

EXTENDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD...ONE PERSON AT A TIME.

ONE-TO-ONE

Winter 2006

Coming

HOME

GOD'S HEART FOR THE
PRODIGAL CHURCH



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Winter 2006



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Editor's note: so many gave sacrificially to help hurricane victims. Here are just a few samples of some of the ways your gifts touched those in need:

"Dear Bro.Charles, Blessings and thanksgivings in the name of the Lord for your love and generosity during this most difficult time in our life. Our God's grace is sufficient for each day. We still haven't heard from the insurance companies but our trust is in the Lord. We know the He will sustain us during these trying times." —George & Sharron C. D'Iberville, MS

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Charles Simpson Celebrates 50 Years of Ministry

Our Editor-in-Chief is a pioneer and pastor whose prophetic vision has brought worldwide blessings

By Stephen Simpson

IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY WHEN I was writing an editorial about my father's fortieth anniversary in Gospel ministry, but another amazing decade has passed. In December of 2005, Rev. Charles Simpson was honored by Covenant Church of Mobile with a celebration of fifty years of ministry.

And as I write this, I am surrounded by the happy sounds of his grandchildren—six of which were not with us ten years ago. In many ways, they exemplify what his ministry has been all about. Perhaps you know their story: in the mid-1990s, with the support and blessing of my parents, my sister, Charlyn, moved to Costa Rica as a missionary, to learn the language and the culture and to minister to at-risk children.

Many of you have heard about how God has used her to bless hundreds of children from the streets, barrios, and squatter's camps; how the Lord gave her a wonderful husband, Enrique Mejia; and how they stood together in battle on behalf of five children whom they eventually adopted. Those children, plus another biological daughter born to Charlyn and Enrique, are now visiting with us here in the United States for a few days of great joy and family fellowship.

Himself the son of a pastor, Charles Simpson's ministry began more than 50 years ago, being licensed by the First

Baptist Church of Theodore (AL) on June 16, 1955, and he quickly moved into ministry to "the outsiders"—the least, the last, and the lost. Whether at the local rescue mission or starting church services at a riverside bar, his ministry—from the beginning—was "out of the box" and typified by compassion for the "lost sheep."



Ordained as a Southern Baptist pastor in 1957, he took a small, hurting congregation in Mobile, and together they were swept into a powerful move of the Holy Spirit that eventually became known as the Charismatic Movement. Dad was an early pioneer in the Charismatic Movement, finding great acceptance among a wide variety of denominations and crossing previously unimagined boundaries for fellowship and ministry.

His Bible teaching back then, as today, focused on Christ-centered living, walking in the Holy Spirit, worship, family, the

Church, covenant relationships, practical discipleship, evangelism, godly manhood, restoration, and joy—all taught with his unique combination of piercing insight and warm humor. Literally millions of people worldwide have been influenced directly and indirectly by his ministry.



In 1969, along with Don Basham, Derek Prince, and Bob Mumford, he was part of the launching of *New Wine* Magazine, a strategically influential Bible teaching publication throughout the 1970s and 1980s. After *New Wine* ceased publishing in 1986, Charles Simpson Ministries gave birth to many other outreach efforts, including *One-to-One* Magazine and *The Covenant & the Kingdom* Bible Study Curriculum.



Charles Simpson with his pastor, Ken Sumrall

Another ministry born out of New Wine is Integrity Media, the world's largest praise and worship music company.

Dad has traveled more than three million air miles, and countless miles by car, to share the Gospel around the world. He is the author of books such as *The Challenge to Care*, *Courageous Living*, and the collection of humorous stories, *Take Your Hat Off, Son!* He was also a Contributing Editor for *The Spirit-Filled Life Bible*, a special New King James Edition that was overseen by Pastor Jack Hayford.

But he has never sought out media acclaim or the spotlight of spectacle. He is, at heart, a pastor. In 1973, he founded Covenant Church of Mobile, a non-denominational Charismatic congregation that has since planted numerous churches and ministries around the world. In 1999, he resigned as Senior Pastor of Covenant Church to focus on his ongoing ministry of offering personal care, insight, and encouragement to pastors and spiritual leaders in the marketplace.

Also in 1999, work was completed on the Ern Baxter Memorial Library on the Covenant Church campus, which Charles Simpson built to not only honor his longtime friend in ministry, but to provide a place for education and encouragement for the next generation

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Coming HOME

A PROPHETIC LOOK AT THE
DESTINY OF THE CHURCH

W

“WHERE IS THE CHURCH GOING?” “WHAT DO YOU SEE HAPPENING?”

Sometimes I get asked these questions, perhaps because I travel and visit many churches.

I always answer, “Lots of different things are happening.” There is no one model.

However, my longer view of where the Church will go is another issue.



A prophetic look at the destiny of the Church

By Charles Simpson

To discuss what I see ahead, let me first share about something from the past. It was 1966, a year when there were many thousands of small home prayer and Bible study groups emerging across America.

People of all social and religious segments were seeking God. I had just concluded such a meeting where the Holy Spirit had visited powerfully; I was waiting there with a brother who had just been baptized in the Holy Spirit. It was then that the Lord spoke something to me that changed my entire worldview, and my view of the church: “I will restore the Church.” What was lost first, will be restored last; what was lost last, will be restored first. You will see this in the story of the Prodigal Son.”

I cannot fully describe my response, but wonder, amazement and joy, all at the same time, would be a start. I was not a “restorationist,” doctrinally-speaking. In fact, I was a pre-millennial-dispensational-fundamental-evangelical Southern Baptist (and I’m not making fun of that label). The Rapture and subsequent events were my focus—not restoration. Needless to say, after that experience, I began to see abundant scripture to support the restoration of the Church.

I wondered what the Lord meant by things lost first and last, and how the Church would return in reverse order. And I wondered what the Prodigal Son would tell me about the Church.

PARABLES

Parables are short stories that conceal great truths. The meaning is for those who follow the Lord and search out His ways (see Matthew 13:10-16). The parable that I was to search out was the story of the Prodigal. While I would not build theology on a single parable, this one would open a door to a truth and cause me to see many scriptures in a new light.

There are three parables given in Luke 15: The lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Each story is about something valuable that is lost, is found, and is celebrated. The lesson: God rejoices over a loss restored.

As I read the story of the Prodigal, something became evident. Jesus was not simply talking about the story of a lost son, but He was revealing the nature of our Father in heaven. He is revealing the Father’s heart for the lost sons and daughters. The Father is wealthy, generous, and forgiving. He allowed for free will to err, but waited for repentance. The two sons therefore represented his two chosen people. Israel, the older son, and the Church, the younger one. The older son was law-oriented, dutiful, and unforgiving. The younger son was adventurous and learned mercy through serious error.

One day the younger son asked for his inheritance; the father then gave to both sons their inheritance. There is no evidence that this was an inappropriate request. The younger son received wealth, and likely a fine robe, a ring and shoes. The robe speaks of righteousness, the ring of sonship, and the shoes of proclaiming the Gospel. Shortly after being endowed with these gifts, he took a long trip to a far country. He might have had a horse or other animals for his journey. There is no indication that the father objected, though he knew his son’s immaturity.

How does this relate to the Church? Jesus made numerous promises to the disciples regarding the wealth and power that the Father would give to them. He especially commanded them to ask for the “promise of the Father” (see Luke 24:49; John chapters 14, 15, and 16). On the day of Pentecost, they did ask and receive great power from heaven. They were united in one mind and spirit and thousands received their message of Christ’s Kingdom. Then new believers gave lands, houses, and money to their stewardship.

THE JOURNEY



The younger son left his father’s house to go to a “far country” with an alien culture. Again there is no evidence or resistance by the father. However, the son was not mature enough to manage his wealth, and he wasted it in unrighteous living. Finally, one day, with his money gone, he asked a merchant, “What will you give me for this fine robe?” Later he asked, “How much is this ring worth?” And finally, “Would

you like to buy a good pair of shoes?” Finally, in desperation and poverty, he hired himself out to a citizen of that country to feed hogs—a detestable occupation for a Jew.

As I studied this story, I asked myself, “Could this be the Church? Then I remembered history. The Church left its Jewish home, laden with gifts from God. Indeed, it was sent out to far countries. But time proved that it was not ready for Rome, the Imperial power. For awhile it remained righteous, contributing many martyrs to the mission, but eventually it traded its righteousness for rags, its sonship for earthly citizenship, and its mission for status and maintenance. Consecrating pagan statues and temples; it took on a new identity. Over time, it was “Romanized.”

It is important to say that not all were unrighteous. Many Christians in Rome were faithful and preserved theological truth. But in general the Church traded its spiritual wealth for earthly treasure. It ate what that culture ate.

We do not know how long the younger son fed hogs or how long he served citizens of that country, but for the Church, it was many, many years. In spite of it all, though he was impoverished, he was still a son. Parables are short versions of a terribly long experience.

THE AWAKENING

Genetics are a mystery to me. But they are tiny, ticking clocks that one day sound an alarm. In the course of tragic events, the young man “came to himself.” He finally got to who he was. He was a son of a wealthy and gracious father. “How many of my father’s hired servants have food enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my Father and say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me

like one of your hired servants.’”

In essence, he made 3 declarations:

- *I will arise*
- *I will repent*
- *I will serve*

He left home wealthy, proud, an aspiring master; he returned poor, humble and a servant.

I pondered the issue, “How does this relate to the Church?” And then again, I thought of history. The Church had made a deal with the Roman culture. “My wealth for your acceptance.” The power of the age to come for the power of this age.” (In many cases, it is still making such arrangements).

How low did the Church sink? In order to build the great church of St. Peter, the largest and most magnificent edifice, it sold the forgiveness of sin and the release of souls from purgatory—for cash. The moral climate in the clergy was corrupt.

One day 500 years ago, a monk named Martin Luther “came to himself.” He carried two great concerns: His own salvation and the corruption that he saw in Rome. In the process he made 3 vital discoveries: Salvation is by faith, we are all priests, and the scripture is our sole authority. To his voice, others were added. It began more than mere reform; it began restoration. Last thing lost, first thing returned: Repentance and righteousness. I should add that there was also a counter-reform in the Roman Church. Inside and outside the Church of Rome, repentance was beginning.

THE FATHER’S HEART

The young man was coming home with sorrow and hope. He had wasted so much wealth and time, but he had one resource left—his father’s mercy. In the distance, his father saw him coming. Many times the father had looked down that road; today his patience would be rewarded.

As the son drew near, he rehearsed his confession, “Father, I have sinned,” but he never got it all out. The father, with compassion, ran to meet him and began to hug and kiss his son. “My son was lost but now is found!” Grace had allowed the journey and grace awaited the return. There were no “I told you so’s.”

With joy, the father began giving orders to the servants, “Bring the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.” The robe, ring, and shoes were restored. This is more than a natural father greeting a wayward son; this is the heavenly Father greeting a wayward Church and restoring it in righteousness, sonship, and kingdom proclamation.

“Bring the fatted calf and kill it! Let us eat and be merry, my son who was lost is now home.” The father threw a party! There was a great celebration, a feast with music and dancing. The son had come home, and was restored. The Church will come home, too.

History ends with a feast: The Great Marriage Supper. The Hebrew calendar year also ends with a feast. When the final harvest is in and the original grain has multiplied itself, there will be a great feast (see Mark 4:26-29).

I am reminded of Psalm 23. The Church has gone through the valley,

but goodness and mercy has followed it, and He has prepared a table that it will eat in the presence of its enemies. He will anoint its head with oil and its cup will run over.

There is another character in the story of the Prodigal Son, of course: the older brother. He did not understand mercy. I don't know if he ever got into the party. But I do know he failed to really know his own father's heart. He had his own inheritance, but he missed the joy of restoration. I wonder if he ever hoped that his brother would return. He referred to his brother when speaking to his father as, "that son of yours." He failed to love his brother. He was a Pharisee.

The issue for us is the Father's love for the lost and the "Lost Church." If we find his heart, we will long for and believe in restoration. In addition, we must see what needs to be restored: repentance, return, the robe, the ring, the shoes, and serving Father's house.

Another question is what will be the last thing restored? Righteousness by faith is accepted truth in many quarters. Our sonship through Christ is generally understood. In the last two hundred years, we have gotten our shoes back with world evangelization. But the message to the world is the kingdom of God. There is more: spiritual power, a divesting of a world system for church government. It was apostolic unity that was lost first. Will it be restored? I pray and believe so. When that occurs, look out Hell! The Church will have a celebration and a feast.

The journey has been long and difficult, and will be, but the prodigal Church is coming home to Father's house, humble, mature and full of grace. This is what I believe. ¹²¹



Charles Simpson is Editor-in-Chief of One-to-One® Magazine. He ministers extensively throughout the United States and among the nations.

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of Christian leaders. Out of this has come Covenant Institute, an innovative combination of DVD, written curriculum, internet learning, and one-to-one mentoring.

All of this has been rightly noted by many contemporary church historians, particularly Dr. David Moore in his superb book, *The Shepherding Movement*.



But what impresses me most, as one of his children, is that Dad's first priority has been his family. A loving husband of nearly 45 years to



Mom, Carolyn, and father to Charlyn, Jonathan, and myself, he has unselfishly given

himself to us and has proven in private to be a man of great integrity. My sister, brother, and I are all serving the Lord today, along with our three wonderful spouses. Dad and Mom have the affection of their seven grandchildren—each of whom has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

None of this is by accident, which Dad—on a feisty day—will tell you himself. As a family, we are in debt to he and Mom for their prayers, their love, their tears, their sacrifices, and their generosity. Understand, I'm not bragging on my Dad—OK, maybe a little bit—but I really want to boast in the Lord, for His faithfulness and lovingkindness to us.

As Editor-in-Chief, Dad will likely be somewhat irked that I've taken so much space in this issue of *One-to-One* for this tribute. But, I trust that you, our wonderful readers, will join with me in taking note of this momentous occasion, in thanking God for His servant, and in praying for many more years of fruitful and joy-filled ministry.

¹²¹

Stephen Simpson is the Editor of *One-to-One* Magazine.

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Charles Simpson

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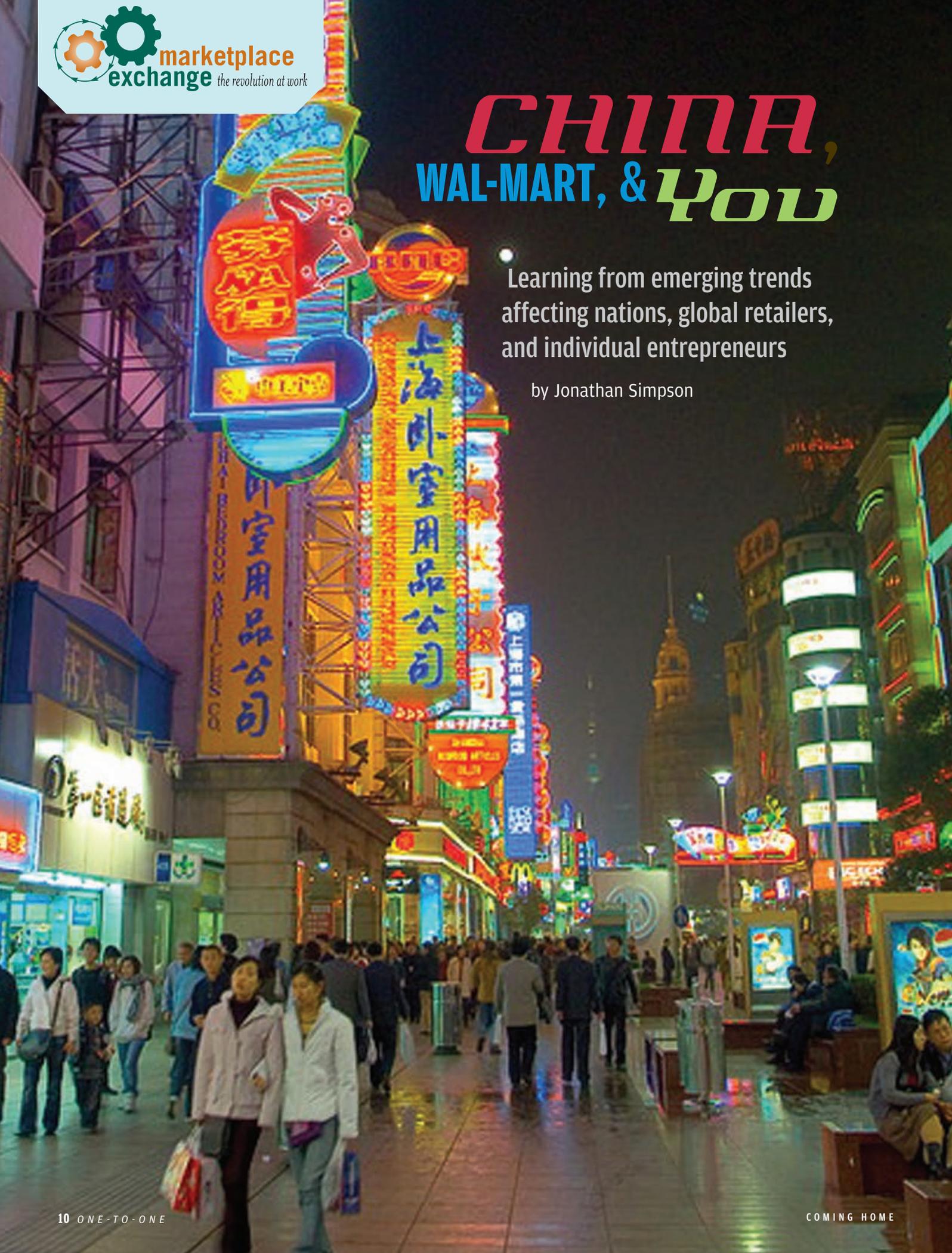
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CHINA, WAL-MART, & YOU

Learning from emerging trends
affecting nations, global retailers,
and individual entrepreneurs

by Jonathan Simpson



“By 2040, China will overtake America as the world’s biggest economy.”



THE BIGGEST, FASTEST, TALLEST...

If 2008 finds you in Beijing attending the Olympic Games, be sure to take a few days in China’s showcase city Shanghai. Don’t worry about spending precious travel time in getting from Beijing to Shanghai. Why not take the world’s fastest train? This magnetic levitation train will deliver you to Shanghai at 300 miles per hour. No word yet on a link to Hong Kong.

If interstate travel is more your speed, you can also take advantage of the then newly constructed road system (something along the size of the entire interstate system in the U.S.). Haven’t been to Shanghai since the mid-80’s? You will notice the skyline growth from 1 skyscraper back then, to approximately 5,000 buildings over 15 stories tall, hundreds of which are skyscrapers.

Does this seem staggering? By 2009, construction will be complete on China’s Three Georges Dam project, which will include the world’s largest concrete structure. Wait a few more years and Shanghai will have finished building the world’s largest shipyard, longest tunnel, tallest building, largest pyramid, and don’t forget the world’s tallest Ferris wheel. Whether you consider this information amusing, or a sign of end times, here’s a trend to note: according to Goldman Sachs in a March 20, 2004, article in *The Economist*, “by 2040 China will overtake America as the world’s biggest economy.”

If all of the growth in China leaves you homesick, just stop in to one of China’s 46 Wal-Mart stores...or make that 92 stores in 2008. True, you won’t see the old banners “Buy American” and “Bring it Home to the USA” but then again when was the last time you saw those in your local store? In fact, make a stop into Wal-Mart a must on your visit because the story of China’s emergence as an economic superpower is not complete without Wal-Mart, nor Wal-Mart’s without China.

Fast Company Magazine says Wal-Mart is bigger than ExxonMobile, GE,



and GM. Wal-Mart has annual sales greater than rivals Target, Sears, Kmart, JC Penny, Safeway and Kroger combined. It is the world's largest employer (1.4 million) and world's largest private company. Did you know Wal-Mart also deploys a network of satellites? You guessed it...the world's largest.

For China and Wal-Mart, like everyone else, success brings scrutiny and the greatest cry heard from competitors or those in the U.S. whose jobs were lost in the process is, "Unfair!" No doubt both China and Wal-Mart will face correction as market forces and trade agreements will demand, but while the China and Wal-Mart watch groups race to update their web sites, the pie multiplies. At some point, critics have to ask themselves, "What can be learned from the success of these two entities?" "How is the *global* market landscape changing?" and "What steps should I be taking?" As the playing field is leveling around the world, many in the U.S. will need to rethink their business and career strategy.

ATTENTION SWEAT SHOP SHOPPERS

You hear the lamenting all around, "We just can't compete with the cheap labor forces of China and India (some folks still mention Mexico)." While "cheap labor" gets the spotlight, other factors for falling prices go unmentioned. As Thomas Friedman writes in his newest book ***The World is Flat***, "The biggest mistake anyone can make when it comes to China is thinking that it is winning on wages and not improving quality and productivity."

And then there is Wal-Mart, often criticized for its union ban and wages good for a steady diet of Ramen noodles. What else are they doing to stay ahead? Well, remember that network of satellites they have? No, it's not used to snoop out lengthy smoke breaks. It's part of an overall, super-efficient supply chain system that tracks every pallet of "Made in China" knick-knacks, so there's no guessing on inventory levels or location.

Suppliers to Wal-Mart get plugged into all of the data as well. When your checkout item hits the scanner, the supplier knows: make one more. They also know that they can never dream of raising their price to Wal-Mart, only lowering it; and, if they're late on delivery, they run the risk of being replaced by their competitor, eager to have a turn at the Wal-Mart market.

You think Sam Walton envisioned this one-day long ago while riding in his pickup truck? Probably. Those overalls aren't fooling anyone anymore. Sam realized that having a lower cost of goods sold meant utilizing economies of scale and investing in a culture and system efficiency. Visit Wal-Mart HQ in Bentonville, Arkansas and you'll see that the culture of savings starts at the top with its legendary no-frills executive offices.

LOU'S CLUES

Outsourcing has become a dirty word. Lou Dobbs, dubbed "the Dan Rather of financial journalism" by Daniel Griswold of the Cato Institute, is CNN's business anchor and host of its "Exporting

America" segment. Mr. Dobbs fervently reminds us of jobs once held in the U.S. that are now performed overseas. If you miss an episode, you can check out his attempted "list of shame" he entitles "list of companies exporting jobs" on his website. Among those listed is a favorite whipping company (now teetering in bankruptcy) Delta Airlines. According to the October 2004 edition of ***Business Solutions*** Magazine: "Delta came under scrutiny for outsourcing a 1,000-seat call center to India. However, the move saved the airline more than \$23 million in 2003 and allowed for the creation of 1,200 new jobs in Delta's U.S.-based reservations and sales team - a net gain of 200 American jobs." This is a prime example where time and again, companies utilize outsourcing to bring on new growth at home where they can be reinvested.

Let us recall as well, NAFTA, which Dobbs, a staunch critic, referred to as a "so-called free trade" agreement. Since its passage, the Heritage Foundation, in a June 16, 2005 outline called ***Debunking Some Myths About DR-CAFTA*** tells us that the U.S. economy created 18 million new jobs, GDP grew by 38 percent and exports increased from \$134.3 billion to \$250.6 billion." If there has been any "giant sucking sound" of lost jobs, it was heard by Mexico. Ted Fishman, author of *China Inc.* says, "according to the Mexican government, the country lost 218,000 manufacturing jobs when 500 of the thirty seven hundred export only maquiladoras closed between 2001 and the end of 2003." Hola China.

With all of the jobs moving to China from the U.S., Mexico and elsewhere, no wonder Chinese farmers are trading in farm tools for hand tools and moving to the southeastern manufacturing centers. But hang on, Thomas Friedman tells us that China actually *lost* 15 million manufacturing jobs between 1995 and 2002 compared with 2 million lost in the U.S. . Confused? The answer to China's job loss lies in their improved efficiency, requiring fewer workers on the line. A study by the U.S. Conference Board (sited by Friedman) that says productivity increased 17% annually between 1995 and 2002 in the private, non-state owned sectors of Chinese industry. This is due to China's absorption of both new technologies and modern business practices, starting from a very low base," Friedman added.

So who is the benefactor of all of this? ***Fortune*** Magazine's October 4, 2004, issue says that since the mid-1990s, U.S. consumers have saved close to \$600 billion on imports from China, and U.S. manufacturers have saved billions as well because of cheaper parts for their products. Moreover, these savings helped the Federal Reserve to hold down interest rates longer, giving more Americans a chance to buy homes or refinance the ones they have and giving businesses more capital to invest in new innovations.

Finally, another view on "Exporting America" is found in ***Time*** Magazine's June 27, 2005, article entitled "Wal-Mart Nation." According to ***Time***, "Wal-Mart says it's trying to export its American-style standards and ethics to China's manufacturing sector too. In China, where sweatshops are alive and well, the company insists

those measures make a difference. Suppliers, including those who sell to Wal-Mart indirectly through other companies, must limit the work week to 40 hours, plus no more than three hours of overtime a day, meet safety requirements, and provide decent accommodations for workers. Even those critical of Wal-Mart concede that the standards can make conditions at a Wal-Mart supplier's factory more bearable than they are at a lot of other low-wage factories in China.

Further to this point, the article later says, "Wal-Mart is spreading a management style that many of its young Chinese employees find liberating. In most Chinese companies, managers typically share little information with employees, and promotions usually depend on who you know. At the Sam's Club outside Beijing, it's different. Alan Li, 31, the store's deputy manager, encourages workers to contribute ideas about efficiency, and managers tell employees what's going on. It doesn't matter who you know here says Li, a high school graduate from a peasant family in rural China."

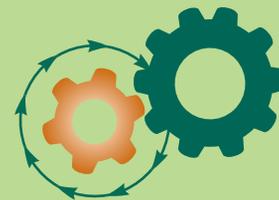
PIE RECIPES

The Chinese fellow today making your next set of golf clubs is not immune from his job going to Vietnam or a machine tomorrow. If he is prepared, he can move into electronics or maybe even the service industry. This is the world we live in; a "**Flat World**" as Mr. Friedman calls it. Where your new competitor living in Suzhou, China has, in sense, become your new neighbor. Where your accountant just FedExed your tax information to Bombay for preparation and where you called for technical assistance half way around the world. You have a pie to make and if you don't like it, you can make another. Don't buy into the mindset of a one-pie system where a piece is gotten by taking from someone else. Look for advantages by becoming unique, specialized, and adaptable. Oh and by the way, the Chinese guy working on your golf clubs makes \$200 per month but manages to save half of it.

Want to know where China is winning? Its leaders are focused on training their young people in math, science, and with that comes English. Friedman says Chinese young people are also given the infrastructure to "plug and play" faster. Furthermore, he says "What Chinese leaders really want is the next generation of airplane wings to be designed in China, the next step is 'dreaming it up in China.'" As of now, China rightfully faces growing pressure to better enforce the WTO policies for intellectual property "dreamed up" elsewhere by honoring patents and non-compete agreements.

As China gains global influence, please keep its leadership and underground Church in your prayers. China's theology will not only shape its economic outlook, but also its dealings with Taiwan, North Korea, Japan and its own people. God is using the marketplace as a door to China and other countries as well. Look for it. **121**

Jonathan Simpson is the Director of Development for CSM.



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GETTING YOUR TREASURE

Into Heaven

How do New Testament
believers invest?

By Gary Henley

YOU'VE HEARD THE SAYING, "YOU CAN'T TAKE it with you." Money is a major theme in our culture, and competition for it comes in a cacophony of voices from every angle. Even though Christians can also get caught up in the "what can I buy now to make me happy" syndrome, most polls show that those whose beliefs are classified as evangelical are the most likely to share their wealth.

So, let's assume that those who are reading this really do want to do God's will with regard to their money. Jesus' most basic teaching on money was "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" where rot and insects can't destroy it. *We have to believe that Jesus was the smartest, best informed investment counselor you could ever consult. But, how do we respond to his seminar on "lay up treasures in heaven"?* We can't FedEx it there, nor can we do electronic transfers

to the Throne room. Obviously, we have to give it someplace here on earth in a way God considers to be a legitimate gift to Him, and one that is registered in heaven. The question is to whom, when, where, why? Don't you sometimes wish Jesus had been a little more specific?

One basic way of interpreting a Scripture is to see what light other Scriptures have to shed on it. Another way of clarifying the meaning is to see what the people in the Bible actually did to obey those teach-

ings of Jesus. I thought it might be an interesting exercise to put those two methods together by going through the New Testament to look at every occasion of giving by believers, and to see how they gave in obedience to Christ's teachings. The results were quite surprising when compared to our giving habits today.

I found a record of thirty-four direct references to actual giving. Of the total record of New Covenant offerings, giving to the poor included eighteen of the thirty-four. While I am not saying that proves anything, it is a significant comment about the way early Christians used their money. It is probably a clue to which we ought to pay close attention.

Beyond that, I found that seven of the remaining references are clearly incidents of giving to the missionaries of the day, the apostolic teams who were taking the Gospel beyond the borders to those who had not had any chance to hear of God's mercy through Christ Jesus. Four more instances show that much of the giving to the poor was through those missionary teams. The longest passage on giving in the entire New Testament has entirely to do with giving to the poor through the missionaries of that day - chapters eight and nine of Second Corinthians.

It seems to me the clear indication is that the priority of New Testament Christians was to give to the poor and to provide for those who were taking the Gospel to those who had not heard. Apparently, they had confidence that this was a way to get treasure into heaven.

What does all this mean in our world today? It doesn't take much research to find that the poorest people and nations today are the ones that have not been reached with the Gospel. Nineteen of the poorest countries are also unevangelized. Those same nineteen countries include 45 % of the world's population, but only 6% of the missionaries. Poverty is rampant where the Gospel has not given people a new hope and worldview.

The other group of poorest nations is in the southern half of Africa. This area has been evangelized, but the Gospel has not penetrated deeply enough to change the culture. Add ruthless dictators, AIDS epidemics, and wars like the one that killed three million in the Congo; it would be difficult for anyone to believe they can ever get beyond mere subsistence.

However, sound Bible teaching can reverse that. God did not create poverty; man did. Physical poverty is rooted in a culture of poverty, rooted in cultural values that retard and resist development, trapping people in destitution. New believers there need to learn that God does not just distribute what is available; He creates that which is not, and gives people the ability to increase, to "create wealth" (see Deuteronomy 8:18). Productivity, even in those settings, can come from faith that God can bless what we do and make it increase. That concept must be taught and modeled for those who have never seen it work. To do that, someone has to go there; that's

where the missionaries come in.

The average income in most of these nations is less than \$1 per day. Orphans and widows go without because people can hardly feed their own families. The economy doesn't improve because people have nothing to begin a small business, or no training to get a job. More than half of the world still lies in this decaying kind of poverty. As followers of Christ, we must be touched by their horrifying situation.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Follow the pattern of the early believers, and give a good portion of your income to help the poor. "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his deed."

GIVE THROUGH PEOPLE YOU TRUST. Much money intended for the poor never gets there due to poor stewardship by certain organizations. Give to missionary teams or organizations you know personally, and who have integrity.

GIVE TO GROUPS WHO ARE CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES. Simply feeding people is not enough. The old adage of "give a man a fish and he will eat today; teach him to fish and he will eat every day" applies here. This is called "development work" - creating ways for people to earn what they need while improving the local economy as well.

For instance, IOM missionaries are creating micro-enterprise jobs and businesses in such places as the tsunami center at Banda Aceh, in Bangladesh, and in Morocco. In Africa, we have programs to teach pastors to model agricultural work and progress, and to stock small animal farms. We own boats that ship their crops to market. We also help children get into schools who would otherwise grow up illiterate and to be a drain on the economy.

At the same time, we are also taking the Gospel where it has not been heard. One third of our missions are in "closed" countries where missionary teams can only go as business people or relief workers. When they do, they bring a Kingdom message of real hope, plus tangible means of help where people are really hurting.

Whatever you do, don't forget the poor. "Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered" (see Proverbs 21:13). 121

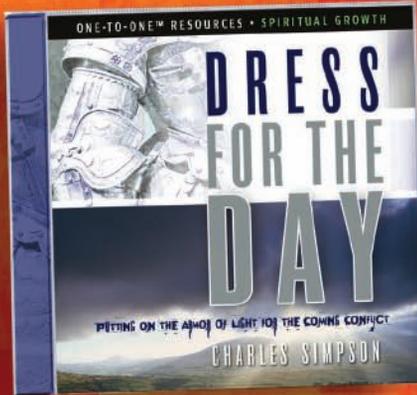


Gary Henley, the Director of International Outreach Ministries, travels widely encouraging missionaries around the globe.



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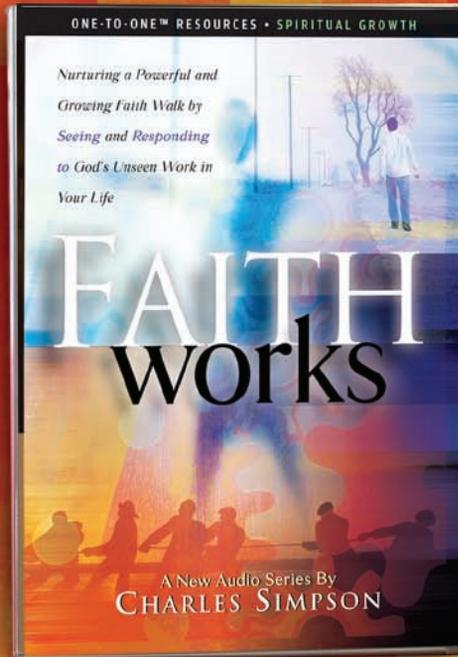
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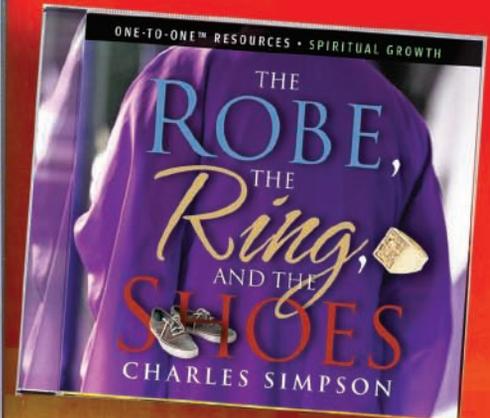
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