the feet of the apostle, which in turn was distributed to the poor and those who had need. He was such a strong encourager that they renamed him Barnabas, that means "Son of Encouragement". God saw to it that the anointing on this man was to rub off on the Paul the Apostle who, as we know, influenced the entire gentile world including us, as the gospel multiplied and rippled out in the ethos of evangelism and encouragement coupled with teaching and discipleship.

I believe BCM is being shaped by the Holy Spirit to not only be an evangelistic, church planting, and house-building ministry, but also a ministry that not only brings encouragement and hope to the poor but also to those who serve as "Sons of Encouragement" like modern day Barnabas's. Allow me to update you on some of the encouraging things that have been and are happening through these Barnabas groups.

A Very Inspiring and Encouraging Story: A precious 71-year-old grandma...Elisha...whose face is wrinkled like a road map, now graces the community of Vista De Valle 2, where she now lives. When she smiles God's encouraging love in her breaks through. She was thrust with the responsibility to raise three little grandchildren along with her son Jorge. We prayed together and pushed to make sure we could have a house built for her. A beautiful house was built through one of the groups of The Crossing Church. She was thrilled and greatly encouraged as you can imagine.

A week later, one of our board members arranged for the mission pastor from his church and a scouting team to see our work along with other works in Mexico they were visiting. Just weeks before many members from this church were featured on the TV show—"Extreme Home Makeover" as many of them re-built a home for a member of their congregation, a widowed man with 8 children and brought great encouragement to this family.

We didn't have much time so I brought them right to this new house to see her and a few neighbors. I said to them...allow me to now show you what I think is the most inspiring thing you will see all day. I then brought them to a ten-foot hole in the ground that was shovel cut from very hard, rocky soil. Inspiring? A ten-foot hole in the ground? I then said to them, this 71-year-old woman dug this hole entirely by herself with the anticipation of having her own toilet. I challenged the group to raise the \$600 to purchase the building materials to build the latrine for her, which they gladly did immediately. This latrine will be built next weekend, Nov 13-14, along with 6 other houses.

Encouragement Serves as a Rescue to Bring Consolation in a Tragic Time: Two houses up the dirt road from Grandma lives Roberto and Basilia, parents of a full term pregnant daughter and their two other grandchildren, her children, a one and three year old, who also lived together with them in an apartment by the border. A horrible fire burned the apartment down and they suffered the tragic loss of these two precious grandchildren in the fire, and the daughter, their mother, also suffered burns. We didn't know any of this... when Captain Venegas, Omar Perich, Pastor Frank Castrejon and I went to visit them as potential house candidates. Basilea the grandma, who lived behind this makeshift of ripped plywood and junky trashed wood in Vista De Valle 2, wouldn't come out at first. As we spoke with them Roberto the grandpa started wailing, they then gave their lives to the Lord and begged us for bibles. We happened to have a food box with us that we gave to them and promised them a house soon. Grandpa Roberto told Captain Venegas privately that grandma Basilea was contemplating suicide that evening because she couldn't bare the extreme emotional pain from the loss of her grandchildren; Which caused us to realize that our visit of hope and encouragement was God's timing as a rescue from further tragedy. We visited Grandma and Grandpa several times since. They are healing. Ray and Jeannie Fecteau and Pasquale and Danielle Russo and many of their friends and associates are building a new house for them next weekend, Nov 12-13, along with another one across the street for a neighbor. Not only that...Jeannie, Ashley Coelho, Danelle and a number of ladies from her women's ministry from the North Coast Calvary Chapel of Carlsbad are throwing a baby shower for the pregnant daughter who is still living at the border till the house is built. The delivery date for the baby is the same weekend they are building the house. Please pray for God's healing upon this entire family and blessing upon this entire group serving them in this sensitive time.

More Encouragement Flowing on the Weekend of Nov 12-13 Mike Coelho, family, friends and associates are building a house this same weekend for Erica and her family living next door to the 71 year old grandma. Erica told us it was her dream to have a house someday. She is ecstatic as this dream is coming true for her on this weekend. We led Erica's husband Armando to the Lord a few weeks ago...he broke into sobbing tears.

Dennis Breckenridge, Chris Falletta, and Art Reynosa and team from Foothill Vineyard Church of San Dimas are building a house and latrine for Pastor Jesus and Ernestina pastors of an El Nino church and director of a men's home in El Nino.

Dave Bower and Bob Allen, who have encouraged hundreds of families with houses and latrines, are building a house in San Bernardo.

Rob Songer and Travis Friberg are leading a team from Olive Knolls Nazarene of Bakersfield to build their first house and latrine and outreach on this same weekend.

Then a week later, Nov 20-21, Steve Thorne, friends, and associates are building a home for a very needy family with 7 young children in Vista de Valle.

Brett and Valerie Vandenbrink are leading a team from Woodenville Alliance Church from Washington to build a house and do outreach in Valle Verde with Pastor Alvin Morales.

Barnabas Encouragement Flowing This Weekend—Nov 4-7 Al Day and Mary Weber have arrived with another team from Grace Presbyterian Church of Plano Texas to build a house for a family that lost their house in the floods a few months back. They have built two Church buildings with us over the years and many beautiful houses.

Joe and Laurie Watson are bringing a team in tonight from Lake Arrowhead of about 55 people and will receive a police escort to the bunk facility from the border. They are building two houses in Vista de Valle and will be having dinner with 12 or so families they have built for over the years, an encouraging tradition they have pioneered with Russ Martin and David McClellan.

Jon Hall and team from Canyon Hills Church, Lake Forest, is also arriving tonight with a large team to build 3 houses for families in San Bernardo who lost their homes in the floods. Jon has shared how this ministry of encouragement has encouraged so many he has brought down to build and participate that aren't saved or churched and how it has warmed them to relationship with Jesus and the church.

Please pray blessing, protection, and fullness of joy on all these groups and the people they will be encouraging and ministering to.

Over the last two weeks, Oct 22-24, Michael Pjung brought a team from Lake Avenue Congregational Church, Pasadena, to build a house. On the second night he and his team chose to stay in the community to get to know the people they were serving better. Michael was sharing how rich that experience was.

The next weekend Gary Astfalk and Dave McCellen came to bless a family in San Bernardo with a needed house.

Our Greatest Weapons: It's not worldly power nor money. Our greatest weapons are faith, hope, and love in Jesus through prayer. Through these weapons we can gain great victories. Your prayers—the prayers of many (2Cor 1:9-11) as a prayer vanguard coupled with the prayers of the precious widows and poor saints in these needy communities is what is helping to substantiate all these hoped for requests. Thank you very much for standing with us! Please keep praying!

Home Depot/Whitecap Construction Donation Blessing: Home Depot recently purchased Whitecap Construction. Ted Nark, the CEO of Whitecap served a weekend with our ministry in T.J. In the buyout, he asked that a gift of \$75,000 come to our ministry. The first \$15,000 has arrived. Steve Small is recruiting his team to build a community center and probably another house in Vista De Valle in January through those funds. The remaining \$60,000 is promised next year. Through this transaction there has been phone conversation and/or e-mail exchange with Ted and with Home Depot executives Frank Blake, Pat Chandler, and April Harrison. I believe God has brought us together for something bigger than what meets the eye, even more abundantly than we can ask or think (Eph 3:20) Please pray that God would bless, bring joy to,

activate great faith in, encourage them to pursue the things of the Lord and to continue their favor upon this ministry and our work amongst the poor in Mexico.

Newsboys/Teenmania/Global Expeditions/BCM Partnership: Peter Furler and Wes Campbell, owners of the Newsboys and INPOP Records bridged a ministry trip partnership between BCM and Teenmania, a large Texas based ministry founded by Ron Luce that serves the youth and the world for Jesus through Acquire the Fire, an interstate ministry, and Global Expeditions, an international ministry. Global Expeditions is planning to send approximately 500 youth in partnership with us to serve with us July 31-Aug 5th to build houses and do evangelism. How many houses is not yet certain. Pray with us that God would provide funding for 25 houses, or what seems best, and that together we would lead thousands into relationship with Jesus our Lord through this army of Christian youth. Sometime during that time the Newsboys will be doing a concert in TJ. Peter Furler, Wes Campbell, Dave Wagner, and Steve Campbell and their management team have been very good to us and very encouraging. Please pray blessing upon them and upon all the Newsboys members and their families. The Newsboys just released a new album on Nov 2nd entitled "Devotion" which is excellent. In it they placed an insert promoting this outreach trip through Global Expeditions who are partnering with us. Pray for God's rich blessing on Ron Luce, Jonathan Hasz, and Nathanael Ferguson and their families who are pulling this together with us. If you'd like, you can purchase this new CD at <http://www.newsboys.com/prerelease/> or at a nearby Christian bookstore.

Encouragement to Widows and the Fatherless: Often when police officers are killed in the line of duty in TJ the remaining widow and kids are left with no support systems. They fall through the cracks and suffer the effects of poverty. The kids can't often afford to go to school because the widow can't afford the small tuition, the books, backpack, shoes, and uniform. Through Capt Venegas approximately 80 of these children have been identified as desperately needing this type of support. Like Laura and David Boyd did through Irvine Presbyterian Church to sponsor 265 kids to go to school in El Nino and Vista de Valle, Jeff and Laurie Hack and friends are eager to build that safety net of encouragement for these 80 kids. They are also making funding available to fund a house that the junior police, (youth that Capt Venegas and Capt Daniel are training and sharing the gospel with) will be building from ground up. A great development project for these very encouraged youngsters. I need your prayers to help put together this needed system that will become a blessing to many.

New Zealand Comes to Encourage Baja With New Zeal Again: My dear friend, Pastor Anthony Walton, is flying out again with another team from the Rock Church, Wellington, New Zealand. Led by Anthony and Amber O'fee they will build two houses and encourage Baja and all of us with their New Zeal again Nov. 19-23. Please pray for blessing, protection upon them, and smooth preparation for them.

Community Wide Pastors Conference—We will be having a community or region wide pastors/elders conference on Saturday, Nov 20th at Pastor Chuy and Ana Gomez' church in El Nino, sponsored largely by Anthony Walton and the New Zealand team. Anthony and some of his team will be speaking and doing workshops along with other leaders from both US and Mexico. It's a one-day conference focused on unification of purpose, letting walls fall, and bonding together to reach that region for Jesus. It's a day, per say, of foot washing, humbling ourselves, leaving turf battles, competition, and the things that divide behind. Our dear brother, Steve Skolos will actually be leading a foot washing ceremony and share how revival sprung from one such pastoral meeting in China. Please pray that the Holy Spirit fully orchestrates what He desires in this conference and draws everyone He wants there to be there.

Pray Continual Encouragement on our Entire Team: Please pray great encouragement and unity on our entire Baja team from Mexico; Hector Rubio, Captain Jose Venegas, Pastor Salim Barraza, Pastor Luis Barraza, Pastor Alvin Morales, and our US team, Cheryl Walker, myself, our board and all our spouses and families.

In order to give encouragement we need to be filling our cups to have something to give. We need to be encouraged ourselves. King David learned how to encourage himself in the Lord. I have enclosed a poetic prayer I penned entitled, "He Encouraged Himself in the Lord". I hope it serves to encourage and inspire you even a little bit. Thank you and may God bless you. With Gratitude, Bob Sanders

He Encouraged Himself in the Lord

(1Sam 30:6, Lu 17:21, Ps 100:4, Ps 36:10, Isa 58:11, Ps 91:1, Rom 14:17, 15:4-5, Heb 4:10-11)

King David encouraged himself in the Lord
He pressed in to God's Kingdom within
Into the Barricade Heaven had anchored and secured
That Mighty Fortress of Entered Rest
Though guarded by flaming sword
from hearts untrue
Tenaciously and Passionately
He pressed through
He fought and found what he diligently sought
And was consoled, soothed, refreshed and renewed
He pressed the King's gates with thanksgiving
And His courts with praise
to find the Prince of Encouragement and Blessing
The Desire of the Ages, the Ancient of Days
Who radiates blessings in unending waves
He fervently sought and never quit...
Seeking His Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Spirit
He learned to encourage himself in the Lord
In due time he found that Great Reward
Granted to those diligent seekers who refuse to draw back...
who even pursue this Beloved One when under attack
In his pursuit...
He Discovered the Secret Place
Where Tender Loving Care met him there
Within the Well-watered garden of grace
Delightfully and Beautifully Faced
Free from the strangling vines of shame and disgrace
In that secret place
where love abounds from this holy ground
where we are warmly embraced
by the sweet vintage of renewed courage
by life abundant and endless contentment
And nourished by Holy Spirit's fruit
drawn through deepened roots
deeply sinking and freely drinking
from Unfailing Springs
Of Holy Spirit Anointing
where peace that passes understanding flows

and tranquility and repose continually grows
where we find courage and motivation to press on
where anxiety and fear is overcome and gradually gone
Where Kingdom keys open heavenly benefits that never quit
where our mind is renewed as His Love pulls us through
Where we are Hedged in by the Strong Defense
Of His Holy Spirit Presence
within the Strong Tower
Of His Majestic Power
a safety nest of rest
Hedged secure from the thrones of fear
Where His Spring of courage and well-being
rises up to build resilience
perseverance and endurance
in the Vanguard of His Presence
Under the Shadow of His Wings
Where He cares for everything
and enlightens us to know
That He's in full control
of our spirit, body and soul
as our best interest is also His goal
Because He loves us so...
In His Love... He Draws us back
From defilement or attachment to emotional wrath
to re-direct us into His peace on His simple path
As He turns disappointment into contentment
and helps us to find
His soothing heavenly music
that brings solace amidst the grind
Even when our heart has been made sick
it greets us to soothe our weary mind
In times of broken dreams and deferred hope
It's plenteous enough when times get tough
and when circumstances make it hard to cope
It's at that time and always, that we must remember...
the secret place is always there
to engage faith to sink our spirit roots
into His Heavenly Pools of Tender Care
to diligently seek and find

Yet the greatest crime...
Is to not make or take that time
of Prioritizing that One Needful Thing
to spend that vital time at His feet!

Holy Spirit Helper and Comforter

Teach us to drink in the endless reprieve
from an unwavering heart-straw that fully believes
Move us to enter our heart closets and close the door
My King...I ask you please to teach us how
Open to us Your secrets now
Reveal to us the Keys to Your Intimacy
Embolden us to earnestly press through to be with You
Stir in us love for You and that fully renews
Lavishly fill our heart cup
so we may have enough to lift others up
to effectively energize and fortify our sisters and brothers
to run this race-beholding Your Face-in the fullness of Your Grace->
stirring, spurring, invigorating, and stimulating one another
into love and good deeds
with passionate love for our King
as we diligently press into the Rich Reward
of effectively encouraging ourselves in the Lord

By Bob Sanders-10/27/04

<http://www.bajachristian.org/>

Dedicated to my good friend Richard Gorsuch, a 71 year old artist, warrior exhorter, uplifting motivator
from Cannon Beach, Oregon--the greatest encourager I know and to all those wonderful Barnabas
encouragers out there