



THE CHICAGO CONNECTION

Connecting Chicago disciples with each other, the Midwest and the world

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God's Vision Uncovered — Hidden in the Individual

Acts of Faith of Unsuspecting Disciples

The ripple effect is a truly compelling phenomenon found in the Scriptures. This is an event or incident that creates a chain reaction of subsequent events or incidents that could never have been anticipated. It often seems there is no deed, whether good or evil, whose effect fails to come home to roost either upon an individual or a larger group of people at some point in time within the Biblical narrative. Truly, the action of a single person, whether in private or within the public arena, can affect the future of many! It is a truth that is both sobering and inspiring.

This ripple effect phenomenon is also something that all members of the Chicago Church of Christ should strongly consider as we begin our faithful pursuit of God's will through our 10-year Vision. What God can accomplish through a body of believers reaches no limit to the imagination! Yet what is the body of believers here in Chicago but a collection of individuals? Every disciple in the Chicago Church has the potential to be used by God in ways beyond their furthest reaching hopes or dreams. This is one of the reasons why our stated vision stresses the importance of our individual participation and the pursuit of God's vision by utilizing our God-given gifts.

The scriptural history relates the stories of many people whose single acts of faith, courage and charity had ramifications that could never have been predicted. One may even begin with Abraham and his decision to heed God's call to leave hearth and home (**Gen 12:1-3**). Did he really understand that the first step he took out of his homeland set into motion a plan to set aside an entire nation of people for God to call His own? It's conceivable that he understood all of that, since God told him it would happen. But there were many moments of doubt for him along the way. Yet, there are plenty of other individuals in the Bible who could not have understood what the sum of their actions would represent for the future.

In the time of the judges, just after the conquest of Canaan, we find Israel in the midst of a 400-year dark age. As a matter of fact, the Book of Judges ends with this ominous statement: "*In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.*" (**Judges 21:25**) So it's quite surprising then to find the seeds of Israel's greatest king coming to fruition during this time.

The Book of Ruth begins with a woman named Naomi, who loses her husband and two sons within a short period of time. She was a Jewess who had been living outside of Israel but had decided to return home as a result of her tragic losses, hoping that she might find some family to take pity upon her. Upon releasing her two daughters-in-law from any commitment they might have to her so that they might begin new lives themselves, one of them, Ruth, decided to go with Naomi. What followed was a deeply moving and inspiring account of her relationship with Naomi. And this act of devotion and love set in motion the salvation of Israel.

Ruth returned with her mother-in-law and met a Jew named Boaz. Ruth and Boaz married and had children. They had a son named Obed, who in turn had a son named Jesse, who had many sons, one of whom was named David—the future king and hero of Israel. There could have been no way for Ruth to know that her act of charity would result in the birth of one of the greatest kings of Israel, a powerful pre-figure of Christ, the Savior of the world.

What is also interesting to note is that Ruth's noble husband, Boaz, is himself the result of an incidental act of bravery, if there is such a thing. According to **Matthew 1:5**, Boaz was a descendant of Rahab the prostitute, a woman whose bravery in hiding Israel's spies at Jericho was rewarded with the salvation of her entire family when that city was destroyed. These are ripples welling up into waves that change the tides of time.

Every disciple has the potential to be used by God in ways beyond their furthest reaching hopes or dreams.

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Member Article: Under His Wings

Note: This article was written by Sam Hastings of the DeKalb Church of Christ.

A long time ago, in 1896, William O. Cushing penned these words to a hymn I grew up with and heard often:

Under His wings I am safely abiding
Though the night deepens and tempests are wild.
Still I can trust Him; I know He will keep me
He has redeemed me, and I am His child.

Under His wings, under His wings
Who from His love can sever?
Under His wings my soul shall abide
Safely abide forever.

A longer time ago, an anonymous psalmist wrote these words:

He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. (Psalm 91:4)

But only recently have I begun to understand what it means to really find refuge in God. Let me back up just a bit. Last year, the DeKalb Church of Christ took as its theme these words of the prophet Isaiah.

Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land. (Isaiah 31:2)

Our goal was to become that refuge for each other, for the students at Northern Illinois University and, ultimately, for the city of DeKalb. I thank God for that goal, because it caused me to think, perhaps for the very first time, that if I was to be of any use to anyone else, if I was to resemble a refuge in any way and if I was to offer any comfort or “shade” to anyone, God had to first be that for me. So I set out to allow God to be my one true comfort—my refuge. The amazing thing I came to realize was that God wasn’t sitting idly by, longing to become my refuge. He had been my refuge all along!

Over the course of years that my family and I have been in the greater Chicago area, life has been really tough in many ways. In Michigan, where we lived previously, we had it pretty easy. We had just moved into our dream home, I had what many church people would have considered (and did consider) a dream job (I was the Vice-President of a Christian college), we had very little debt and we were well on our way to realizing the “American Dream.” Moving to Chicago ended all that. But it started something much more valuable—learning to trust God, not just in some things, but in all things.

I think I had always believed that God would see to our being fed and clothed and housed, but I never gave much thought to how God might protect me from me. Allow me to explain. Having to start over is difficult at best. Just ask Abraham! (**Genesis 12-23**) Sometimes it’s downright embarrassing. Being in a “prestigious” position and then not being in one is humbling. Jesus definitely understood that challenge! (**Philippians 2:5-11**) And being financially secure, then being dependent on others to pay your rent is scary. Paul knew all about that feeling! (**Philippians 4:10-13**) Events such as these can really hurt. And when we’re hurt, we have a tendency to get an attitude. No doubt every last one of us can relate to that!

Now here’s where I feel totally protected by God. I have a tendency to get an attitude about things not going my way about as fast as anybody can, and probably faster than most. Frustration and Impatience are demons that seem to feel free to come and nest (not just sit) on my shoulders any old time they please. During the time we have been in Chicago (and now in DeKalb), things have not always gone as I would have liked them to go. But God has seen fit to surround me with patient, loving people (not the least of which is my wonderful and lovely wife of 41 years, Judy) who have helped save me from myself. Many times I have been on the brink of saying that coming to Chicago was the biggest mistake I have ever made, especially over the past few years. But praise God I’m still here!

In closing, be encouraged by these words that were recorded in **1 Samuel 7:12**:

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far has the LORD helped us.”

Do You Remember When...

Let’s take a look back at some of the defining moments and events of our congregation:

The membership of the Chicago Church of Christ grows to nearly 2,900 by the end of 1994. It is named one of the **Top 10 fastest-growing churches** in the world by Dr. John Vaugn, respected church growth expert.

In January of 1994, the inspiring play entitled *The Cross and the Gavel*, written and directed by our own Steve Staten, is performed at the Medinah Temple in downtown Chicago before a crowd of more than 3,000 people.

Reviews and Previews

25th Anniversary Worship & Concert

A big thank-you to everyone who played a role in helping last Sunday's 25th anniversary service go so well. It was a tremendous encouragement being together—worshipping, fellowshiping, playing and having such a tremendous time as the family of God. A special thanks as well to Dave Eastman who spearheaded the organizational efforts for this incredible day.

Single's "Paradise" BBQ

The DeKalb Singles Ministry is hosting *The Big Huskuna's Paradise BBQ* next Saturday, July 7th, in Belvidere. More information is available on our website, www.chicagochurch.org.

Spanish Language Women's Inspiration Day

All Spanish-speaking women and their guests are invited to the first annual Spanish-speaking Women's Inspiration Day, entitled *De Mujer a Mujer (Woman to Woman)*. It will be held on Saturday, August 11th from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the DoubleTree Hotel in Oak Brook. The cost is \$15. For more details or registration information, contact Patsy Harris at (708) 484-5427.



7th Annual Women's Retreat

The Heart of a Woman, our 7th annual women's retreat, will be held from Sept 7-9 at the Abbey Resort. This is sure to be a life-changing time as we will be inspired by women from the Bible as well as from those among us. Also joining us this year will be women from the Milwaukee Church of Christ, the Quad Cities Church of Christ and even sisters from the Ukraine!

The Abbey sits on Lake Geneva and we have chartered a private boat for an additional fee. All of the guest rooms are beautiful and the resort has a full-service spa and nine different restaurants.

Please hurry to sign up for what we know will be an incredible event! Next Sunday, July 8th, will be our registration deadline. Please see your ministry center representative for more details.

Ty Ellis

By David Weidner

One of the most exciting times for me to be a member of the Chicago Church of Christ had to be in the late 1980s. With the entire church meeting downtown at the Medinah Temple, the highlight of every service was watching people from all parts of the city being baptized into Christ. Our hearts overflowed with joy as the stage was often flooded, quite literally, with the water that overflowed during the baptisms. To keep the service at a reasonable length, two baptismal tanks had to be used. Although the attendance at that time was only around 700, everyone believed it was inevitable that we would one day fill the 4,000-seat auditorium. It was my privilege to baptize Ty Ellis at the Medinah Temple during that time. It is a moment I will cherish forever. His story represents much of what the church was like during those years.

Bold Evangelism

As disciples of Christ, we were desperate to be fruitful and we would try almost anything to find searching hearts. In those days, it was not unusual for the brothers to preach on the trains, in the parks or wherever we could find people who would listen. Our children were so

accustomed to us reaching out that they would prompt us to invite people if we were hesitant or forgetful. On a damp, overcast day in the fall of 1987, I noticed a sharply-dressed, young black man crossing the street and decided to approach him in order to share my faith. He remembers being surprised at my boldness and curious as to why a white guy would be stopping him and asking him questions about having a relationship with God. We exchanged numbers, as he was seeking contacts to build his personal training business.

Determined Love

It soon became evident that it was going to be a lengthy spiritual battle if Ty was ever going to become a disciple. After many phone calls over a span of several months, he

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Conversion
Corner

Welcome New Baptisms!

Chicago

- Ricky Acevedo

North

- Alexis Montes

Southland

- Joe & Shannon Gruzanski
- Carly Harte
- Carolyn Reed

God's Vision Uncovered — Hidden in the Individual (Cont.)

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There is no such thing as an inconsequential act of faith. Such actions live and grow beyond the scope of what we see. We must have confidence in this as we act and participate as individuals outside of our corporate plans as a body. Private decisions to act in faith to God have ramifications that change the world. Ruth, Boaz, Rahab and many, many others in the pages of Scripture are evidence of this truth.

There's another story that's often used to show the converse effect that private actions of disobedience will have on the body or the world at large. This is the story of Achan's sin. **(Joshua 7:1-26)** In this incident, one man's sin results in Israel's defeat at Ai. In a private moment of disobedience, Achan stole treasure (the "devoted things") from the rubble of Jericho, something that was expressly forbidden by God. The effect of his individual sin was the defeat of his nation's army at Ai. What each individual does or doesn't do can make a big difference, both for the good or the bad, to everyone around them.

As a church, we deny God's power when as individuals we fail to live up to our spiritual calling. Each of us has been endowed with a number of unique gifts and we are constantly being pulled by God's Spirit upon inimitable paths. While the church as a whole must submit to God's vision for its role in this world, so must we as individuals bow to His sovereignty in our lives. The future of the church and the future of the individual are often entwined by one another.

The Chicago Vision Statement says that as a church "we envision generations of authentic disciples—intent on loving God and embracing the cross, surrendered to Jesus, committed to His mission, determined to discover their God-given gifts to serve His kingdom and advance the Gospel—who accept His call to go anywhere, do anything, give up everything and become whatever God bids us to be."

I think we all probably agree that those are nice words.

What each individual does or doesn't do can make a big difference, both for the good or the bad, to everyone around them.

But do you really believe that an individual who holds to this vision can actually set in motion a chain of events, under God's direction, to change the world? We might

be blessed to witness the results of our faith, or we might, like Ruth, Boaz, Rahab and the prophets and heroes who came before us, only be allowed to "welcome them from a distance." **(Hebrews 11:13)**

Regardless, our deeds prompted by faith will create a ripple of impact in this world that we cannot begin to understand. The effect of these deeds may be far-reaching, inspiring those in generations to come. This is what we must pray about as we consider sharing our faith with the stranger on the street, opening our pocketbooks during the collection, making a decision to attend an all-night prayer session rather than a late-night movie or simply heeding the phone-call of a disciple in need. Each individual act is a potential tidal wave waiting to bend the future of our world to God's will and vision.

Chris Zillman

Conversion Corner (Cont.)

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finally agreed to let me and another brother come to his house for a Bible study. (He admits that had Caller ID existed at the time, the study may have never been set up in the first place.) He was surprised to learn how the Bible actually related to his every-day life and agreed to continue. Although illness and difficult relationship issues threatened to derail the studies, we refused to give up on the hope that Ty would one day be our brother.

He recalls coming out for the first time to a picnic along the Fox River. The sincerity and love of the disciples he met there and the concern they showed for him and his daughter convinced him that the people belonging to this church were very different. Finally, on June 26th, 1988, he "took the big splash" at the Medinah Temple. Later that

summer, a trip to the Boston Evangelism Seminar cemented his faith and convictions about God's worldwide family. Two years later, he married a disciple named Paula, and they have served the Lord together in various capacities over the past 17 years. They presently worship in the Central Ministry Center with their daughter Ashley. We always look for each other at congregational services, and the warmth of his embrace still brings tears of joy to my eyes.

While I'm sure there are things that happened during that era in the church which we might do differently today, I'm also convinced our lives would be more blessed and the rejoicing in heaven would increase if the boldness and love that filled our hearts then could be restored today.