

Calendar of Events

March 18, 2006
Chestnut Hill, PA—Abuse Prevention Day and Benefit Concert (11:00am and 5:00pm)
See the web site for more details.

June 15-17, 2006 (Exhibit)
Thompsonville, IL—Women of Spiritual Praise Conference

August 2-5, 2006 (Exhibit)
Dallas, TX—ASI International Convention

We are continually scheduling church, victim/survivor and pastoral conferences throughout the U.S. and abroad. If you'd like to schedule or sponsor a conference in your area, please call (618) 983-6434.

Please check our web site for the most up-to-date conference information and schedule. www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

This project was supported by Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Our Current Needs...

The Hope of Survivors has many needs on a monthly basis. Currently we're focusing on raising the funds necessary to purchase a retreat center. If you can help with this goal in any way, beyond your regular monthly contributions which pay the operating expenses each month, we would greatly appreciate it. It is not for our sake that we ask...it is for the healing of others. We've had several comments like the one below, which emphasize this great need. Please prayerfully consider helping others in this way.

"I just wanted to confirm that a retreat centre is extremely needed and I truly believe this is God's will. I wish there was one right now that I could go to! I am so thankful you are pursuing this. I pray that God will provide for you all the financial means to get this established."—Canada

Donations are the primary source of funds that make it possible for The Hope of Survivors to maintain its ministry. Since The Hope of Survivors receives no denominational subsidies, your gifts are vitally important. Thank you for considering a tax-deductible donation to further the work of this ministry and bring hope and healing to wounded hearts.

HopeSPEAK

Dear Readers:

So much has taken place since our last newsletter! Praise God for His goodness and mercies which are new every morning. He is faithful to guide and protect us as we serve Him and others. In January we taped an hour-long interview about The Hope of Survivors on 3ABN. After the program aired, we were flooded with calls and emails from all over the world—people who needed help, people who had experienced abuse at the hands of their pastor or spiritual leader. Below is a letter we received from one viewer in Tennessee:

"Mrs. Nelson, I applaud you for your courage to tell your story and the work you are doing. The healing taking place will have a positive effect on individuals, families, the church and our society for eternity. This '...little secret' of the pastorate has taken too many lives. God Bless You! Mr. Nelson, as a fellow man who has walked a similar path, I applaud you. You are a man among men. Displaying the courage to stand by your wife through this ordeal and to have the courage to publicly tell your story is an example to us all. To you both, my heart & arms are wrapped around you both in prayer and praise to God. You are truly doing his work as you help reclaim the broken spirits of the victims. To 3ABN, thank you for your courage to enlighten your viewers about such a despicable offense. It is rare that anyone talks openly about the reality for the potential for abuse by any power of authority in society. Too often in churches I have seen ministers, policemen, doctors, etc., held up as icons rather than the fallible creatures each of us are."

Thank you, Lord, for your abundant blessings and power to reach so many lives! Thank you, 3ABN, for giving us the opportunity to share the truth about the devastating effects of pastoral sexual abuse with so many through your broadcast.

At the end of January, we held several individual meetings as well as a victim's conference in Roseville, Michigan. We were amazed at how the Holy Spirit worked to enable healing to take deep root in their lives. Here's what one man wrote to us:

"A very special thanks to Steve who, with God's guidance, released me from the grips of Satan, as I forgave the pastor for all of his actions and deceptions. I will never forget the look in Steve's eyes as he urged me, with God's guidance, to release the pastor and focus on my children and my ex-wife's healing. Steve, because of what you both have been

through, I believe you were the only one, besides God, that could have guided me to that promise of forgiveness..." Again, all glory and praise to the Lord!

On February 18, we held an abuse prevention day and benefit concert in Springfield, Illinois. One participant wrote, *"I just wanted to say thank you so much for inviting me to come and sing. It truly was an honor. It is so great how God works. Though I came to (hopefully) bless others, it is I who received the blessing this weekend. From the music from the other artists, Steve's wonderful sermon, the testimonies, but most of all just getting to know and to visit with all of you. What a truly wonderful work you are doing. And I know that God is going to bless abundantly... I am going to talk with my Pastor and see if we can get you guys to come to Houston..."*

Many thanks to all who participated in the events that day! We pray God will do even more as we continue to lead others to the hope and healing found in Christ.

Our prayers are with you,
Samantha Nelson

Volume 3, Edition 2, April 2006

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The Hope of Survivors is an inter-denominational nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization funded by individuals who support the mission and goals of the organization; survivors of pastoral sexual abuse who desire to use their means to help others; and by grants from private foundations whose values are similar to those of The Hope of Survivors. All contributions are tax-deductible. Your support is greatly appreciated.

THE **Hope** of Survivors

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It's the Trials

It often seems that either just prior to, or on the heels of, a spiritual high point, we suffer some form of discouragement or trial. These trials are often what God allows us to endure in order to test our faith and bring us into closer dependence upon Him. It was just such a time as this that we rediscovered God's love and care for us—His children.

Samantha and I had just finished taping a program for The Hope of Survivors ministry and we knew God was going use this program to bring the light of truth to many who are in darkness and despair. Because of His leading, we could see how it would bring hope to those who have been torn apart by pastoral sexual abuse and are now searching to find their way back to wholeness and to Christ.

It did not take long, less than a day, before we started to see how Satan was angry and wanted to vex and annoy us. Samantha became sick the afternoon of the taping and that night the annoyances increased. We have a very wonderful, sweet, loving dog who has suffered some setbacks to her health this year, but had been progressing very well. About 12:00 am she woke up and started to make noises and would not settle down. We tried for some time to get her to lie down, but she would not. After several hours of intermittent sleep, we finally put her out of the room and tried to catch a few winks before getting up for work. Needless to say, we woke up very tired, but still thanking God for not allowing her to get worse.

We have come to accept the fact that every time we take a stand or raise our voices for truth, we anger the enemy of God. If this minor annoyance was all we were to suffer for this program, then we felt very blessed indeed. But we were soon to see that would not be the case, for the Bible tells us in 2 Timothy 3:12, *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."*

You see, when you serve God, you will always be under the enemy's attack. There will never be a time that you will not come under his fire. Many of you who are reading this know full well what I am referring to because you, too, have been the object of his wrath or, as one writer put it, you have felt the "ire of the Dragon."

Sometime prior to doing a work for God the devil will try to stop, if possible, God's plan. This was

true in our case as well. The week before our taping, Samantha had a severe asthma attack that made it necessary for us to take her to the emergency room. Fortunately, she was able to receive treatment and return home four hours later. She is dealing with the effects of living in the Midwest and all of the difficulties this climate presents to those who have allergies and asthma.

Now, some of you may be thinking, *"all people have difficult times, all people get sick or, worse, suffer pain and even loss."* This is true. Much could be said about living in a world of sin (being on the battlefield) and suffering because of sin, rather than the suffering that comes as a direct result of standing for truth.

Right now, as I am typing this message to you, we are sitting in a hospital room because of yet another attempt to discourage our efforts to serve the Lord. On the day before the program was to air, I went to work as usual. The only difference was the tight feeling in my chest that I had felt while getting ready that morning. I excused it as probably the result of the flu bug that was going around and decided to just take a little extra Vitamin C to help boost my immune system and hopefully not get sick.

As I climbed the stairs to the second floor where my office was, I noticed my head started spinning and my heart seemed to be racing. I sat down in the office waiting for worship to start and one of my co-workers came in and asked me if I was ok. I told her how I felt and she asked if I wanted her to check my pulse. After checking it, she noticed it was high and suggested we call someone else to come check on me who used to work as a paramedic. Needless to say, it was recommended that I go to emergency and have it checked out as a safety precaution.

After many tests, and the loss of what seems like most of my blood, it was determined that I am fine and will live to have other annoying attacks from the enemy. I praise God for how He is able to turn what was meant for evil into something for His glory and our eternal good. I am reminded of the text in Romans 5:1-5, *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love*

of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." God has a purpose in all things.

Many of you are suffering right now because of what someone has done to you. You may not realize this, but when you became a part of the family of God you left the ranks of the "prince of this world" and enlisted in God's army. Many people laugh and scoff at Christians. It is no small matter to change sides and go against the flow of the world. The attacks will be fierce and the trials will seem insurmountable at times.

It is not because you are weak that you have been beaten down by Satan's attacks. It is because God desires for you to become strong and He will use these trials to refine and strengthen you, if you'll let Him. My grandfather used to tell me religion was fine for my uncle because he needed a crutch. It was not until my grandfather was on his deathbed, facing his own mortality, that he, too, realized his need of a Savior.

It helps to remember you are no longer your own. You've been "bought with a price." That price was the highest price Heaven could pay. The ransom for your salvation was an infinite cost—the death of Jesus. It is only when we view our trials in the shadow of the Cross of Calvary that we begin to grasp a glimpse of the whole picture.

What you are enduring right now could possibly be the most difficult trial you have ever faced. Maybe you're the husband whose wife has left you because of the lies told to her and the deception she is under. Or maybe you're the wife or single woman who has just now come to the realization that you have been betrayed by someone you trusted with the most intimate details of your life and now you feel alone, betrayed and confused.

I can only point you to the One who, by His mercy, love and grace, saved us from the same devastation you are now enduring. The road ahead of you is not easy. There are probably no shortcuts back to where you came from. But you do not have to go back. This may seem like a great setback, but it is not a loss, only a detour. A detour that will take you down a road you never would have traveled if you were given the chance to choose the destiny of your life for yourself. The good news is that we have been down this road before you and can, with complete confidence, tell you that the One who brought us out of hopelessness and despair

will, if you let Him, do the same for you.

The good news is God has not left you alone to face these trials on your own. There is a precious promise in Deuteronomy 4:29-31, *"But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them."*

Friends, no matter what the devil has in store for us, we will take our stand with Joshua and exclaim, as he did in Joshua 24:15, *"but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* I encourage you to do the same.

Yours in Christ,
Steve Nelson



Steve and Samantha Nelson are co-founders of The Hope of Survivors. Together, they share how God brought them through the devastation of pastoral sexual abuse. By God's grace, they seek to bring hope and healing to those who have been affected by this trauma.

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*"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