

Heart to Heart

A quarterly newsletter of Open Hearts Ministry

Winter 2001

"My Father Has No Face!"

by Mark Bonham

We are familiar with individual and family abuse. We have seen how churches can be abusive. But can a political system also rob a people of their God intended identity? My recent experience in SALTS Austria helped me see the significant damage that Nazism not only did, but continues to do two generations later.

Our Mission:

*"Ministering
to the
abused
through the
love of Christ
and
equipping
others to do
the same."*

Actually, Nazism was more than a political system. My Austrian friends told me that they see it as a belief system rooted in the occult. Its rituals and indoctrination were intended to break every emotional bond with the exception of allegiance to the Third Reich. One of the ways they used to achieve this allegiance was to give their young recruits a puppy. When it was obvious that the recruit had bonded with the pet, they were given an order to kill their pet with their own hands. In this and other ways people were brought to blind, unfeeling obedience that led to the holocaust. After losing the war, broken, demoralized and angry young men returned home in shame and began to have children. The next generation was raised in some very dysfunctional families. Children were emotionally abandoned, physically and sexually abused, and yet held to extreme standards of discipline and achievement that were modeled after military training.

With tears running down his cheeks, one Austrian man chocked out, "My father has no face! All I can see are his tall, black boots and his uniform. But I cannot see my father's face!" We know that God has created us as relational people. We long for intimacy and we are nurtured by affection. Without emotional bonding, something vital dies within a child. The suicide rate is exceptionally high and all this is now impacting the children of this generation.

The men in our small group had a deep longing for recovery. They were serious about the group process and there was a real sense of mourning over the losses they had experienced. It was painful to look at the damage they had done to themselves, their wives and their children. Much of this had overflowed to their churches as well. They began to long for Grace that gives life to the full, and to repent of the enemy's lie that steals, kills and destroys life. As the week progressed there were signs of men reconnecting with their hearts, the first inklings of restored identities in Christ, and the ability to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

Our Father has a face. II Corinthians 4:6 tells us that in the face of Christ is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. The face of Christ is one easily touched with the feeling of our life experiences. The Bible says that Jesus was sorrowful, troubled, overwhelmed, angry, distressed, amazed, indignant, full of joy, full of love, full of longing, eager, deeply moved, in anguish. We know that we may hide our face to not show our emotions, but do you know that when you do not

In the region where the "hills are alive with the sound of music", many people are either emotionally numb, expecting nothing from life, or wrestling with an internal anger that flows out of a deep sense of disappointment with life itself.

show your emotions, you hide your face? A hidden face communicates both shame and rejection. Children need to see their fathers' emotions to have any sense of connection with them. Emotional aloofness is every bit as damaging as unbridled anger.

Does your father have a face? Does he hear your heart? David could say of his Father in Heaven, "My heart says of you, 'Seek his face! Your face, Lord, I will seek.'" (Psalms 27:8) When you seek His face, He will reconnect you with your heart. Then your children will have hope.

Mark Bonham is the Executive Director of Open Hearts Ministry, Inc. and teaches and leads small groups both at SALTS and in the local ministry.

SALTS Austria: "A Growing Partnership"

by Mark Bonham

Castle Mittersill, on a beautiful mountainside between Salzburg and Innsbruck, was host to SALTS Austria October 29-November 4. It was a high privilege for me to represent Open Hearts, assist with leader training and teaching, and help lead the first men's group on the European continent. Our manual has been translated into German by International Teams. Apart from translating for my benefit and two small groups in English, the entire conference was held in the German language. The progress of the Austrian team, coordinated by Donna Albinson, in not only developing small group ministry around Austria, but in providing high quality teaching and training for the 34 participants and 15 leaders from 7 countries, is the result of a journey which began in 1995 when Donna attended her first SALTS in Croatia, at the end of the Bosnian War.



Group leaders in Austria

The interest among missionaries to be equipped in this ministry continues to grow. Along with International Teams, the following missions were present: Campus Crusade, Youth for Christ, International Students, Inc., Operation Mobilization, Assembly of God Missions, the Women's Breakfast of Germany, as well as local churches. We highly value partnership with solid mission organizations in developing this ministry. Working through existing relational networks and with people already on the field is not only the most economical, but also the most practical way of getting help to the abused and wounded among every people group around the world.

Feedback from the seminar has been very encouraging. One woman became a believer in her small group. There is interest in developing small groups from Latvia through Hungary, Serbia and Kosovo. One participant with missions experience on several continents wrote to the organizational team: "In my long

Christian and missionary life (SALTS) has been the most helpful conference I have ever attended. Thanks to you and your team, healing is on the way and freedom just around the corner."

To all who partner with this ministry I say thank you! God is multiplying the impact of your service to the lives of many others. This small ministry is having far reaching effects both at home and in various counties abroad. We continue to trust God to enable this movement to reach the far corners of the earth.

SALTS Texas: "The Result of a Vision"

by Sandy Burdick

SALTS Texas was the result of a vision that trained leaders from Texas have been talking about for some time. It began with Betty Lee who joined us years ago at Maranatha. As she went home and started groups she began talking about SALTS coming to Texas. When Pat Beyer was trained she caught the same vision. The dreams of these women came true in bigger ways than they could imagine. Who would have thought that 40% of the participants would be men? We had 2 men's groups, 4 women's groups and 2 co-ed groups.



Leadership team in the lone star state

We definitely felt resistance to "feeling emotions" and "entering pain." The leaders gathered to engage in warfare praying for this "stumbling stone" in our path. I am thrilled to report that we saw answered prayer: new movement and people "coming alive." During the closing gathering we heard two hours of praise and testimonies about changed lives. Yes, God met us in Texas!

We were looking for men and women to rise up and lead groups in their home churches. There were people there from all over the states, Canada and even as far away as Australia, India, and the Philipines. Some of the Texas people went back to a church in San Antonio where they now have 40 people involved in groups with 8 trained leaders.

If you who are reading this have a burden for your area, remember that one Godly person with a burden for the wounded can make a difference.

Sandy Burdick is the founder and ministry director of Open Hearts Ministry. She is the principal teacher at the "Survivors of Abuse Leadership Training Seminars" (SALTS) sponsored by Open Hearts.

OHM Financial Update

There's Good News and Bad News...

First the good news...2001 has been a great year in terms of our activities and the number of small group leaders trained to do this ministry. Of all participants who have attended SALTS since our beginning in 1993, 24% did so in 2001. People from all over the U.S. and Canada came, as well as from Austria, Australia, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Latvia, the Middle East, the Philippines, and Switzerland. Our ministry was extended to African Americans and Native Americans. Special scholarships enabled us to help many attend SALTS as well as providing an 8-week internship for Lima Jamir from India.



The bad news...2001 has been a slow year to date for donations to OHM. Our walk-a-thon was scheduled a week after September 11. We reached 25% of our goal. We need to raise \$15,000 to meet our budget by year-end.

We are looking for partners: individuals, churches, and businesses who share our vision to see wounded people from around the world experience the Wounded Healer, Jesus Christ. People who know that the best way to accomplish this is by equipping people who can help others. We need people who can give regular amounts monthly, or special gifts during the year. We need to enlarge our capacity to respond to the tremendous needs and opportunities that surround us. And we need your help to do that.

Please take a few moments to make your special end of the year contribution using the postage free response envelope provided. Please consider as well what part you can play in helping us in 2002. Could you connect us with the missions committee at your church? Could you introduce us to businesses that would value being a partner in a growing ministry? Could you make a personal pledge for 2002 and include us in your regular giving? Your heart for this work and your partnership in this mission is greatly needed and appreciated.

We make it easy for you to give by electronic fund transfer or credit card. Fill out the agreement in the reply envelope or send us your card information. All gifts are acknowledged with a tax-deductible receipt. Your support is needed today!

What to do if...

...a group member continually enters group with super spiritual responses?

by Mary Jane Hamilton

It is not uncommon to have a group member who feels that a scripture verse, prayer, or a spiritual cliché (Let go and let God!) is the appropriate response to the hurt and pain of others. Unfortunately, those kinds of responses can make members feel angry, patronized, missed, insulted, or carnal. How do you let someone know that these responses (which are truth) or their desire to pray (which is good) are inappropriate at this time?

First, we need to recognize the negative impact of scripture and prayer when not timed well. God's word can push others away when given as a substitute for entering their pain. We may need to encourage the responder to respond from their own heart instead of their head that is filled with Biblical truth. It is difficult to do that because the responder really does feel they are offering their best. After all, they are giving from God's word. But they need to realize that the person who is sharing out of their pain may not be ready to hear what God has to say at that particular moment (remember Job's friends). Reinforce that we believe in God, His word, and that his truth does change lives, but that we are willing to sit in the mess and enter from the compassion of our own hearts first.

Second, let them know that we believe in prayer and that any member (including yourself) is free to be praying silently any time during group. Stress that stopping to pray can interrupt the pain of another, giving them the message that they are too much for the group. In reality we can handle their shame and pain and enter into it. Revisit prayer after the person's time of sharing and responses to them are finished. Invite the person requesting prayer to pray if it still seems appropriate. We want to tread delicately with someone's spiritual life and let them know that we value their relationship with God, and that we do not want to diminish or take lightly the role of God in their life.

Mary Jane Hamilton is a teacher, trainer, and small group leader at SALTS, as well as being an important part of the Open Hearts Ministry board of directors and ministry team.

A Christmas Wish from Open Hearts!

"Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy." Luke 1:58

Nestled in the Christmas story is the wonderful story of Elizabeth. She is the relative of Mary who was the first to really rejoice with Mary in her pregnancy. Her words of affirmation and blessing (Luke 1:42-45) must have sounded so good to the young girl who no doubt felt the sting of contempt others had for her condition. Why could Elizabeth be so affirming? "In these days He has shown His favor and taken away my disgrace among the people." (Luke 1:25) Elizabeth herself had carried a sense of shame for having no child in a society where a woman's worth was often determined by her fruitfulness. She knew from personal experience what it meant to feel disgrace through no fault of her own. Her own healing freed her to embrace Mary.

It must have felt good for Mary to be with Elizabeth. She stayed in this safe place for about 12 weeks. No doubt they spent much time entering each other's story and sharing the struggle of coming to full acceptance of God's mercy in their life experiences. Mary was able to frame her story with the "Magnificat" (Luke 1:46-55). How rich their fellowship must have been! Elizabeth came out of her 12-week experience and entered a ministry to her neighbors and relatives. She knew both the depths of pain and struggle as well as the joy of recovery. As one who had experienced great mercy, she was a safe place for those around her.

May your experience of the Christ of Christmas overflow in rich fellowship and significant ministry as you reflect on His great mercy in your story. May others share in your joy as they see His hand on your life in the year to come!



Important Dates to Remember

*Don't forget your end of the year gift to OHM! All gifts must be postmarked by **December 31** to qualify for a tax deduction in 2001.*

Brand New Allender Seminar!!

March 9, 2002 – "Learning to Love the Story God is Telling Through You" – Dr. Dan Allender's latest seminar premieres in Kalamazoo, MI., sponsored by OHM. See the value of entering your story from a whole new perspective!

Two SALTS in 2002!

April 29-May 4, 2002 – SALTS Maranatha, Muskegon, MI. Registrations must be postmarked by March 22.

OR

October 14-19, 2002 – SALTS Maranatha, Muskegon, MI. Registrations must be postmarked by September 6.

Extra brochures and details available. Contact us!