From the Senior Pastor’s Desk

By Freddy Fritz

My Testimony

The past several months I have been asked to share my testimony at several Gideons’ Pastor Appreciation Banquets. The reason I have been asked to share my testimony is because God used a Gideons’ New Testament in my conversion. I thought I might share with you what I have been sharing with the Gideons.

In 1970 I was thirteen years old when I started attending Pearson High School in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Sometime during the year all 150 Standard 6 students, as we “freshmen” were called, were marched into the Assembly Hall for a special presentation. There I heard my first-ever presentation from the Gideons.

To be honest, I don’t recall what the man from the Gideons said that day. All I know is at the end of the presentation we were told to get in a queue (which is a “straight line” in American English!). At the front of the queue a man from the Gideons gave each one of us a brand-new shiny green pocket New Testament.

I am sure that I paged through the Gideons New Testament but, frankly, I did not pay much attention to its message. Immediately after high school I was conscripted into the South African Air Force. After 4 months of basic training I went to Air Traffic Control School. Six months later I qualified as an Air Traffic Controller, and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant.

Shortly after becoming an Air Traffic Controller, much to
my shock, I was sent off to what is now northern Namibia to go and protect our border and also support one of the factions in the civil war in Angola. I was so terrified of the prospect of going off to war that I remember drinking myself to sleep on the train on the way to begin my assignment.

Up until that point I had not concerned myself too much with spiritual matters. Even though I had gone to a very fine church in high school, I believed that I was going to live a long time. I thought that there was perhaps something to Christianity but I would wait until I was well into my retirement before I got serious about spiritual matters. I simply lived my life for myself.

But now, suddenly death was not a distant reality. Death became an even closer reality when a friend of mine, who was a pilot, was killed in action. I don’t think I was ever more sober than when I carried his body off the plane.

Meanwhile, my brother and best friend had each made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. They started sharing their newfound faith with me. I argued with them about the truth of Christianity, but deep down I wanted to be sure that Christianity was really the true way to eternal life. The only book that I had taken with me to the war in northern Namibia was my little green Gideons pocket New Testament. I read it often and I prayed to God to save me.

After my first tour of duty in northern Namibia I was sent back to South Africa. While on leave I visited my best friend in Port Elizabeth. He took me to a service at his church on Easter Sunday evening in 1976. It was there that God opened my eyes to the truth of the gospel, and by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone I became a Christian.

I am so thankful to God for the Gideons who placed this pocket New Testament in my hands. In the providence of God, it was the Bible that he used to draw me to himself.

Some 45 years ago someone may have sat at a table and heard an invitation to become a Gideon. That man accepted the invitation and became a Gideon. One day he was called and asked to deliver pocket New Testaments to the Standard 6 students at Pearson High School.

I wonder how he felt? Was he nervous? Was he apprehensive? Was he scared? I don’t know. I do know he wasn’t a preacher.

But he accepted the assignment, and handed out brand-new shiny green pocket New Testaments to students he never knew. I received that Bible. I don’t recall saying, “Thank you.” And years later, it was reading this Gideons New Testament that God drew me to himself. And now God is using me to teach others about his amazing grace.

Every Gideon touches a life when he hands someone a Bible from the Gideons. Most Gideons don’t know about the lives they touch this side
As we have been going through Christianity Explored over the past few weeks, it has been great not only for those who are wanting to learn more about Christ, but also as a reminder for the church members who have been coming. The wonderful truths of the scriptures are repeated for us each and every week. I wanted to give a taste of some of the things that we are talking about to both encourage you with the gospel as well as excite you to bring people in the future. Our vision as an outreach team, Ordinary People Living Ordinary Lives With Gospel Intentionality, is to help you think of the people that God has placed before you and the situations that you have that can be used to share the gospel as well as equip you to do so. Christianity Explored is a great opportunity if you are in conversation with someone about the gospel. Over the course of seven weeks we slowly reveal the gospel using the format of who, why and what. Who is Jesus? Why did he come? What do I do to respond? Using the gospel of Mark, which participants will read through over the course of the seven weeks, we seek to answer these questions and show participants the gospel.

When I get to heaven I would like to ask Jesus to point me to the Gideon who put this pocket New Testament in my hand, so that I can go to him and say, “Thank you! Thank you for putting God’s word into my hands. It changed my life!”

But I suspect when I get to that man, I will again have to wait in a queue, along with many others, who also want to thank him for giving out Gideons Bibles.

As a pastor now, I regularly encourage the men in our church to become a Gideon. All of them want their lives to have meaning and significance. One of the ways to do so is by becoming a Gideon. Only God knows how many lives will be in heaven for all eternity because of their service as a Gideon.

I am so thankful to God for the pastor who encouraged that man who gave me my brand-new shiny green pocket New Testament to become a Gideon.

Thank you! And may God bless you.
The first week begins by asking the participants, if you could ask God one question, what would it be? This helps us to understand what people are thinking about and what is on their hearts about God. We then talk about the very beginning of Mark, paying particular attention to the first verse, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” We talk about how the word gospel means “good news.” Not just the kind of good news like finding out that you are having your favorite meal for dinner, but the kind of good news that happens when a war is declared over. We also talk about the word Christ and the fact that it is not a last name, but instead is a title meaning “God’s only chosen King.” So Mark is the great good news about the one chosen king of the creator of the universe. The creator of this amazing world sent his son down to earth to reveal himself to us. What a great opportunity to get to know about God! We also talk about the Old Testament prophets (Mark 1:2-3), John the Baptist (Mark 1:7), and God himself (Mark 1:11) and how they pointed to Christ. We then talk about how Jesus had power and authority: to teach (Mark 1:21-22), over sickness (Mark 1:29-31, 32-34, 3:22), over nature (Mark 4:35-41), over death (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43) and to forgive sin (Mark 2:1-12). As we were going through this time, I was struck by an amazing point that the book makes. It says: “Jesus’ enemies would have looked for every opportunity to discredit him. Why didn’t they do so by proving that Jesus didn’t have the power and authority he claimed?” What an amazing sentence! Even Jesus’ enemies couldn’t claim that he didn’t perform the miracles that the Bible talks about. To quote the centurion in Mark 15 – “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

I hope that this look into what we are going through in Christianity Explored has been encouraging and challenging. I want to encourage you with both the Gospel and the fact that it is being presented regularly as a ministry of the church during this time. I want to challenge you to be talking to people so that this Fall when we have another Christianity Explored, you will have people that you can invite or ways that you can serve. Please continue to pray as we continue to preach the Gospel!
Missionaries Supported by TBPC

Mission to the World
Peter & Lauren Dishman
Essie & Natacha Etienne
Ken & Tammie Matlack
Carla Stevens

Reformed University Fellowship
Jeff & Jenny Lee

New Harvest Missions International
Nathaniel & Cherita Adawonu

Serving In Missions
Rene & Lili Palacio

Wycliffe Bible Translators
Don & Judy Vander Ploeg
Kevin & Gertrude Nicholas

Ven Con Nosotros Church
Dr. Oscar & Elizabeth Alvarez

PRCC
Chaplain Ted Hamm
Chaplain James Cochell

MAY BIRTHDAYS

1—Gloria Andel
2—Cole Darbyshire
3—Boy Skopp
4—Anthony Cozzolino
5—Roy Hunter
6—Zoe Almonte
7—Richard Hunter
8—Catie Tomasello
9—Larry Hess
10—Josh Jeffries
11—Cathy Turpen
12—Wendy Compton
13—Judy Weir
14—Eileen Kociela
15—Doug Knox
16—Amelia Cozzolino
17—Joey Cozzolino
18—James Turpen

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

8 — Mr. & Mrs. Joe Kirkpatrick
9 — Mr. & Mrs. John Andel
11 — Mr. & Mrs. McLeod
25 — Mr. & Mrs. Richard Hunter
27 — Mr. & Mrs. Chris Coffey
28 — Mr. & Mrs. Rick Hallastrand
Thank you to Suzanne Swenson for opening her home with gracious hospitality for our Sister to Sister Spring Lunch. There were 18 sisters in Christ attending, including several guests and new members. Thank you also to Nancy Kirkpatrick for the plant guessing game and to Marianne Cali for her thoughtful devotional. We will surely think about how we can grow in the Lord wherever he has planted us. Additional thanks to everyone who attended and contributed delicious food to the buffet table. A great time was had by everyone! Remember your prayer partner in your daily prayer time and if possible, get together for fellowship.

May Event

Women’s Ministry will have our annual collection for the 14:6 Connection (formerly the Pregnancy Care center) in the weeks surrounding Mother’s Day. This organization is founded on Christian principles, and requires the young women to attend Bible lessons and parenting classes. There will be a crib in the narthex from May 3rd through May 17th to hold donations that anyone wishes to make.

Primary needs are diapers (especially sizes 3,4, and 5), both new and used clothing in sizes from newborn to 24 months, toys, equipment, and also monetary donations. This annual collection helps moms who are struggling and brings women to Christ. Please prayerfully consider donating to the collection.

Looking Ahead

There may be a WM activity in June. There is a new tea house in Brooksville where the Christmas House used to be. The WM committee suggested that we arrange a trip there for a luncheon. I will look into the prices, reservations, etc. Be on the lookout for additional information on the WM bulletin board.

I have looked at the calendar for next month and see that the 2nd Sunday is Mother’s Day, so we will have our next WM 15 on the third Sunday, May 17th. Please join us to share ideas and help plan future events.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>8:45a</td>
<td>9a NTCA-</td>
<td>9a NTCA-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7:45a</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Memoria</td>
<td>Sanctuary;</td>
<td>Sanctuary;</td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>Men’s Bible Study;</td>
<td>Men’s Bible Study;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>9a NTCA-</td>
<td>11a Staff Meeting;</td>
<td>7p Outreach Team Meeting, Missions Committee Meeting, ESL</td>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td>7a NTCA-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>9a NTCA-</td>
<td>6:15p Dare 2 Declare;6:30p Kids of the King &amp; Prayer Meeting; 7p Pioneer Club; 7:15p Adult Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td>8:45a</td>
<td>11a Staff Meeting; 5:30p WBS Small Craft Project</td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td>7p ESL</td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td>8:45a</td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MAY 2015**

- **3**: 8:45a Session Bi-Annual Meeting, Youth & Children's Sunday School; 10:30a Worship Service; 5p PHOS Youth Meeting
- **4**: 9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 11a Staff Meeting; 5:30p WBS Small Craft Project
- **5**: 9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 7p Outreach Team Meeting, Missions Committee Meeting, ESL
- **6**: 6:15p Dare 2 Declare;6:30p Kids of the King & Prayer Meeting; 7p Pioneer Club; 7:15p Adult Choir Rehearsal
- **7**: 9a NTCA-Sanctuary; National Day of Prayer
- **8**: 9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 7p Christianity Explored
- **9**: 7:45a Men’s Bible Study; 9a Men’s Ministry Team Meeting
- **10**: 8:45a Adult CEF, Youth & Children's Sunday School, CE&F; 10:30a Worship Service; 12:30p Welcome Lunch; 5p PHOS Youth Meeting
- **11**: 9a NTCA - Sanctuary; 11a Staff Meeting; 5:30p WBS Small Craft Project
- **12**: 9a NTCA - Sanctuary; 7p NTCA Board Meeting, ESL
- **13**: 6:15p Dare 2 Declare; 6:30p Prayer Meeting; 7:15p Adult Choir Rehearsal
- **14**: 9a NTCA - Sanctuary
- **15**: 9a NTCA - Sanctuary; 7p Christianity Explored
- **16**: 7:45a Men’s Bible Study; 9a Christianity Explored Day Away
- **17**: 8:45a Adult CEF, Youth & Children's Sunday School; 10:30a Worship Service; 5p PHOS Youth Meeting
- **18**: 11a Staff Meeting; 5:30p WBS Small Craft Project
- **19**: 7p ESL
- **20**: 6:30p Prayer Meeting; 7:15p Adult Choir Rehearsal
- **21**: 7p Session and Diaconate Meetings
- **22**: 7p Christianity Explored
- **23**: 7:45a Men's Bible Study
- **24**: 8:45a Adult CEF, Youth & Children's Sunday School; 10:30a Worship Service; 5p PHOS Youth Meeting
- **25**: Memorial Day- Church Office Closed; 11a Staff Meeting
- **26**: 7p ESL
- **27**: 7:15p Adult Choir Rehearsal
- **28**: 5:30p WBS Small Craft project
- **29**: 7p-9p Share Your Faith Workshop
- **30**: 7:45a Men’s Bible Study; 9a- 4p Share Your Faith Workshop
- **31**: 8:45a Adult CEF, Youth & Children’s Sunday School; 10:30a Worship Service; 5p PHOS Youth Meeting
The Sunday Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Sunday School for Children</th>
<th>Christian Education &amp; Fellowship for Adults</th>
<th>Worship Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:45 AM</td>
<td>Classroom Wing</td>
<td>Sunday School for Children</td>
<td>Christian Education &amp; Fellowship for Adults</td>
<td>Worship Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>