

SUMMER 2018

# ignite

A Publication of New Hope Ministries

*Speak Lord,  
I Am  
Listening*

*My heart has heard you say,  
"Come and talk with me."  
And my heart responds,  
"Lord, I am coming."  
Psalm 27:8 (NLT)*



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# A Word from Pastor Grant

Recently a couple in our church offered me a free propane grill. A few days later I drove to their house to look at it and was pleasantly surprised to find that it was very large, brand new, and still in the original box. The color photo on the box revealed a shiny, expensive-looking cooking machine that any macho, meat-eating man would be proud to own. I humbly and thankfully received the gift, and then quickly loaded it into the back of my truck before they had time to change their minds.

As I was loading it, I noticed these words written on the box: "some assembly required." This didn't surprise me or in any way intimidate me. I actually welcomed the challenge and looked forward to the look of surprise on my wife's face and her words of praise when I presented the finished project in a very short time. After all, I *am* pretty good with my hands; therefore, putting together a grill that has a color photo on the box and an instruction booklet included couldn't be that complicated.

My first big surprise was finding out how big the "some" in "some assembly required" was. It took half an hour to unpack all the pieces. There were some big pieces, some medium sized pieces, some small pieces, some very small pieces, and some "stupid small" pieces. There were plastic bags of screws, bolts, nuts, washers, and spacers of various sizes. Out of the box and unassembled, the grill took up most of the available space in my garage.

The second surprise was finding out how many words and diagrams there were in the instruction

booklet. Reading the boring booklet from the beginning to end would have taken a long time, so I decided to just scan over it, look at the diagrams, and primarily use the photo on the box for reference while I put together the big recognizable pieces first.

I started putting together my new gift on Saturday afternoon and worked for about four hours. On Monday, which was my day off, I worked most of the day. On Tuesday, I worked for a couple of hours in the afternoon. What started out as an exciting challenge turned into physical and mental *torture*, but I was stubbornly determined to complete the job and finally finished it, sort of.

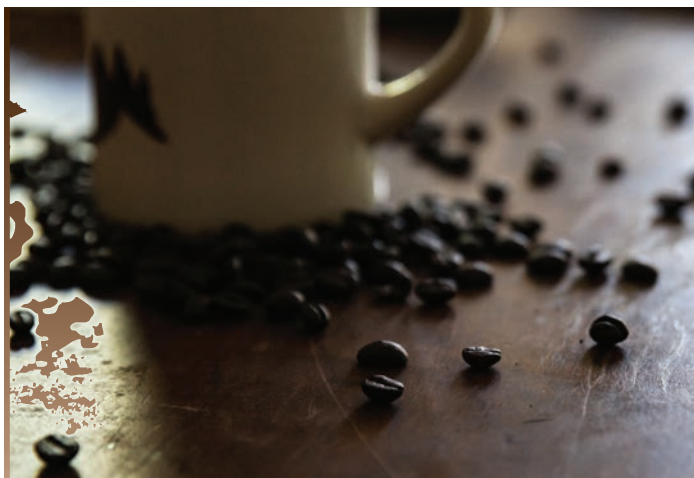
My wife and son came out to see my new grill and just as I had hoped, they bragged on me and said it was beautiful. I relished their praise and told them I would cook steak that evening. As they walked back into the house I threw away all the leftover pieces that I could not figure out where they went or what their purpose was.

Later that evening I lit the burner on my newly-assembled propane grill, but I had to do it with a match because the small electric igniter was never installed. I had somehow failed to put it in, and when I discovered it was missing I couldn't find it. I must have thrown it out with the packaging material, but I chose not to mention it to anyone.

The steaks turned out great and it felt good to see the appreciation and admiration on the faces of my wife and son. They both were proud of my accomplishment and thought the grill was perfect. I never told them otherwise but I knew that regardless of the grill's outward appearance, on the inside there were pieces still missing.

While I am thankful to have received the grill, it required much effort on my part to reveal its beauty and usefulness. In contrast, I am so thankful that the work of salvation has been completed by Jesus Christ and the gift of salvation did not come to me in pieces that had to be laboriously put together by my own good works. The Bible is our instruction manual and God speaks to us through His Word. Reading the scriptures teaches us how to recognize His voice when He speaks.

This issue of Ignite contains some remarkable stories of how God moved on behalf of some individuals who listened and obeyed when He spoke instruction into their spirits.



**Breakfast is served...**  
**Sundays in the Event Center**  
**8:00-9:00am and 10:00-11:00am**

### Esther Listened

by Faye Sentovich

**T**his issue of Ignite is about hearing God: specifically listening for His voice and acting on what He is saying.

I've long been intrigued by Queen Esther and have read multiple books and watched movies inspired by her story. In my research for this article I discovered via various sources that, while God was constantly at work behind the scenes throughout Esther's life, He is never - no, not even once - mentioned in the Bible's Book of Esther. We do, however, clearly see God's sovereign favor and protection over Esther, her cousin Mordecai, and the other Jews who had been exiled from Jerusalem under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar.

This was not a Cinderella story; a young woman dreaming of Prince Charming. Esther was not from a *proper* family, destined to marry royalty. Rather, she was an orphan being raised by Mordecai, who had taken her as his own daughter, when her father and mother died. When a search was made for beautiful young virgins, Esther was among those who were taken from their homes to King Xerxes' harem. These young women were put under the charge of a eunuch, where each would receive beauty treatments for two years before it was her turn to spend one night with the king. The morning after she slept with the king, she would be taken to another part of the harem and placed with another eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name. Although these young women were well cared for, they were nonetheless *captives*. They were not free to visit family, shop, travel, or even have a family of their own.

Life had certainly not been fair for young Esther. She had every excuse to be depressed, angry, bitter, and hopeless. Instead, we read that Esther won favor with the eunuch who was in charge of her, with all who saw her, and ultimately King Xerxes (see Esther 2:5, 15, 17). How did she do this? Esther *listened* and followed the advice of those who cared for her. Rather than having

a bad attitude, she chose to do good, find wisdom, and work within her circumstances.

Because Esther listened to Mordecai, who instructed her not to reveal her Jewish heritage, she was able to use the information to her advantage when the right time and opportunity came.

When letters were sent to all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, and to plunder their possessions (see Esther 3:13), Mordecai instructed Esther to approach King Xerxes and plead for her people. When she hesitated to do so, knowing she could very possibly be put to death for her action, Mordecai replied, "Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther's response was to call the Jews to fast and pray for her for three days, while she and her maids did the same, saying, "I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

Because Esther listened to wise counsel, God used her, and her position as Queen, to save the Jews from annihilation and turn the tide on those who wanted to destroy Mordecai and his people. God's sovereignty is the colorful thread uniquely woven throughout the fabric of Esther's life.

As I studied Esther, I questioned: *Am I listening and following the leading of the Holy Spirit? What am I doing with the favor God has entrusted to me?* I pray that I would view my circumstances, both past and present, through a lens filtered with God's love, grace and mercy; and listen intently for His voice and direction.

Faye Sentovich has been a worship leader since she was twelve years old. She is a 1992 graduate of the New Hope School of Ministries, and has held leadership roles in the women's ministry, youth, and children's departments. Faye has been the editor, typographer, and design/production coordinator of Ignite since January, 2014.



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# A Double Portion

by Stacie Jennings



Jason Justice smiled as he loaded his truck for a day of hunting with one of the teens from *New Hope Ministries'* student ministry. The boy's grandfather would be joining them.

But Jason's smile had nothing to do with the day's activities. He and his wife, Danielle, were expecting their first child, and they'd just found out they were having twins. Their family was about to double in size, and Jason couldn't have been happier.



Later that morning, when the three hunters arrived at the Charlotte County lease and pulled into the pasture dotted with cattle as far as they could see, the grandfather turned to Jason and said, "Do you realize you are looking at over a million dollars worth of cattle standing in that field?"

Jason had no idea that a herd of cattle could be worth so much, and the thought of having his own herd intrigued him. Over the coming days the Lord used that hunting experience to stretch Jason's thinking and encourage him to diversify himself. He didn't know a thing about cattle ranching, but Danielle did; her father had run a 90,000-acre ranch while she was growing up. When Jason talked to Danielle about his idea of starting a herd, her excitement was just the confirmation he needed, because the Word of God says, *By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established* (2 Corinthians 13:1).

Jason stepped out in faith and leased ten acres of land, and then he purchased four cows. Until he could afford to purchase a bull, he leased one. "That first year was rough," says Jason. "I had to learn the business while I was also working full time at *New Hope Ministries*. Cattle died, and we had losses." But in the time of his discouragement the Lord gave Jason a Word for him and Danielle to stand on: *For we walk by faith, not by sight* (2 Corinthians 5:7). Jason remembers, "It didn't make sense, but I knew God had spoken that verse to me. He was stirring my heart and rekindling my passion for the business."

Danielle gave birth to sons, Bryce and Karson; and as the boys grew, so did the cattle business. Naples Elite Cattle Company, which started with ten acres and four cows, now encompasses two hundred acres on three different ranches. With over thirty heifers and four bulls, the company produces twenty-one calves each year. They are fed until they weigh in at approximately five hundred pounds, and then are sold at the Arcadia stockyards.

Jason has gained a lot of experience over the past two years. "I've learned it costs more to make a sick cow healthy than it does to simply maintain its health.

We work our herd every July and December, gathering them on horseback and then giving them their shots as we separate the calves."

Another scripture verse Jason and Danielle use to guide them as their company grows is, *Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?* (Amos 3:3). Jason says, "Danielle helps me think about what I'm doing. When people who no longer want to feed their cattle call and ask me to buy their stock, I rely on Danielle's gift of discernment. If she's not comfortable with an offer, we walk away."

Because Jason and Danielle Justice stepped out in faith and obeyed the leading of the Lord, they are enjoying the fruits of their labor as they plan to expand the borders of their business. Jason says, "Whether in ministry, life, or business, I always want to offer the best. In ministry, that's Jesus; without Him, none of the double portion of all that Danielle and I have been blessed with would have been possible."

***Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs.***

Isaiah 61:7 NKJV



Jason Justice, pastor of *New Hope Ministries'* children's/student ministries, has been on staff since 2011. He is passionate about evangelizing the youth in our church and community, bringing them to a knowledge and understanding of how Jesus can give them a life worth living.

# The Speech I Would've Given

by Jesse Barrett

When I graduated from the New Hope School of Ministries (NHSM), I wanted to give a speech at graduation. After finding out one has to be asked to give a speech (which I hadn't), I decided to write this article instead. This way I can promote the NHSM and people won't have to hear me talk, like they do at every church service. Plus, a magazine article will have a broader impact and I won't be limited to time (although I'm still limited to a word-count per my editor, Faye). So, in a nutshell, here's the speech I would've given at graduation (if I had been asked).

Every pre-conceived idea I had about the NHSM before attending was wrong. I know what you're thinking, *How could he be wrong? He's Jesse!* Well, I was wrong. There were many times when I thought, *Wow, I was way off!* Just to give you some background, I grew up attending *New Hope Ministries*, and I've known most of the NHSM instructors my entire life. Some have been friends of my family for almost half a century. So, going into their classes I assumed I had them figured out and assumed I already knew what they were going to teach and how they were going to teach. I was wrong. The class I thought would be a breeze was the most difficult. The instructor whom I thought would bore me to tears had me on the edge of my seat the entire time. So, my first piece of advice is: don't assume anything about the school, just go.

The NHSM equipped me to be a better parent. My daughter, Kaylee, came home one day and had enough questions on the topic of creation to fill a car ride to Fort Myers in rush hour traffic. At school, she had been taught the Big Bang Theory as one of the many ways to believe the universe was created. She just couldn't understand how people could believe something that has so many obvious things wrong, while so many things point to Genesis creation being true. At NHSM we had just finished *The Old Testament Survey* with Mike Sedgwick, where he gave us the statistics and biblical knowledge to disprove the Big Bang Theory. While Kaylee and I were on the topic of people not accepting information that's right in front of them, I went a step further. I relayed to her what Dr. Patricia Hilliard was teaching us about the Pharisees not accepting Jesus as the Messiah, even though He had fulfilled all of the prophecies. So, my second piece of advice is: attend NHSM so you can become better equipped to answer questions hurled at you about biblical and spiritual things.

I learned a valuable lesson about myself while attending NHSM. I'm sure it's something my close friends, coworkers, and most of all my wife, already knew. I learned that I do not like to be told no. While teaching the *Prayer* class, Gwen Brown shared a story about someone who asked God for something. When

they didn't get the answer they wanted, they asked God why He didn't answer their prayer. God's reply was simple, "Isn't *no* an answer?" That story really stood out to me, but I didn't realize why until several months later when I was talking about it with Gwen. She said, "Jesse, the reason that stood out to you is because you don't like the answer no." My third piece of advice is: be willing to accept the truths you will learn about yourself. Sometimes it's not easy to learn things about yourself, but it will help make you a better person; easier for others to be around.

I want to wrap up with this: attending the NHSM will change your life in more ways than you can even imagine. The best analogy for the NHSM came from Renee Relf who said, "Attending the school is like getting a concealed weapons permit. You don't know if or even when you'll ever need it, but you'll be glad you prepared if or when the time should ever come." So, my last and most obvious piece of advice is: attend the New Hope School of Ministries. Even if you're a new Christian, don't think the school is only for "mature" believers. The instructors are skilled in presenting the material on a level that will meet you right where you are.

Jesse Barrett has attended *New Hope Ministries* for the majority of his life. He has been on staff since 2013, and was named NHM's Media Director in 2015. Jesse oversees all print and digital media, including the church Facebook page, website and *Ignite* magazine. He and his wife, Abbi, are 2018 graduates of the New Hope School of Ministries.



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# Authority Over the Enemy

by Nicholette Brawner

**M**y eleven-year-old son's diagnosis was juvenile rheumatoid arthritis along with fibromyalgia. *How could this be?* Brody is a very active, outgoing child who loves the Lord. I was crippled with emotion, but the Holy Spirit showed me this was spiritual warfare.

In the summer of 2017 my son had recurring symptoms which led to a series of tests and then to Miami Children's Hospital to see a pediatric rheumatologist. Once the diagnosis was given, I couldn't get out of that hospital fast enough. While my son slept, I spent the long ride home claiming the blood of Jesus over him and my family. I had no idea the war I was about to enter, but I was determined not to give the enemy any authority over my family. I enrolled in the New Hope School of Ministries (NHSM) to better equip myself for spiritual battle. Through NHSM I grew in my relationship with the Lord. I learned how to dig deep in the Word and how to truly pray the Word of God. I got acquainted with my Lord and Savior in a way I had not previously experienced. I was praying for, and over, my child like never before. I wasn't praying or begging that my son be healed. I didn't cry out to God asking *Why?*; I stood on what I knew, not what I felt. I knew the victory was ours. I knew the war had already been won. I knew my son was already healed. I knew I had authority over the enemy. I knew no weapon could be formed against him. I knew my son was a child of God, anointed and called.

When the time came to repeat my son's blood work so treatment could begin, I wasn't ready. My spirit was not at peace. I put off the blood work for two months, against his doctor's recommendation.

On Thursday, November 30, 2017, we arrived at Miami Children's Hospital for the results of the new blood work. I anointed my son with oil, we prayed, and I told him "No matter what the doctor says, this is a report and only a report. Jesus has already healed you."

After we checked in and were given a room, the physician's assistant came in and pulled up the blood work on her computer. Without a word, she walked out. When she returned the doctor was with her. He said, "We have no explanation for this, but your son's blood work is all negative." With tears of joy streaming down my face, I gave them my explanation, "Jesus."

Today Brody is a happy, healthy pre-teen. There is power in the name of Jesus!

Nicholette Brawner is married with two sons, Trevor, age fourteen and Brody who is eleven. Originally from San Diego, California, Nicholette and her family live in Ft. Myers. She first attended *New Hope Ministries* upon moving to Florida in 1998. She graduated from the NHSM in May, 2018.



# Ears to Hear

by Patricia Noble

**H**ave you ever wondered about people who say they have heard a *message* from God? Or wondered if God ever spoke to you and you weren't listening? Why else would Revelation 2:7 say, *Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit?*

God has always been communicating with people, before a word was ever written. Romans 1:20 says, *Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature.* So they have no excuse for not knowing God. In other words, God revealed eternal truths about Himself in creation and put the knowledge of Himself in men's hearts.

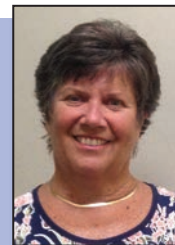
Hebrews 1:1 states that *God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets.* God spoke in visions, dreams and even face to face. Awesome! The Old Testament is filled with the words, *God said*, not in general terms, but in very specific words of instruction to individuals. Can we expect the same? He speaks to us through His Son (see Hebrews 1:2). Jesus is God's greatest speech. He was the message of God in human form, God's way of showing us who He is and how to act and speak in every situation. Jesus said, "If you know Me you know the Father; You are My sheep and you know My voice; and, When I am no longer with you (physically), God will send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who will teach you and remind you of everything I have said." These are powerful statements. They are guarantees that we will hear His voice and will be mentored personally by His Spirit.

The question is, have I read the words spoken by the prophets of old and do I know Jesus, the Living Word? Have I asked to be filled with the Holy Spirit? How much of His Word have I hidden in my heart for the Holy Spirit to bring to mind when I need answers?

Jesus is our example. He was filled with the Spirit without measure, but he had also studied and learned the scriptures. When tempted by Satan or tested by religious scholars, Jesus answered them with the Word. He knew the Author and the Author's intent and heart. He could discern between truth and deception. We, too, can commune with God by reading His Word, prayer, and having the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This gives us *ears to hear*.

God is always talking to us; We are the objects of His great affection; He delights to make Himself and His will known to us. Ask God to give you ears to hear what He is saying to you personally. You will be surprised at how intimately He knows you.

Patricia Noble and her husband, Roger, have been attending New Hope Ministries since 2006. They have four adult children and nine grandchildren. Patricia is a retired RN. She was born again in 1953 and married Roger, her high school sweetheart, in 1966. They have been serving the Lord together for the past fifty-two years.



# Listening to God

God may use unexpected sources to communicate to us, whether through people, thoughts, or experiences. Sure, God can speak to us in an audible voice, but the vast majority of the time He gives us gentle prompts. And it usually takes spiritual maturity to recognize the leading of His Holy Spirit. So, we need to be sensitive and open to God's surprises.

Recently, Kay came across two wedding invitations from years ago. Shortly afterwards, she learned of needs for prayer concerning both families represented in these invitations. Kay soon realized this was not a coincidence. The Holy Spirit initially brought both families to her attention through these old wedding invitations so she would pray for them. God often brings people to our attention as He calls us to intercede in prayer, but we may not realize it.

The Lord sometimes prompts our human spirit with an inner witness from the Holy Spirit (see Romans 8:14). It is important for born again Christians to cultivate a sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Spending intimate time with God is vital to becoming familiar with His voice and leading. Only then can we recognize when the Lord is gently communicating with us. With His help, we can develop this sensitivity through daily prayer, Bible reading, and study. Another aid is frequent fellowship with other believers who are not carnal but pursuing deeper relationships with the Lord.

We should have an expectancy that God desires to communicate with us regularly. He often prompts us as we practice an attitude of prayer throughout the day while going about our daily tasks (see 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Practicing the presence of God, with expectancy, generates hope and helps our faith. This invites the Holy Spirit to communicate with us. Spending time with God also makes us less vulnerable to distractions from the enemy, such as doubt and fear.

God uses His Word to speak to us, especially as we meditate on it (see Psalm 1:1-3; Joshua 1:8). Meditation is simply focusing on a verse or passage of scripture and asking the Holy Spirit to help us apply it to our situations.

God may use dreams and visions (see Acts 2:17). But unless we cultivate a spiritual sensitivity, we will not recognize or correctly interpret many messages from God. It is wise to share a revelation with one or two mature Christians; find out if they too receive an inner witness from the Holy Spirit that a message is truly from God and has been interpreted correctly.

Wait on God's timing and for God's wisdom. When you discern that God is leading you, it may not seem logical. This may require faith, obedience and

even courage. The Holy Spirit will empower you with peace and boldness when you need it. Once you know the Lord is leading you in a situation, you may be tempted to fear. Spend time praising the Lord for His love and grace. Remember, perfect love casts out fear (see 1 John 4:18).

God may use other people to speak to us, sometimes through the gifts of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians, chapters 12-14; Romans 12:6-8). We should keep in mind that a true prophecy from God will always encourage and build a person up (see 1 Corinthians 14:3). It should also be displayed in the love of God (see 1 John 4:7-8). Additionally, any message or teaching from the Lord will exalt Jesus (see John 16:13-15), encouraging us to draw closer to Him.

Spiritual manifestations and messages are not to be blindly accepted. They are to be evaluated and weighed for authenticity (see 1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 John 4:1). We are to test the spirits to determine if they are from God (see 1 John 4:1-3). If a manifestation or message does not exalt Jesus or is not designed to bring us into closer relationship with Jesus, we should reject it.

A message from God will *never* contradict scripture (see Matthew 24:35). If such a message clearly contradicts the Bible, it is not from God.

God may use circumstances to teach us lessons. Evil circumstances come from sin or satanic forces. God does not bring evil on us, but God can bring good things out of evil circumstances. Yes, we should bind the influence of enemy forces in the name of Jesus (see Matthew 16:19). We should also confess positive things that are not yet manifest, believing they will be fulfilled (see Mark 11:23-24; Romans 4:17). But when God allows us to experience difficult circumstances, we should ask the Lord, "What are you trying to teach me? What do you want me to learn? What are you preparing me for?"

God is more interested in our character than our comfort, and sometimes we find this irritating. But we need to train our minds to be sensitive to our regenerated human spirits and God's Holy Spirit. Then we can correctly discern what God is communicating to us through our circumstances.

There are several things that will hinder our ability to listen and hear from God:

- We don't know Jesus in an intimate way, not just as Savior, but as Lord.
- A poor self-image that creates doubt and a lack of confidence that God wants to communicate with us: like Gideon (see Judges 6:11-40).
- A sense of guilt, which is destructive to our faith (see 1 John 3:21). This may be a true sense of



# STAFF Spotlight

guilt based on unconfessed sin. It may also be a false sense of guilt based on self-condemnation that is not from God.

- Busy-ness: letting our day to day tasks stifle our communication with the Lord, like Martha (see Luke 10:38-42).
- A lack of praise to the Lord can reduce the communications from the Lord; God inhabits the praises of His people (see Psalm 22:3).
- Unbelief (see Hebrews 11:6).
- Anger toward God, as Cain had (see Genesis 4:8-9).
- Unforgiveness toward others (see Matthew 6:12, 14-15).
- Disobedience. Why should God say anything to you if you continually refuse to do the last thing He told you to do? When Jonah finally became willing to be obedient, God started speaking to him again (see Jonah 3:1).
- A rebellious spirit, like King Saul (see 1 Samuel 13:13-14).
- We reject the person God uses to speak to us. For example, God used Stephen to speak to the Jewish religious leaders, but they all rejected God's message (see Acts chapter 7).
- We are untrained to listen and to discern.

Praying in the Spirit, using a personal prayer language given by the Holy Spirit, is a tremendous help in developing a sensitivity to hearing from God (see Romans 8:26-28; 1 Corinthians 14:15).

Cultivating a sensitivity to listen and respond to the Holy Spirit is vital to a productive and fruitful relationship with God. We should pray as young Samuel prayed: "Speak, for your servant is listening" (see 1 Samuel 3:10).



Mike and Kay Sedgwick moved to Naples in 1974, the same year they graduated from Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri, and the year they were married. They began attending *New Hope Ministries* in 1990. Mike is on the NHM Board of Directors, and an instructor in the NHSM. He and Kay have served in the altar ministry; Kay has also served as a greeter and on intercessory prayer teams. They have two adult children, Kayla and Jeremy.

Frances Agosto, joined the *New Hope Ministries* staff in 2015 and is administrative assistant to Pastor Grant Thigpen, Susan Thigpen, Kion Brooks, and Pastor Steve McGraw.

As part of her duties Frances prepares the letters that are mailed to our first-time guests, and to new believers. She also sets up airline and hotel reservations for our guest speakers, coordinates board meetings, staff meetings, team building and recognition, and assists with special projects as needed.

Frances also handles the scheduling and coordination of weddings, funerals, benevolence, and baby dedications. She orders flowers, and assists in scheduling hospital, nursing home and homebound visitations.

Outside of the office, Frances enjoys running. Since 2014 she has run in more than ten races, including her first marathon this past January, and is excited to run the New York City Marathon - her dream race - in her hometown on November 4, 2018. She is also a health coach and soon to become a nutrition specialist. She runs an online health and fitness group.

Frances says, "I love, love, love to write and to share the things I've learned through reading and by experience. I have been a blogger since 2013; I write letters to state and federal inmates currently serving time, I write devotions, and bible studies, and I am currently working on a thirty-day devotional for females in halfway homes. A couple of books are in the near future as well: *Sand & Virtue* and *Useful Life*." Reading also plays a huge role in Frances' life.

As a worship leader and a Christian music songwriter and singer, Frances is currently working on her first CD project titled *My Savior Lives*. Songs are released digitally every three to four months, and her first single, "My Savior Lives," is currently available for download on iTunes. Frances says, "I would love to go for a live recording project. I love God and I love the freedom we have to come together and praise Him."

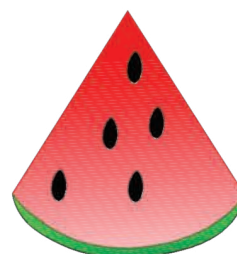
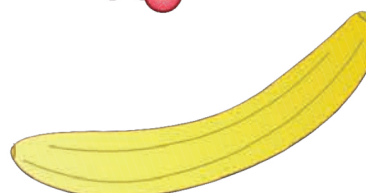
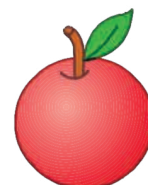
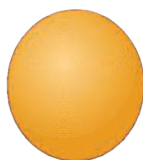
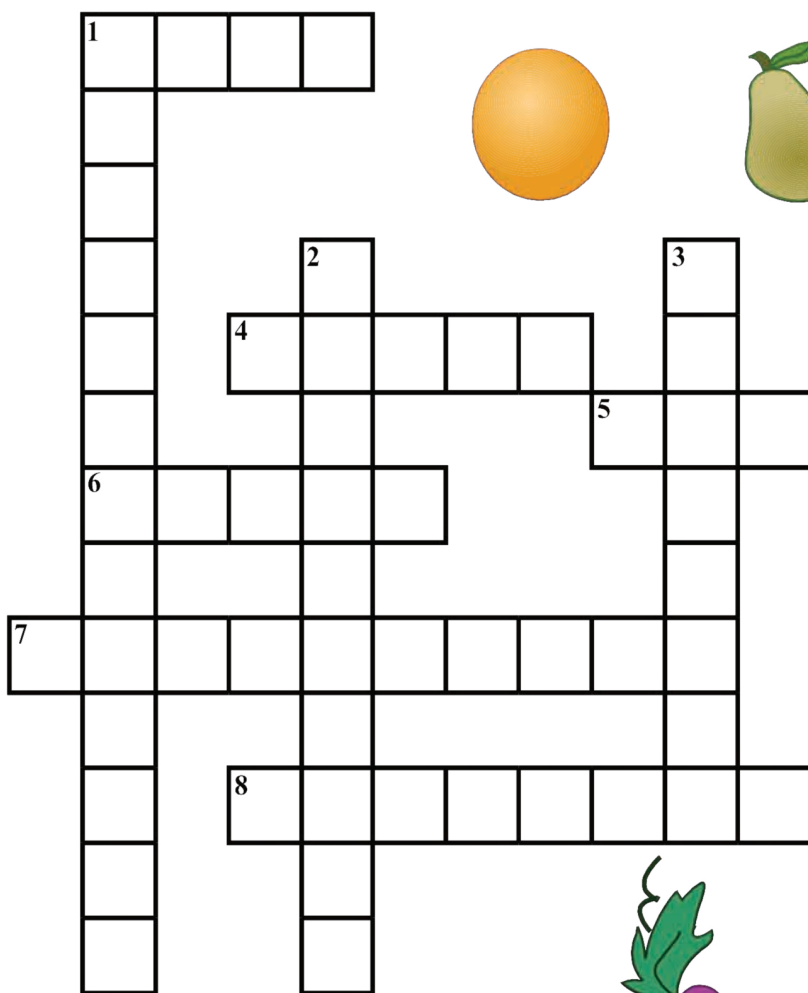
Frances was born in Manhattan, NY, but was raised in Puerto Rico. Desiring to be a doctor, she studied biology for two years at the University of Puerto Rico before discovering that she dislikes chemistry, and math other than algebra.

Frances returned to the United States at age nineteen. Since that time, she has studied business administration at Edison College in Naples and has received her Associate's Degree in Vocal Performance from Edison College in Fort Myers, Florida. She is a 2018 graduate of the New Hope School of Ministries.



# Fruit of the Spirit

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; ~Eph 5:9



## ACROSS

- 1 Defined in I Corinthians 13
- 4 Rest, quietness
- 5 Delight, cheerfulness
- 6 The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.  
~Heb 11:1
- 7 Self control
- 8 Humility

## DOWN

- 1 Patient
- 2 Moral excellence of character; kindness
- 3 The quality of being beneficial; kindness





# Missions We Support:

by Marion Z. Wright, co-founder,  
Living Water Teaching

We entered into 2018 with high expectations as the Lord spoke,

“It is to be the year to increase in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (see 2 Peter 3:18). There is so much we don’t know about our Savior, but we can get into the Word of God, like never before, with a desire to really know Him and the power of His resurrection.

Every day, in eleven countries from Central America into South America, Haiti, the U.S. and other parts of the world, lives are being touched, taught, and changed with the Word of God that *Living Water Teaching* is taking to their nations. Visit the website and look through the information under the Outreaches tab. Click on each country’s map to read more about each country in which *Living Water Teaching* resides.

*Living Water Teaching* was started in 1979 by Jim and Marion Zirkle. Since then, the work of this ministry has grown to include outreaches in eleven countries around the world. The Word of God is going forth by way of Bible schools, evangelistic campaigns, medical clinics, Operation Shoebox, and through the ministries of the graduates of the Bible institutes in each of these countries.

*Living Water Teaching* says, “Thank you for your partnership with us. You help us to go further, reach more lives, and daily fulfill the vision to which God called the ministry in 1979.”

## Operation Shoebox, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala

4,072 children and adults accepted the Lord  
12,890 shoeboxes and toys distributed  
and people ministered to in the 2017 campaign



It was an extreme blessing to have a dynamic group from the United States come to distribute shoeboxes, share love, hugs, smiles, and candy. Thank you to every shoebox partner who provided finances for toys and container costs, bulk items for the shoeboxes, and to those who helped put the boxes together, fill and send them to Caddo Mills, TX, so they could be shipped by container to Guatemala. Several thousand more gifts were prepared after the initial distribution to fill all the petitions we received. These shoeboxes were given out during other outreaches throughout the month of December. Besides Guatemala, *Living Water Teaching* also distributed shoeboxes in Belize, Haiti, Mexico, and Panama in 2017.



# Living Water TEACHING

## The Promised Home Orphanage

The Promised Home was opened last year. Since the early 80s, we have desired to have a home for the orphaned and abandoned children of Guatemala.

Many orphaned children live on the streets, eating leftover garbage and sleeping wherever they can find a place to lie down. Some have gone into prostitution, others are put to work at a very young age and paid very little, but most live in subhuman situations. Many die from lack of nutrition, sickness, and disease while



others are victims of sex trafficking or join gangs at a very early age.

The Promised Home currently has seventeen children under the age of five years old. Not long ago, we received a three-month-old whose mother sold her at birth. Another newborn was found by a firefighter on the steps of a hotel around 5:00 am one morning. These are the types of stories we encounter.

## Living Water Bible Institute

In 1981, the Lord laid the vision for a Bible school in Guatemala on the heart of Dr. James Zirkle. The first graduating class was nineteen students. In November 2017, we watched four-hundred-thirty-eight graduating students walk the stage. *Living Water Teaching* has Bible schools in eleven countries throughout Central and South America and Haiti, and fifty-three extension schools throughout Guatemala. We began a new extension school last year in Nebraska. Over forty-three thousand students have graduated from the Living Water Teaching Bible Institutes. With all that have been taught, there are still so many who dream of attending our Bible schools, but it takes time, patience, love, and money to make this happen. Classes run from January to mid-October.



Visit [www.livingwaterteaching.org](http://www.livingwaterteaching.org) for more information about *Living Water Teaching* and the lives they are touching each and every day.

# Abba Father

by Gwen Brown

# Brown-eyed Girl

by Gwen Brown

In Luke 11:1, after Jesus had spent time in prayer, His disciples came to Him and asked Him to teach them to pray. This is the only thing they ever asked Jesus to teach them. The disciples saw a power in Jesus' prayer life that they wanted implemented in theirs.

Notice Jesus responded not by giving them instruction on *how* to pray, but rather to pray. Jesus said to pray after this manner: "Our Father..." (see Matthew 6:9). This was and still is one of the greatest revelations. Until then the Jews had said their fathers were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When Jesus said, "Our Father," He was telling them they were part of the family of God and could now know the God of the universe as their Father. They had *relationship* with God. Jesus gave them the truth of their legitimacy as His children.

We too certainly are the legitimate children of God. Romans 8:5 says we have received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry Abba, Father. Galatians 4:6 says this:

*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

Abba means "daddy." The Scripture again confirms that we are the sons of God in John 1:12, Romans 8:14 & 19, Philippians 2:15, and 1 John 3:1-2.

Our prayers should always be based on our relationship with God. John 11:52 states the Spirit bears witness in our spirit that we are the children of God. Romans 8:17 tells us as children of God we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. These verses again verify relationship. Now, through our relationship, we can go boldly to the throne of grace to find mercy and grace to help in our time of need (see Hebrews 4:16). Oh, how wonderful it is that we can run to our Abba Father and find grace and mercy every time we are in need!

Pastor Grant recently said in a sermon that our prayers should mostly be listening to what our Father has to say. What a jubilant and blissful truth - to know our Father speaks to us. Jesus said he who has ears let him hear; this is recorded nine times in the New Testament. It's our choice to hear what our Father is saying.

To see the same power of prayer that was evident in Jesus' life, we need to grasp hold of our relationship with God, our Father, and pay attention to what He says. Believe me, when you *pray in this manner*, your prayer life will be dynamic, mighty and effective!

Many years ago I heard a story about a brown-eyed girl and her prayer for blue eyes. I've often relayed the story when teaching at the New Hope School of Ministries.

The little girl once again overheard a comment about her mother's beautiful blue eyes. She went into her bathroom and looked at her own eyes. They were brown, just plain brown. Oh, how she wished she had her mother's blue eyes. Everyone spoke about the special color they were, like the sky when it's at its bluest. She loved looking into her mother's eyes and wanted her own to be just like them.

Hadn't her mom and dad taught her she could ask God for anything without doubting and He would give her what she asked for? She believed. She believed without doubt. That night when she prayed, she asked God for blue eyes just like her mother's. As she lay falling asleep she was confident that God would certainly answer her prayer; She would awake with blue eyes.

The next morning she leapt out of bed and bounded to the bathroom mirror. Her little heart was beating with such expectancy, knowing her eyes were now blue like her mother's. She looked into the mirror. Brown, they were still brown. She asked God, "Why didn't You answer my prayer?" and He immediately spoke back into her heart asking, "Isn't no an answer?"

The brown-eyed girl became a woman who served God wholeheartedly. God called her to India and used her to rescue women enslaved as temple prostitutes. She would disguise herself with a veil, enter into the temple, and help women escape. How could she have fulfilled her God-designed destiny if she'd had blue eyes?

Prayer is not having an open account where we get everything we ask for. Can you imagine what spoiled brats we would become? We must always keep His perspective in mind as we pray, not only for ourselves, but also when we pray for others. How might the answer affect your destiny or, more importantly, others? God knows all and determines what's best for you and me in how He answers our prayers. He takes into consideration His perfect will in the matter. Have you ever prayed a prayer that you are now thankful you didn't receive what you thought you wanted or needed?

God's no is just as important as His yes! Praise God, He loves us enough to sometimes answer no.



Gwen Brown, Director of the New Hope School of Ministries, has attended *New Hope Ministries* since 1988. She began teaching classes at NHM and for the NHSM in 1996. Gwen is a graduate of Naples High School and the NHSM. She has two adult children, a teenage grandson, and is "mom" to Miniature Pinscher (Min Pin) sisters.



**A**s Spirit-filled Christians we all have miraculous stories to share to exhort one another and increase our faith. The Lord loves to do what is impossible in our eyes. He does not need to prove to us His awesomeness, but He loves us so much that He delights to do this, so we will glorify Him for the incredible God that He is.

It was God's total grace that led me to my church home, *New Hope Ministries*. New York City had been my home for sixty-six years. My husband of forty-seven years went to be with the Lord suddenly, on March 16, 2016. He and I had been planning to relocate to Naples, Florida with our daughter, son-in-law, and three grandchildren in July of 2016. Now, with him gone, I had only three months to totally transform every area of my life. It seemed in the very moment he went home, I experienced more spiritual warfare than I'd had in thirty-nine years of salvation.

At my wonderful church in New York, caring sisters and brothers encouraged me, but the battle was strong. I arrived in Naples on July 9, which happened to be my thirty-ninth spiritual birthday. On July 21, my first wedding anniversary without my husband, my other daughter, who still lives in New York, sent the most beautiful flower arrangement I'd ever seen. After thanking her, I called the florist to thank them. I had the opportunity to witness to a sweet woman who let me talk for ten minutes before revealing that she too was born again. I laughed and asked her why she'd let me go on and on and she said she just wanted to hear me talk. She asked if I had found a Spirit-filled church and suggested I visit *New Hope Ministries*. I told her that my family planned to attend a church in North Naples, however, after visiting there I wasn't at peace about making it my home church. I wanted to worship with my family, as I didn't want to be away from them during this unsettled time of my life, but I was resting in the Lord's leading. I believed God would answer my prayers for a new church home and that He used this Christian sister to suggest *NHM*.

Because of the spiritual battle I was in, I desperately needed to find a Bible-based church so I could be under its spiritual umbrella. I did not want to judge a church on one visit (unless I heard something unbiblical), so I asked the Lord to reveal His perfect will for me within two months.

I knew the enemy would work overtime to stop me, so I left home an hour early to ensure I'd be in my seat at *NHM* no later than 9:00 AM. Somehow, I passed the church and drove for about twenty-five minutes before turning around. Then I passed the church again. I have a tendency to drive fast so the Lord had to tell me to slow down. As soon as I obeyed, I saw the church sign. I ran in and sat in the middle section of the front row because that's the area my husband and I always liked to sit. Immediately the announcements began and my eyes welled up with tears. I am never late and God had put me in that seat exactly on time. Five minutes into praise and worship, my eyes teared again. **God had answered my prayer in five minutes instead of two months. I knew that I knew I was home, when my arms reached toward the sky in worship.** That was the first confirmation from the Lord.

The second confirmation was when the pastor stood up and introduced himself as Pastor Grant. I almost fainted because the brother who'd led my husband to the Lord years before was also named Pastor Grant! I was overwhelmed with God's awesomeness. I composed myself and then the third confirmation came. The way I recall it, Pastor Grant apologized to the congregation because he was going to preach on something that half the congregation would not understand: spiritual warfare! Never again have I heard him introduce the topic. It's a good thing there was a box of tissues under the seat because I was bawling my eyes out. Spiritual warfare was exactly why I had to run to church that day. God's grace and peace covered me like never before. Throughout the years I've had many prayers answered, but nothing like this powerful confirmation.

Our God does rejoice in guiding us. He is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. If He did this for me, surely He will do it for you because He is no respecter of persons.

Patricia Vitale has been a Jewish believer in Christ for forty years and is currently attending the New Hope School of Ministries. She is a survivor of the February 26, 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. She has a passion to share about the miracles God has performed in her life. At the Holy Spirit's leading, she uses these stories to win souls to Christ and to exhort Christian sisters and brothers. She knows she is God's peculiar person.



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# God Speaks His Will

by Stacie Jennings

The elderly man gazed up warily from his hospital bed. His daughter and I had just prayed the prayer of faith and declared that, according to the Word of God, he was healed. But the old man wasn't convinced.

"You know, we can never be sure about God's will," he said. "After all, the Bible says our eyes haven't seen and our ears haven't heard the things God has prepared for us."

He was, of course, referring to 1 Corinthians 2:9, so I opened my Bible and read the very next verse out loud: *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. And then for good measure I read verse twelve: Now we have received ... the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

Just as religious tradition had led that precious man to believe he couldn't know the will of God with certainty, so it would have us believe God doesn't speak personally to His children. But neither concept is true.

God has given us His Word, and it is through His Word that He most frequently speaks about the many things freely given to us, including salvation, healing, deliverance, blessing, favor, and prosperity. Most everything we need to know about God's will for our lives is already written in the Bible. But we'll never find the answers to our questions or know all that is ours in Jesus Christ unless we spend time reading God's Word.

Some may ask, "Well, what about those specific things the Bible *doesn't* talk about, like who I should marry or whether I should accept that job offer in another state?" Good question. The Bible won't tell us which car to buy (although it may be partial to Honda products, since the believers who'd gathered in the upper room were in one *accord*); however, it does make these promises:

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:5).*

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye (Psalm 32:8).*

*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth ... and He will tell you things to come (John 16:13).*

God has given us the gift of His Holy Spirit, who is here to help when we need specific direction for personal life issues: *For we do not know what we should pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us... Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:26-27).*

The best way to get the will of God on any matter is to spend time praying in the Holy Spirit - in tongues - and then wait in faith for His response. As we consistently exercise our spiritual senses and become attuned to God's Spirit, we'll develop the ability to accurately comprehend His specific direction, which is always accompanied by His peace.

Jesus said, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear*" (Mark 4:9). Don't allow religious tradition to convince you that God won't speak to you in a personal way. God most certainly speaks forth His will to His children, both through His Word and by His Spirit. The question is...are we listening?



Stacie Jennings is a writer and book producer whose works have been printed in multiple languages and distributed throughout the world. She and her husband, Mark Imboden, have been part of the New Hope family since 2003, when they moved from Oklahoma City to Naples.



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# A Cry for Help

by Sandra Hutchinson

In the 1980s, when I was most deeply in bondage to an eating disorder, I would sit alone in my apartment with a gallon of ice cream and a spoon, shoveling the ice cream into my mouth while sobbing and wishing I could stop myself, yet feeling helpless to do so and hopeless that my behavior could ever change.

When I would get down to the last few spoonfuls I would say to myself, "No, you are not doing this anymore." I would wash what was left in the carton down the drain, then go into the bathroom and make myself throw up what I'd just eaten.

My new resolve would usually last a few hours, then I would get hungry and eat again and the cycle of eat, feel guilty, purge, hunger, guilt, purge would start all over again. This went on day after day and all sane eating and body image reasoning, was gone.

I didn't really know God at this time, but one day, with my head in the toilet and a toothbrush in my hand, I called out "Help me God! I don't want to live this way anymore!"

Even though I didn't have a *relationship* with God, I knew in my spirit that He somehow was the way out, that I could not overcome this bondage unless I allowed God to help me.

I did not consciously realize it at the time, but I can now look back and see how many things happened, after my cry to God, to bring me out of the grip of an eating disorder and closer to Him. Over the next few years, my sister moved in (which meant I was no longer alone), I met a loving man who did not just look at the superficial but at my heart, and most importantly, a good friend introduced me to Jesus.

What was impossible for me to accomplish on my own became possible when I cried out to God and began to lean on Him for help.

Are you in the middle of a situation or bondage that seems impossible to get out of? Cry out to God. Out loud. If you have to get in your car and drive somewhere to have privacy, do it. Crying out to God is your first critical step to freedom. Then begin to listen to and obey the still small voice that will let you know what steps to take for recovery to happen.

Most importantly, make Jesus the Lord of your life, for the Bible says, *What is impossible for man is possible for Him*, (Matthew 19:26 NKJV) and *all things are possible to him who believes*. (Mark 9:23 NKJV)



Sandra (Sandy) Hutchinson has been a member of *New Hope Ministries* since 2005. She graduated from the NHSM in 2008 and now assists in the school as a teachers' helper. Sandy is an Occupational Therapist specializing in Lymphedema Therapy. Her passion is to see people recognize how special they are to God. Sandy maintains a Facebook page titled *Wonderfully Made Me*.

## Business Spotlight Melody Merrymaker

**M***elody Merrymaker* (a/k/a Jackie Nolder) has been attending *New Hope Ministries* since 1989 and is a graduate of the New Hope School of Ministries. She is a former Collier County Sheriff's deputy.

When asked how *Melody Merrymaker* came to be, Jackie said, "In 1987 my husband, Sam, and I were attending another local church which was preparing for Vacation Bible School. Someone called and asked me to dress up as a clown. I had no idea how to be a clown, but Sam said, 'Just be yourself.'"

Clowning actually does come quite naturally for Jackie. As one of nine kids, being funny was her way of getting attention. Tragically, Jackie's parents were killed when she was just seven years old and she was raised by an aunt and uncle. They owned a beer garden (bar) in Pennsylvania, where Jackie would dance on the tables and the patrons paid her with pistachios and Pepsi. *She no longer drinks soda.*

*Melody Merrymaker* made her debut in front of a hundred kids and tons of adults. She was very nervous and about to hyperventilate, so she incorporated her nervousness into her act by asking everyone in the audience to take a deep breath and blow on her. Three times! By the third time, she had relaxed a little and was able to proceed with her act. When VBS was over, Jackie knew she had found her calling and Melody became her permanent alter ego.

Jackie travelled to India with Joyce Meyer Ministries about a year after the country was hit with a tsunami. When the bus of one hundred Americans arrived in the town, all the children ran up to Jackie's window. She thought, *Why my window?* Melody had not yet made her appearance, so Jackie started blowing bubbles with her gum.

The Americans had been instructed to separate and go dedicate two hundred homes built by the ministry. As Jackie exited the bus, like in the story of the Pied Piper, all the children followed her. There were no translators and no scissors, to cut the dedication ribbons at the entrance of each home, so Jackie would say, "In the Name of Jesus," and karate chop the ribbon. By the time her group had dedicated thirteen or fourteen homes, the children had learned how to say *hallelujah*, *thank you Jesus*, and *praise the Lord*. Amazingly, without a map or list of the homes, Jackie *accidentally* dedicated the one house (out of two hundred) with the plaque inscribed, "This house is dedicated by Joyce Meyer Ministries and Jackie Nolder." God is good!

*Melody Merrymaker* is available for any occasion worth celebrating by calling 239-877-2742, or email [MMMclown@yahoo.com](mailto:MMMclown@yahoo.com).



# NEW HOPE MINISTRIES

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### Why You Should Look Into the Coffee Break Podcast

**W**hy a podcast? More specifically, why the *Coffee Break Podcast*? A podcast is for those of us who enjoy radio, a series you can download on your phone,

iPad, or other digital device. As described in James Volcott's *Vanity Fair* article, "...podcasts redeemed the medium [radio] by restoring its creative mind." Podcasts are similar to a TV series. Each episode is downloadable and can be listened to at your convenience.

The *Coffee Break Podcast*, hosted by Jesse Barrett and Danielle Justice and produced by Courtney Hubbell, gives us a glimpse into the "back lot" of New

Hope Ministries. There's a perfect blend of current affairs, discussion on what's trending (e.g. music, food, movies), clever banter between the hosts, insightful guests, New Hope news, and a whole lot of Jesus. There was even a recent contest asking participants to film themselves impersonating a lesser known president and posting it on the podcast's Facebook page. (If you haven't seen Barbara DeLeon's entry, please drop what you're doing and watch it now!)

In a nutshell, podcasts, and the *Coffee Break Podcast* in particular, encompass the entertainment and insight of talk radio without inappropriate content or commercials, and it gives you just enough to consider without becoming controversial. For me, it feels like two of my friends join me weekly on my commute, while I enjoy my own coffee break! --*Jessica Madera*



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