

A success story in Grand Rapids

We may faithfully sow seed, but wait years without seeing fruit

“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.” I Corinthians 3: 5-7

Living in West Michigan where farms and orchards are in abundance, we see all around us at this time of year the yield of seeds faithfully planted and watered by local farmers. Sometimes it takes months to see the potential of that seed come to fruition. Other times, such as with the apple and cherry orchards near my home, it will take years before the tiny saplings bear their sweet fruit.

And isn't that the way in life and ministry? We may faithfully sow seeds, but wait years without seeing fruit. Perhaps we may never see the fruit ourselves. Or the seeds we plant may be watered by another. Yet one thing is certain: it is not we who bring the increase, but God in His sovereignty.

This truth was once again evidenced to me at the spiritual weekend conference ADA hosted this past July. I had asked my friend Dar VanderArk, head of Michigan Decency Action Council (MDAC), to speak on a recent victory he was involved with in Grand Rapids, MI. Dar and I became acquainted as a result of our mutual work against pornography. Dar started the first anti-pornography organization in the state of Michigan and we've stood together many times over the years.

Some of you who have been with this ministry for numbers of years recall the anti-obscenity legislation ADA (at the time AFA of Michigan) fought so hard to have passed in the state of Michigan. Dar and MDAC stood with us in that long, uphill battle. In his presentation at our summer conference he gave an overview of the groundwork we worked together to lay in fighting por-



Bill Johnson (right) with Dar VanderArk and Alan Sears in early 90s

nography in Michigan - efforts we began in the mid-1980s that continued into the 1990s and beyond. Years of meeting with legislators, testifying before House and Senate committee hearings, utilizing experts to counsel and assist in developing legislative wording that would uphold constitutionality attacks by the porn industry, bringing forth young women who had been victimized by the strip clubs that preyed on their vulnerability - women who bravely told their stories before legislative hearings of an industry that degraded and destroyed.

In 1993 we saw legislation passed that strengthened Michigan's obscenity laws. In 1998, additional legislation was passed that would allow municipalities to enact ordinances prohibiting public nudity.

In the 1990s we organized training sessions for city attorneys and township supervisors in numerous Michigan municipalities - such as Grand Haven, Muskegon, Reed City - bringing in experts to train municip-

pal leaders in developing local ordinances that would deter sexually oriented businesses from opening up shop in their communities. We also organized an extensive statewide training session in Lansing, bringing in Scott Bergthold, the national expert in this field, to educate city and township officials and attorneys from all across the state regarding regulating and zoning sexually oriented businesses. As Dar stated in his presentation, a lot of city attorneys brought back a lot of information and a lot sat on that information - yet a lot of them didn't throw it away, either. Another seed planted.

The City of Grand Rapids was one represented at that training seminar. With urging from MDAC, the City of Grand Rapids did eventually use that information and with assistance from Scott Bergthold enacted a solid zoning ordinance to deter sexually oriented businesses. Unfortunately, municipalities cannot outright ban strip clubs, however they can use zoning to restrict them to certain areas - such as high cost industrial areas which makes it financially unattractive to strip clubs.

However in 2004 "Sensations", a Grand Rapids strip club, announced that they were building in downtown Grand Rapids near the Van Andel Arena with plans to open up a new "Sensations Galleria" with total nudity - a nude-dancing strip club and an adult bookstore.

A local neighborhood association was greatly concerned and wanted to do something to keep this blight out of their community. Dar and MDAC brought excellent assistance and counsel, beginning three years worth of work - meeting with the neighborhood association, educating on what could and couldn't be done according to the law. The City Commission's hands were tied because the property

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**From the desk of
Bill Johnson,
president**

The Comforter has come. It is true!

Even after a month, sympathy cards and letters bringing condolences continue to arrive here after the tragic death of our fifteen month old granddaughter Cassie Hope Starr on August 17.

How beautiful are the feet of the preachers of the word! How sweet is the balm of Gilead.

My personal note from last month was entitled "The Comforter has come. It is true!" Indeed, it is true! And the words of His people, too, have been such an encouragement and help.

The Bible plainly and clearly tells us "In the world there shall be tribulation but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." [John 15:23]

For some of you younger ones, perhaps you don't see this quite yet, but some of you do. The older that we get the more we see that this is true: "in the world there will be tribulation, but be of good cheer."

In November of last year, my oldest son fell 23 feet while roofing. He ended up going into emergency for x-rays and cat scans and a bill of over \$1,000, but he walked away with only a very serious ankle sprain that kept him out of work for three plus weeks. My father passed away suddenly on March 10 in my home. My youngest son escaped very serious injury when forced off the road by a lady trying to get her mail from her car window. The accident necessitated ambulance, first responders, emergency room, significant stitching to his head and ear and over \$2,000 in emergency room costs. And then, of course, Cassie.

This is not all, however, there are heartaches and heartbreaks involved in the relentless spiritual battle that I face day in and day out in trying to lead a ministry such as this

in a day when we are seeing so much spiritual lethargy and moral decline within our very own families and within our circles.

It is true that the trials and tribulations of life often cut very, very deeply. Yet, the comforter has indeed come. The Bible tells us that our Lord chastens those He loves. He also won't leave you and me comfortless. He does not forsake His own.

These cuttings and these heartaches are only for a season. This world is not our home. We are only passing through as the hymn writer sings. When you have the experience of His comfort, peace, assurance and strengthening in the midst of heartbreak, tragedy, loss, devastation, you know more and more on a personal level the presence of God to uphold you through it all!

And so in another heartbreaking story (one that I can't imagine how it must effect so deeply and harshly his loved ones), we hear of shocking news regarding one of America's favorite Gospel singers, Ray Boltz. Singer of such powerhouse Christian songs as: "Watch the Lamb", "Thank You", "The Altar", "I Pledge Allegiance to the Lamb," and others.

OneNewsNow.com stated it this way on September 15:

"There is shock and sadness in the Christian community over word that famed Christian music singer Ray Boltz has publicly announced he's living a homosexual lifestyle.

"If this is the way God made me, then this is the way I'm going to live...I really feel closer to God because I no longer hate myself." Those were the words of Ray Boltz in an interview with the Washington Blade about his decision to engage in homosexuality. Boltz, a father of four who was married for 33 years before officially divorcing his wife this year ..."

When one has truly experienced the amazing grace of God and His mighty help in times of trouble - sustaining, undergirding, helping and healing - it is so difficult to comprehend such a total sell out to Satan. I do know this. Life is filled with such

contrasts and conflicts. There are great joys. There are great sadnesses. There are great victories and great losses.

Hasn't Ray Boltz experienced the great power of God to heal, help, sustain, overcome? Did he not love His righteousness and seek God's will for his life?

I have more questions than answers. One thing seems clear: Each one of us are engaged in spiritual warfare every day of our lives. The battle is very, very real. It behooves us as Christians to not just give churchy nods of agreement but rather to TRULY STAND "therefore with your loins girt about with truth and with the breastplate of righteousness." None of us are above caving in to the relentless attacks of our spiritual enemy. We need constant vigilance.

Our Lord is so gracious. I have found that to be so very true. But, He's also a jealous God. He hates sin. He deals with us in our sin. Yet, He graciously touches our lives with so many good things desiring to draw us back to Him, to spend time with Him in fellowship, worship, prayer.

He calls us out to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. To love Him above all others. He pours out His Spirit upon us again and again when are hearts are embattled, demonstrating His personal love and presence.

The Comforter has come. Let us stay close to Him in these days of mighty challenge. He has overcome the world.

*These things I have
spoken unto you, that in
me ye might have peace.
In the world ye shall have
tribulation: but be of
good cheer; I have
overcome the world.
John 16:33*

Understanding the times in order to know how to pray and what to do

Grand Rapids (continued from page 1)

purchased for the strip club was located in the designated area under the city's zoning ordinance. While zoning would not prohibit the strip club from opening, Dar told the neighborhood association that regulations could be enacted to control what takes place in the strip club – called “time, place, and manner” regulations.

Because the hard fought statute referenced on page one, which Michigan adopted in 1998, allowed cities to prohibit public nudity, the Grand Rapids City Commission could enact such an ordinance putting restrictions on the strip club. Dar and the neighborhood association brought this before the City Commission, urging them to enact time, place and manner regulations prohibiting public nudity. Dar also urged city officials to seek assistance from Scott Bergthold in drafting sound legislation, which the city did. (Scott had assisted Kalamazoo in drafting language for a similar ordinance, as he does in municipalities all across the country.)

However, before the commission voted on the ordinance, they backpedaled – concerned of being sued by the porn industry. Dar acknowledged that, yes, it was likely they would be sued. The commission balked and stated they were not going to adopt the ordinance because they couldn't afford the estimated \$100,000 needed to defend the legislation in a lawsuit.

Looking as if they were defeated, Dar and the neighborhood association, through prayer, came up with the idea of raising the money the city would need for a suit. Within a week, against all odds, pledges totaling \$100,000 were raised. With some initial reluctance, the city commission voted to pass the ordinance prohibiting public nudity in 2006 – two years after their efforts began.

Nearly immediately the strip club filed suit against the city and against Dar Vander Ark and the head of the neighborhood association. The Federal Court ultimately dismissed the suit against the city and upheld the ordinance and also dismissed the case

against Dar and the neighborhood association and, in a rare move, ordered that their legal fees be paid by the other side.

However, within a month of this decision, the strip club filed an appeal with the 6th District Court of Appeals in Cincinnati. Hearings were held in 2007 and in May of 2008 the 6th District Court of Appeals found in favor of the City of Grand Rapids and in favor of Dar and the neighborhood association.

The day the decision came down from the 6th District Court upholding the ordinance, the city attorney of Grand Rapids began receiving calls from other city attorneys all over Michigan wanting copies of this legislation. And hopefully as a result, similar regulations will be enacted in municipalities across the state.

In addition, this victory has implications that go beyond Grand Rapids, beyond Michigan. It sets precedence for the entire jurisdiction of the 6th District Court – much of the Midwest - and can also be cited in cases across the country. For example, the very day this verdict was announced, Scott Bergthold was in an arbitration hearing in Kansas City, negotiating language for a similar ordinance. In attendance at the hearing were representatives from Kansas City strip clubs arguing against certain restrictions. Scott received word of the court decision and was immediately able to introduce it at the hearing, refuting the strip clubs objections.

As Dar reported on this victory at our summer conference, he closed with these words: *“To say that God was not involved in this thing is foolish. Everything that could have gone against us went against us. We had a City Commission that didn't want to do it, they had an excuse that the media was buying that they couldn't afford it. All those things were overcome by a couple of people who stepped into the water. Who took that step - as fearful as that might have been – and God honored it. I didn't do it, the [neighbor association] didn't do it – God did it.”*

And isn't that how it is as we faithfully sow seeds of service? Efforts that began twenty years ago to strengthen state obscenity

law, to educate city and township officials, and to pass local ordinances are now bearing fruit decades later. God honored that faithfulness and he has brought the increase.

Is the battle against pornography over? Far from it. The porn industry continues to pollute communities, damaging individuals, marriages, and families. October is Pornography Awareness Month, bringing awareness of the destruction caused by the blight of pornography. In this sex-saturated culture, the attempt to shed light on the evil of pornography may garner little notice or importance, but the battle must continue and we must continue to step out in faith trusting God to bring the increase.

I encourage you to provide the information below to your local township/municipality, urging the governing board to be proactive in developing ordinances regulating sexually oriented businesses.

The Law Office of Scott D. Bergthold, P.L.L.C. is the nation's only law firm focused exclusively on the drafting and defense of municipal adult business regulations. The firm's goal is to leverage its expertise on behalf of municipal clients through constitutionally sound ordinances and vigorous defense of local regulations.

Again, the expert in the country in this regard is:

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Boycott McDonalds by Bill Johnson



Last month we reported on the nationwide boycott of McDonalds.

American Family Association (AFA) initiated the boycott of McDonald's restaurants because of the company's promotion of the homosexual agenda, including homosexual marriage. AFA asked McDonald's to remain neutral in the culture war. McDonald's refused.

McDonald's CEO Jim Skinner said the company will promote issues they approve. "Being a socially responsible organization is a fundamental part of who we are. We have an obligation to use our size and resources to make a difference in the world ... and we do."

[Here is an update from AFA regarding the continuation of the boycott.](#)

A document shows McDonald's requested a 10% "group discount" to a recent pro-homosexual training seminar. Eligibility to receive the discount required "groups of 15 or more registrants for the full price 3-day (Out & Equal 2008 Workplace) Summit."

McDonald's applied for the special "discount code" off the regular registration price of \$775 per person. The registration price did not include the employee's air travel, hotel and meal expenses.

The conference, held in Austin, TX, was designed to train employees how to effectively advance homosexuality in the workplace and to persuade top corporate officials to embrace the lifestyle by offering special recognition and benefits to gay employees.

For example, McDonald's health benefits package includes full coverage for sex-change procedures, post-operative recovery, and mental health counseling throughout the process.

To see one of America's largest corporations blatantly go against time-honored standards of truth, morality and decency is extremely difficult to comprehend. On its face, it is one of the most foolish business decisions we ever recall seeing in our 20 years of ministry service.

Contact McDonald's

McDonald's Corporation
James A. (Jim) Skinner - CEO
Ralph Alvarez - President
2111 McDonalds Dr.
Oak Brook, IL 60523
Phone: 630-623-3000
Fax: 630-623-5004
Toll Free: 800-244-6227

Family -unfriendly skies

Flying the "friendly skies" may now be more detrimental than friendly for your family. As airlines move to provide unrestricted internet service to passengers, imagine the scenarios as travelers young and old sitting elbow to elbow are exposed to unwanted pornographic images and vulgar content, held captive as their seatmate turns a flight into a trip through the red light district of the Internet.

American Airlines is the latest airline to offer a trial program offering internet service on a number of flights.

While the airline seems to minimize the concern, the flight attendants themselves aren't so cavalier. "We've heard a lot of complaints from flight attendants and passengers" about travelers pulling up objectionable Web pages, said Roscow [union spokesman for the Association of Professional Flight Attendants].

Many stand amazed at the insensitivity American Airlines has shown in responding to expressions of concern. Your letter is needed. See also enclosed postcard.

Contact American Airlines:

AMR Corporation – American Airlines
Gerard Arpey – Chairman President,
and CEO
4333 Amon Carter Blvd.
Fort Worth, TX 76155
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American Decency Frontline
Vol. XXIII, Issue X
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