

Shalom for Uncertain Times



Mark Bonham

We live in uncertain times. Many assumed that the economy would continue to grow, that homes would be worth more each year, that investments would take care of retirement, that government would take care of threats to our personal well being and that we could count on relative stability. On a more personal level, we have assumed that we will continue in good health, our jobs will be secure and will continue to provide the income we are accustomed to, and that our relationships will stand up under pressure. Our sense of personal well being is attached to so many of these circumstances – hardly noticeable when things are going well. But when storms disrupt our routine, it's like living in a trailer house in a hurricane.

If you grew up in a home with secure boundaries, with parents who were there for you physically, emotionally, spiritually, and you felt that your family could weather the storms of life, a foundation of trust was laid. If you grew up in an environment of chaos, where it seemed your home was just one disaster short of collapse, you carry in your heart, soul, mind and body the fear of abandonment and betrayal. In times like these such fears can easily resurface and threaten to rob you of the peace you long for.

Dorie Van Stone tells of walking the

streets alone at night and looking in the windows of homes where families lived, wondering how she was going to survive childhood. She longed for a sense of family, of belonging, of being cared for. As she sat on the curb and gripped the little New Testament that the only Christian matron at the orphanage had given her, she desperately clung to the hope of a Father who would see her and come to her rescue. There had been many "failed rescuers" in her life.

The prophet Isaiah spoke in a time where people looked at their lives and circumstances and saw darkness all around. But then a beacon of light dawned: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned... for to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end." (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7)

I love the Hallelujah Chorus (*The Messiah*) when this passage is powerfully set to music, announcing these names that triumph over despair. The personal and tender nature of a Wonderful Counselor stands in beautiful contrast to the authority and power of a Mighty God; the security of belonging to an Everlasting Father adds to the security of being

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SALTS Couples... *continued from page 2*

challenged me to tune in more to my wife's feelings. Our female leader was tender yet firm. They did an excellent job at making the group feel safe.

Ellen: The leadership of our group provided a solid structure of safety, honesty and support. To have advocates for our hearts, fighters for our truth, and wise counsel kept us heading in the right direction -- towards healing and oneness. I can not say enough about our leaders!

What did you take home?

Ellen: The information we brought back from SALTS has already filtered into our family. We learned tools that have equipped us to pursue truth not only in our hearts but in the hearts of our children. We often refer to the material -- we are happy and relieved to have it.

Victor: We took a week and prioritized our marriage. There was great resistance and it made me even more determined. I knew something big

was going to happen. I learned how to really listen to the pain I cause, and how important it is to find out how it makes others feel without having to justify why I cause it.

What would you say to others who are considering coming?

Ellen: If you are considering attending a couples group, I would recommend that each person would have attended SALTS. I would also recommend that marriage partners make a commitment to one another to be completely honest with their hearts and that when it gets tough, to stay in it. Trust the process, trust the material, trust the leadership, but most of all, trust God. It is an amazing process that God has honored in our marriage, and I hope the same for many others!

Victor: I would recommend some counseling, in addition to SALTS, in preparation for this week. I would also recommend asking a lot of people to pray for you.

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7. Be willing to engage them more than once if necessary.
8. Be humble. Ask for help from your co-leader, ministry partner or supervisor. Accept your part in any of the disappointment.

I have followed this advice over the years and sometimes at the prompting of a friend. This can be accomplished via telephone, one-to-one or with another person. Just remember: Avoidance and denial are not a part of the pursuit of peace.

My hope is that the reality of the Prince of Peace will flow from your heart into the heart of another as you pursue peace this holiday season. Shalom!