



*Hope does not  
disappoint us,  
because God has  
poured out his love  
into our hearts  
by the Holy Spirit,  
whom he has given us.*

*Romans 5:5*

*July 2008*

## Reflections from the Mountain

by Duan Walker, Executive Director

Last week I spent a couple days in Mt. Angel, Oregon for a personal retreat. That may seem odd to you if you only think of Mt. Angel as the home of Oktoberfest each year (a traditional German harvest festival celebrating the bounty of the earth and the goodness of creation). However, it is also home to a Benedictine Abbey and Monastery. The Benedictine Order is known for its focus on prayer, work, simplicity, hospitality, and service. Part of their service and hospitality is offered through creating places for people to come on retreat. As a side note: If you have never done a personal retreat – a day or two alone to rest and meet with God – I highly recommend it. Certainly seek some advice from others who have done a retreat and enlist people to be praying for your time, but how can you go wrong, making an intentional decision to step away from busyness and distractions to focus on God?

For this visit, I stayed at the Abbey, which sits high on a hill overlooking the valley below. All I could see for miles were fields, small clusters of homes, and trees that have probably lived two to three times as long as I have. In the Abbey garden, shrubs and flowers were enjoyed by many birds and the occasional rabbit or squirrel. Overall, a very tranquil place ... and a reminder of how big God is. I could only see a portion of His creation and it seemed vast – beyond my comprehension to imagine the whole of the universe. Sometimes I get stuck in my place in the world and become overwhelmed or consumed with the tyranny of the urgent and miss the big picture. But God has it all in hand – the small stuff – the big stuff – just as He had all the elements in mind when He created that beautiful valley in Mt. Angel.

A friend recently reminded me of a verse from Exodus chapter 3. First, a bit of background to the chapter: The Israelites found themselves as slaves in Egypt, under harsh masters. Remembering the roots of their nation, they began crying out to God about their situation. Beginning in verse 7, we read God's response in a conversation he had with Moses, an Israelite who would ultimately lead the people out of Egypt:

The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering ... "

In this verse, we find a significant progression. "I have indeed **seen**." The process begins with observation. There is some limited connection but observation by its nature is hands off. Next, "I have **heard**." Another of the five senses is being engaged. It is more advanced observation but still hands off. Then, "I am **concerned** about their suffering." Now there is a fundamental shift from external observation to internal action. God's heart is moved towards His people and what they are experiencing. What an incredible picture of intimacy. God does not just sit in heaven, observing our lives in a disconnected way. He sees, hears, and is concerned. He is connected to us in a very personal way.

From the vantage point of looking over the valley at the Abbey, cars and houses seemed like toys placed across the landscape. It may have been easy to observe them – to see and hear – but they actually represented individuals and



families, each of whom has a personal story. Some family stories are filled with joy, some incredible pain, and many somewhere in-between. While I did not know each story, God does. Part of the way He moves and shows concern is through His calling on individuals lives to reach out and serve. Our vision/desire as a ministry is to do just that and see a message of hope extended to all the people in the vastness of the Central Willamette Valley. For those seeking some hope or answer about their struggle with homosexuality to grasp the enormity of God and His power and the personal, intimate desire He has to relate with us – His personal creation. For those feeling isolated and lost in efforts to relate with friends or family members who have embraced homosexuality to find comfort from our great God. And for churches to wrestle with the incredible potency of the Gospel, and its ability to transform lives. It has the power to extend grace to everyone, even those who find themselves in the midst of extremely difficult issues.

In our hectic lives, it is easy to lose sight of these things. One of the employees of the Abbey had a blank look on his face when I said I came to Mt. Angel for some rest and renewal. For him, being in that pristine place simply involved labor and toil. And we can be the same way, because finding rest and renewal is not so much about the place (though it can help) as it is about our perspective.

There's a song by Christy Nockels called "Hosanna." She writes of a revival occurring in the world – her heart, passion, desire, and vision for it. Part of that is encapsulated in this phrase: "Break my heart for what is Yours." As I heard it, I thought, "That's a scary idea ... to truly have a heart open to the hurts and pains God sees – it could be overwhelming ..." Because as God sees the vast Willamette Valley, He sees and knows the story of each inhabitant – He sees ... He hears ... and He is concerned ..."

**Being in a beautiful place on a retreat, it was easy to have a vision for what God can do in our region. It can be harder when I return to day-to-day life, but keeping that in focus is what can accurately shape my understanding of God's call. I pray you too will embrace God's call on your life and that the desire expressed in Nichols' song will be your prayer as well: "Open up my eyes to the things unseen – show me how to love like You have loved me." And along the way, may you join with others in the vision God has laid before them as well.**

## Sy Rogers Video & Discussion Series

**July 9th - Renewing the Mind**  
Understanding the Partnership of Biology & Body

**July 23rd - Power of Forgiveness**  
How Jesus Heals the Broken Hearted

**August 6th - What Works**  
Corporate & Individual Responsibility in Recovery

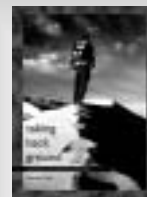
**August 20th - Relapse Prevention**  
How to Avoid Becoming a Statistic



**Group Starts at 7:00pm**  
1495 NW 20th Street, Corvallis

**October 25, 2008**  
Benefit Dinner

## Struggling with Homosexuality?



**Discipleship & Support Program Resumes in the Fall**

Call or E-Mail Us  
for More Information

## Pray With Us

Father, thank you for the blessings and challenges from this last year. We feel lavished upon and strengthened in the process you have placed before us. Thank you for those who have come alongside in the work you are doing. May they be blessed in their journeys as well. Align our hearts with yours as we enlist others to partner in this work. Prepare their hearts for the path you have before them. In our serving, may we reflect you above all.



## Upcoming Events

**July 6, 13, 20**  
Homosexuality 101  
Valley Christian Center, Albany

**July 9 & 23, August 6 & 20**  
Sy Rogers Video & Discussion Series