

## Calling a Truce

By Mike Sciarra

Where did all that Christmas “good cheer” go to anyway? As I begin to write, its 2 days after the event and it looks like we're back to business as usual. Busy, stressed, consumed with trivial circumstances. Carrying burdens we weren't designed to bear. I'm out on my daily walk and all seems as it was before: cars speeding, workmen working, everyday life just clicking along; people striving with one another and with God, whether they acknowledge His existence or not. We're all in search of the elusive peace that passes our understanding. Undaunted, we fight on. And fight we do - grasping for each bit and fragment of what we think is due us. I am in a bad mood and conclude that all is futility and striving after the wind. No one really cares. I'm unshaven, unscrubbed and definitely not on my best behavior as I am on most Sundays. I'm in rare form and the low road is not only within easy reach, I'm on it.

I'm at war with myself and anyone who gets in my way and doesn't give me what I want. Wasn't it only yesterday that I praised God from whom all blessings flow? And wasn't I the one that chastised my children on Christmas afternoon so self-righteously for being selfish and receiving-focused rather than giving-oriented? Why do I battle for control so fiercely? I really need to give it a rest. Be still and realize who really is God. But that would necessitate me actually being in my right mind and right now I'm not. Armies often proclaim a cease fire during holy days. But when you know you're going to go right back at it when it's over, how holy is the day? My complaints keep coming like clockwork as I notice more and more of the faults and conflicts of others. All the while I keep hearing the half-hearted voice of Rodney King ringing in my ears: 'Can't we all just get along?'. No, we can't. Not as long as I insist upon going my own way.

I am rolling along at a pretty fast clip when out of nowhere I see my neighbor, Felix. He's the guy who's always out working on his car or yard. He does each well, with meticulous care. He's out walking too. He's out there nearly everyday like I am. This time is no different. He greets me with a big smile and a hearty 'Merry Christmas'. Two days after to boot! And simple as that, it lifts my spirits. I'm climbing out of the pit a little now. Defrost is on. Then, as is often the case, God does what only He can do - He gently reminds me that the problem is not with the world, not with the proverbial and often elusive 'them', not with how self-absorbed everyone else is. No, as I suspected all along but was too prideful to admit, it is me. I'm the problem and my own worst enemy.

God is gracious. He uses a variety of tools: my wife, my children, friends, neighbors, strangers, pretty much anything and everyone, to bring me to my senses and my knees; to a better perspective and attitude. To the foot of the cross, where I admit my need for Jesus and my desire to be freed and forgiven for my many, often recurring, sins. Where I will admit that I cannot do it alone and I desperately need my brothers and sisters in Christ; to know and be known; for encouragement and accountability. As Hebrews 13:1 reads, *'Let love of the brethren continue'*. I want that more than anything right now and so does Jesus. 'They' will know that we are His disciples when we live like that. So once again I repent in sackcloth and ashes, actually a more humble and contrite heart, and all is well again. Until next time. For now, the view from the mountaintop is spectacular. ◀



*Let  
love  
of the  
brethren  
continue*

*Hebrews 13:1*

## What's Happening with Growing with Grace?

By Matthew Holbrook

**G**od is faithful. The latest phase of Growing with Grace has been completed and we are fully utilizing the newest building on our campus. This new Early Childhood building was completed within the budget parameters for the project – and within the expected time table. That is a true blessing.

The need for these new facilities was great – and now that the building is completed, we are enjoying the great benefits of this quality new space.

But – more importantly – this new space is allowing us to more effectively minister to God's people. Our capacity to care for children has significantly increased – and we have been able to free up other space to use for classrooms, meeting rooms, and Awana. These benefits have allowed our church to have a broader impact in ministry to better reach both individuals and families that come to our church.

Thank you to everyone who has prayed for this project – and thank you to everyone who has made a financial sacrifice for Growing with Grace. God is already blessing as a result.

So, what happens now? Well, we are in the process of evaluating the next steps of Growing with Grace. At this point, the most likely next target is to build a Classroom/Meeting Room facility in the Northwest corner of the property . Such a building would allow for a permanent home for the High School and Junior High ministries – both of which are quickly reaching the point of a desperate need for more space. As God entrusts our church with young people, it becomes increasingly important to have the space to be able to welcome these people. In addition, it is anticipated that this building would likely also include classroom space for additional adult classes.

At this point, though, the next steps in building at Grace are still developing. Nothing is set in stone. We want to be able to continue to evaluate the needs of our church and prayerfully determine how to best use this property that God has entrusted to us. Much more communication will be forthcoming as further progress is made in this evaluation process.

However, please note that no timetables have yet been set for the next steps. One significant consideration is that most of the money for Growing with Grace was spent on this most recent phase. So, any additional phases will require additional funds that we do not currently have. Please know that continued contributions to Growing with Grace are still needed - any new funds will help in establishing a base to be able to pursue the next phase. You can continue to pray for and support these efforts to be good stewards with our resources as we strive to glorify God and impact this world for Him. ◀



## Thanks a "Ton"

With your support through the canned food drive, we were able to reach our goal of a "ton" of canned goods. Those goods helped meet the needs of those at the Rancho San Juan Bosco Orphanage in Tecate, Mexico and those in our community. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of others. Many were blessed through your contributions. ◀

# Photo Highlights

**November - December 2007**





## Grace Church of Orange Starts Crown Ministries

By Alan Cech

**W**ould you like to attend a class that will help you gain God's perspective on your money? Do you ever get the feeling that you don't have a very good handle on your finances? Perhaps you may even wonder if it is important to do so, or how you would do it. You more than likely have heard the answers before, but sometimes the encouragement and accountability from other believers can really make a difference!

On January 20<sup>th</sup>, during the Bible Class hour, Wally Marsh and Alan Cech will be introducing an eight-week class entitled "Managing Our Finances God's Way." This series was co-developed by Crown Ministries (Howard Dayton and Larry Burkett) and Purpose Driven Ministries (Rick Warren). Each session will be split between a video segment and some discussion regarding the material. The speakers include Ron Blue, Chip Ingram, Chuck Bentley, Howard Dayton, and Rick Warren. There will be segments on budgeting, giving, saving, debt, and having God's perspective of our wealth – no matter what the size or lack thereof.

Please join us for the orientation session starting Sunday morning, January 20<sup>th</sup>, at 10am in room Aud 2 (behind the baptismal), to pick up your materials for the next eight sessions. God bless you, and Happy New Year!! <

## Spring Calendar

### January / February

|                              |                |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Crown Ministries Orientation | January 20     |
| Small Group Faire            | January 20     |
| Potluck and Praise           | January 27     |
| High School Winter Retreat   | February 1-3   |
| Bread and Cup                | February 10    |
| Mexico Marriage Mission Trip | February 16-24 |
| High School Coffee House     | February 17    |

### March / April

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Daylight Savings Begins               | March 9  |
| Men's Night Out                       | March 14 |
| High School Yard Sale                 | March 15 |
| Palm Sunday                           | March 16 |
| Good Friday (office closed)           | March 21 |
| Easter                                | March 23 |
| "Making Good Marriages Great" Seminar | April 26 |
| Speechless- The Event                 | April 26 |