



The BELL TOWER

MARCH 2013

VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH



I Wonder

...if they will ever hear this good news?

...if they know that the God of the universe loves them?

...if they have someone in their lives who can show them and tell them of this restoring God?

As I write this I am sitting on an airplane on my way to some meetings related to our being a host site for the Global Leadership Summit. Ending up with a middle seat on a five-hour cross-country flight is not the most comfortable way to travel, but it did give me some time to reflect on the interesting diversity, complexity, and commonalities resident in the people on this flight. I do not know anything about any of them. All around me are so many stories representative of the kinds of hopes, fears, pain, and happiness that make up the quest for a meaningful life. For this span of time I became more keenly aware of an everyday reality that we often take for granted. There are people all around us with whom our lives intersect, all of them in need of God's grace.

As we prepare for Easter we have been looking in Scripture at the wonderful news that God is in the business of restoring humanity. That we need restoring is a profound and fundamental truth that far too many of us fail to appreciate. In our therapeutic age we give too little credence to the truth that we are all marred and held back by sin. We are learning anew that we do this at our peril.

The good news of this season is that this sin need neither destroy us nor define us. Jesus has come. Jesus has died. Jesus has risen from the dead. These are the facts of the season. The result of these facts is that we can be forgiven and restored. This is the good news of this Lenten and Easter season.

So, as I look around and think about the people sharing a plane ride across the country, I am reminded that underneath whatever façade they present to others around them, whatever notions I may assume about what kind of people they are, in reality they are broken human beings in need of the grace of God, in need of His restoring work. I wonder if they will ever hear this good news? I wonder if they know that the God of the universe loves them? I wonder if they have someone in their lives who can show them and tell them of this restoring God?

This Easter season let's pay a little more attention to the people around us. As we interact with them, I wonder if they might see in us intimations that God is restoring us? I wonder if they will hear from us about the hope we have in this restoring God?

I wonder...

Danny Danny Hall
SENIOR PASTOR

Change Doesn't Bite



By Drew Y. Sanders

Change Doesn't Bite (hereafter called *Change*) is a fast and enjoyable read that's a natural fit to our church vision, Transforming lives in a Christ-centered Community. *Change* casts change and its rewards in an entertaining setting and would especially be valuable to those in their 20's to 40's who love baseball and the city (San Francisco) and want to benefit from change. VCC's Drew Sanders has woven his interest in mentoring into an insightful novel about Sam (a lab dog) who seems to have everything under control until his best friend and mentor Larry (a pug) unexpectedly moves. A bonus to their mentoring relationship is sharing their love for the San Francisco Giants. Larry's parting advice to Sam is to resist change when he says:

- Stay close to the pack (other dogs that are "rabid" Giants fans)
- Stick to your routines
- Don't explore the city
- The Giants need you...here's my pass to the "Dog Patch" (the special place at AT&T park where the pack cheered on the Giants).

As Sam gets involved in the 2010 season he meets various dogs that garner his respect by their insights and shared Giants experiences and change Sam's life through their mentoring advice. Sam makes major changes in his life and engages in service to benefit others. The mutual benefit derived from mentoring interactions is portrayed in memorable situations. Some of the life-changing advice included:

- Notice more, let go and use everything (listen in a curious manner and use all your surroundings in engaging others)
- Listen to others, be others-focused, and passionate about your cause (develop a view to see things from the other's point of view)

- Create a personal definition of success (how are you combining your heart and mind to focus your efforts on individual and team goals so that you may compete to your fullest?)

Each mentor is based on five real characters (e.g. John Wooden, UCLA coach who won 10 NCAA basketball championships in 12 years, 7 in a row, and Joe Ehrmann) and advice that Drew has distilled from their writings or, in the case of Ehrmann, from personal interactions. Ehrmann is a 13-year NFL veteran and winner of numerous awards, including Parade magazine calling him "The Most Important Coach in America" (www.coachforamerica.com/meet-joe). In the forward to the book, Ehrmann related his 10-year relationship with Drew through Drew's foundation which raised funds to distribute Ehrmann's books to coaches or parents who wanted to benefit from Ehrmann's insights but couldn't afford it. Drew played a key role in bringing Ehrmann to speak at Amador Valley High School in 2012 to a packed audience.

Besides seeing Drew's sparkling and energetic personality come through the book, I enjoyed the insights to San Francisco (neighborhoods, streets, restaurants, etc.) and especially the Giants. Drew's descriptions brought back memories of piling into my dad's car, driving over to Seals Stadium to watch the new Giants (including Willie "The Say Hey Kid" Mays) and other major league teams who before had been on the *other coast*.

Change has been well received by Drew's co-attendees at Early Risers, our Wednesday breakfast Bible study, as well as friends who have enjoyed this quick read. If you would like more information visit Drew's website www.changedoesntbite.com.



I Love to Tell the Story

The Easter story is perhaps the most important story in all of Christianity. To be sure, Christmas is important because it gave Jesus Christ to the world but His leaving is much more meaningful to the Christian than His coming.

The Jewish tradition of the Old Testament was for worshipers to bring animals (especially lambs) to be sacrificed to God as a sin offering. The blood would purify and make atonement (forgive or make amends) for their sins. This was the order under the Old Covenant with God.

When Jesus came under the New Covenant Christ was the representation of the sacrificial lamb. That is why Jesus is referred to as the Lamb of God. He died to atone for the sin of the world once and for all. He was the final sacrifice. We, thankfully, no longer have to sacrifice animals to atone for our sin. It is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all sin.

When He was crucified on the cross, the sin of the world was upon Him and He bore it all even though He himself was without sin and blameless. Because of God's great love for us all, Jesus bore the punishment that should have been ours to bear individually. The Bible tells us that "the wage of sin is death"! We are covered by Jesus' death on the cross and because of God's grace we will never have to die to atone for our sin.

What is even more remarkable is that three days after He died, Jesus Christ was resurrected. Christ's resurrection is tied to the future hope of all Christians—that we too will be resurrected. And in our resurrected state, we "will continue the bodily existence that we enjoy in this world, but with bodies that are transformed by the Holy Spirit." (N. T. Wright)

What an amazing God we have. What a wonderful story.

Come and celebrate Easter with us here at VCC

Sunday, March 24: Palm Sunday

Sunday March 24, 6:30PM: CrossPoint – a dramatic time of reflection

Sunday, March 31, 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00AM: Easter Sunday services

Sunday, March 31, 8:30-11:30AM: Easter Breakfast

Sunday, March 31, 5:00PM: iINVERSION Easter Twilight service

I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love; I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true, it satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.

Refrain:

I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

I love to tell the story, more wonderful it seems than all the golden fancies of all our golden dreams; I love to tell the story, it did so much for me, and that is just the reason I tell it now to thee.

I love to tell the story, 'tis pleasant to repeat, what seems each time I tell it more wonderfully sweet; I love to tell the story, for some have never heard the message of salvation from God's own holy Word.

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest; and when in scenes of glory I sing the new, new song, 'twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.

The Rest of the Story

by Marlene Diggins

Everywhere you look; there are signs of spring, from the blossoms starting to burst from their trees to the bulbs pushing their way through the cold ground. As we turn our faces toward the warm sun and our hearts toward spring, it is also time to look forward to our Women's Spring Brunch. This wonderful event will be held on Saturday morning, March 23, featuring an amazing dramatic presentation by Maggie Rowe, "The Woman Jesus Called Mother".

The doors of the Seminar Room will open at 9:30AM to greet the women with individually decorated tables and the delicious smells of brunch food. This will be a great opportunity to invite a neighbor or relative who might not normally attend a church event, or bring your whole small group for a morning of good food, fellowship and this amazing presentation by Maggie.

Tickets are \$10 and are available at vcclive.org or on Sundays in the Gathering Place. Seating is limited so buy your tickets early.

For nearly 20 years Maggie Rowe has been portraying the life of Mary, mother of Jesus, focusing on the early years in Mary's life. It is the story of the Virgin Mary, a young girl growing up in an observant Jewish home in Nazareth, whose life changed forever after she was visited by an angel telling her that she would bear the promised Messiah.

It's a familiar story, and one that is often told during Advent as Christ-followers focus on the birth of Christ.

But what about...the rest of the story? What about the events that occurred after the birth of Jesus but before his eventual death and resurrection?

What was it like to receive postpartum visits from shepherds and Wise Men? How did Mary feel when she and Joseph searched for Jesus for three days following the celebration of Passover in the City of David when Jesus was 12? As the mother of at least six additional children, how did Mary cope with parenting a spiritually divided family?

In a brand new drama written and presented for the first time in the spring of 2010, you are invited to listen in as Mary, now a woman in her late 50's, shares a very exciting discovery with the Apostle John. Here is...the rest of the story.

March Calendar

Significant Marriage Weekend: March 1-3

Church workday: Saturday, March 9, 8:00AM

MS Guys Explosion: Friday, March 15, 6:00PM

MS Girls Explosion: Friday, March 15, 6:00PM

Heart Connection kickoff: Saturday, March 16, 9:00AM

Women's Spring brunch: Saturday, March 23, 9:30AM

CrossPoint—a dramatic time of reflection: Sunday, March 24, 6:30PM

Easter Sunday services: Sunday, March 31, 8:00, 9:30 and 11:00AM

Easter Breakfast: Sunday, March 31, 8:30-11:30AM

INVERSION Easter Twilight service: Sunday, March 3, 5:00PM



Heart Connection *by Sandy Carter*

On Saturday, March 16, the Heart Connection team will host the Kickoff meeting for the 2013 session with a brunch at 8:45AM in the Fireside Room. Mentors, mentees and prayer warriors will gather to commit to one another for a season of relationship and growth.

Prior to the Kickoff meeting, women can complete profile cards. These will be available at the Women's Ministries table between Sunday worship services and online. Our team will prayerfully match mentors with women who would like to enter a mentoring relationship and announce the matches at the Kickoff. During the meeting, the team will share the Biblical basis for mentoring and discipleship, assure the mentors and mentees of support by the prayer warriors, and offer simple instruction to mentors.

Mentors are encouraged to serve as confidants, encouragers and role models as they walk alongside their mentees. Prayer is an important part of the mentoring relationships. Women who serve as prayer warriors support each mentor/mentee pair in prayer, and the mentors and mentees also spend time praying together. Women who would like an opportunity to invest their lives in 'younger' women and 'younger' women who would like 'older' women to come alongside them for a season of spiritual encouragement should consider completing profile cards and attending the Kickoff.

Heart Connection also desires to offer training, encouragement and accountability for women who have already entered mentoring relationships. If you are currently in a mentoring relationship, we invite you to attend the Kickoff to learn more about how the ministry can support you.

The team is asking the Lord to weave mentoring into the culture of VCC and to develop 'generations' of women ministering relationally with other women. Prayerfully, as women experience growth and encouragement as mentees, they will then serve as mentors to others. For more information, please pick up a brochure at the Welcome Center or visit the [Women's Ministry pages at www.vcclive.org](http://www.vcclive.org).

Welcome New Members!



Brian & Katie Baker



Joan Evans



Kevin & Lara McHugh



Vicki Sien



Yvette Villabrille



Patrick & Kris Volkir



Rob & Cheryl Ways

Financial Update

For the past several years we have provided a financial update at this time of year, after the first four months of our fiscal year have passed. And each time we provide our best estimate of how we will end this fiscal year based upon what has transpired so far. So we will attempt to do the same this year.

The table shows the contributions for each of the four months compared to the budget. As has been true over the past several years, the contributions in December compared to the budget are significantly less than for the other three months. We continue to interpret this pattern as being due to the recession since year-end bonuses and commissions are lower than when the economy is better. So for the purposes of forecasting, we will take the same approach as we have in the past.

Month	Contributions Relative to Budget
October	-\$5K
November	-\$25K
December	-\$45K
January	\$0K

The reasonable predictor for contributions in the remaining eight months of our fiscal year is to base it upon October, November, and January. So if the giving pattern remains the same, the average monthly deficit will be \$10,000. Thus, our best forecast for giving in FY2013 is a shortfall of \$155K. That is a disconcertingly large deficit, representing about 7% of our annual budget. The total of contributions so far this year is 4% lower than for the same time period a year ago. On the expenditure side, so far we have spent about \$29,000 less than budget, so that helps a bit, but unless some significant changes are made to ministry plans, we would not continue to under-spend at that same rate. We have not yet made any such decisions on ministry changes, but we will continue to closely monitor both our contributions and spending.

An update on the status of our *Setting Us Free* contributions reveals a more positive story. The initial first fruits offering for this capital campaign was \$626K, received in November 2011. Since that time, an additional \$777K has been received. That's a total of \$1.403K! So the contributions to this fund continue to be strong, and if they continue at the same level, we should be able to reach our goal of paying off our loan balance by the end of 2014. And remember, 10% of the contributions to the campaign goes towards mission projects, so to date we have raised \$140,000 to enhance our support of various mission needs. So many others are being blessed as we work towards eliminating our debt. Thank you so much for your faithful and generous giving to *Setting Us Free*.

Don't forget to...

Spring Forward

Daylight saving time begins on Sunday, March 10 at 2:00AM

Set your clocks ahead one hour!