connecting Word of Life Bible Institute alumni

VICTORY Journal

Issue 6, Spring 2013

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The Second Generation

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The Gospel was sufficient. Don’t ever forget that the Gospel does not take the path of least resistance and to assume a stealth mode. Faced with this kind of pressure, it might appear attractive at times to simply take the path of least resistance and to assume a stealth mode.

Where does this kind of confidence come from? Here are a few truths to consider. First, Paul believed that the Gospel is superior — not some intellectualism and philosophy. Nothing compares to the Gospel. Second, Paul believed, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. If there was ever a place where we really need to be as Christians: “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” Finally, the apostle also knew that the Gospel is simple. “It is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.”

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"Holding forth the Word of life," Philippians 2:16

The Victory Journal is Online
Visit us at wolvictoryjournal.blogspot.com to find everything you see inside the pages of the Victory Journal. We’ll keep the site updated with photos, testimonies, features, and columns by alumni and for alumni. You can also comment on articles and submit ideas for new pieces.

We want to get as many alumni as possible following our Facebook page. Can you help us reach our goal? Follow us at www.wordoflife.edu/alumni, and spread the word among other alumni you know.

Look for:
Word of Life Bible Institute Alumni
Ideas? Suggestions? Contributions?
Connect with Victory Journal:
for reprints, back issues, and other information, please contact us at: alumni@wol.org or 518.494.6000

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Don Lough, Jr.
Chancellor

The Victory Journal is a publication of the Word of Life Bible Institute.
The name “Victory Journal” comes from Jack Wyrtzen, the Founder of Word of Life, who used to sign his letters with the phrase “on the victory side.”

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Chancellor: Don Lough, Jr.
Executive Dean: Mark Stout
Alumni Director: Mike Bush

Mission Statement
Just as the Bible Institute provided a place for you to learn about God, to grow in your spiritual walk, and to connect with other Christians in true community, we want the Victory Journal to be a place where you can continue that journey. We want to build a community where you can find longtime friends, share testimonies of what God has been doing, encourage others with your stories of change, and learn how you, too, can still be involved with the community and mission of Word of Life.

Be part of the Victory Journal
We want to hear from you! Whatever you are doing in your life, how has He led, helped, or comforted you, even in small ways, since your time at the Bible Institute? If you have a story to share, email us at alumni@wol.org. Whether you have a testimony to give, a story tip to pass on, or would like to hear more about a part of Word of Life, we are here to help. We want to see you in the Victory Journal!

What we’re looking for
The Victory Journal features all kinds of stories about Bible Institute alumni, whether you have short pieces of alumni news or ideas for longer articles. Let us know if there’s something or someone you’d like to see. Fill us in on people or opportunities involved with alumni or Word of Life. And finally, tell us about yourself! If you have a testimony, remember when, ministry update, or feature article idea, please send it our way.

Are you trying to connect with other alumni?
The Victory Journal will not only tell you stories about other alumni but will also help you connect with them. Periodically, we will let you know about different ways you can find old friends or classmates through events at Word of Life or perhaps in local church ministries around the country. But there’s also a place where you can always go when looking for fellow Bible Institute graduates. Contact alumni@wol.org or visit our Facebook group to connect with other alumni right now.

Don Lough, Jr.
Chancellor
FROM THE EDITOR

A

lumni Director Emeritus Wayne Lewis seems to think you all will enjoy getting a column from me, the editor in every Victory Journal (and a photo of myself, at some point).

So here we go.

The reason I shied away from putting my name all over this magazine in the past is mostly that I think my part shouldn’t matter. If you are reading and enjoying what we are sending you, you’ll be reading and enjoying it, and the perspective that is all of consequence. (And if the opposite is true, then we just have to work harder.) But as we change this Victory Journal and aim to make it something that not only blesses the alumni population but also accurately reflects you, my role in the Victory Journal’s development might be more important than I realized.

First, understand that I am not a staff member at Word of Life. While I am an alumnus, I live in Cambridge, Massachusetts, down near Memorial Drive, where you can look across the Charles River black like glass and see Boston, a city that has so much hope, promise, and intellect but is really as lost as this world ever has been. I have degrees in journalism and have done everything from designing the front page of a newspaper each night to covering the Celtics at the Garden to editing Sunday School lessons for teenagers. Right now, I am a diehard Yankees fan, a Boston-based national sports website. My professional life right now consists of me keeping the jobs I can get as journalism melts around me. But my personal life is exactly what I have prayed it will be since I first discovered the idea of a life consumed by God (Galatians 3:27). I aim to walk with God, and then to carry the only true hope I ever found to the people I see in everyday life.

The Bible Institute is billed as “a great place to start.” And it is just that — a start. For all that people love about their Bible Institute years and what happened there, the true glory belongs to the people I see in everyday life. The Bible Institute is billed as “a great place to start.” And it is just that — a start. For all that people love about their Bible Institute years and what happened there, the true glory belongs to the people I see in everyday life.

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David L. Duma, Class of 1979

For many years, I could not stand to be around Christians. I hated to see those smiling faces. I just knew they couldn’t be happy all the time.

My childhood was unhappy. My mom and dad divorced when I was 6 years old. I remember them always fighting, and my mom crying at night after the police escorted my dad out of the house. My mom and me three children were left in a farm house with no heat and a bank repo letter on the door, telling us to move.

The Christians I knew were counterfeit. They smiled but never helped, even after my dad left. Instead, my grandpa and grandma took us in. Mom got a decent job as a secretary in a factory, and my brother and I got jobs as kids to pay our own way. I delivered newspapers. When I was 12, I started washing dishes in a restaurant and cleaned a slaughterhouse.

Getting into the working world introduced me to different people, and I made new friends who were not good for me. The Bible says bad company corrupts good manners, and it’s true. I was a good boy who went bad — fast. I finally had plenty of money, but having everything money could buy didn’t keep me from being miserable.

Still, I knew some people who didn’t have much materially but always had smiling faces and seemed genuinely happy. They seemed to like me and never judged me, and I was comfortable around them for some reason.

All these people wanted to do was to help me, and I began to think that they may be right when they told me I just needed Christ. Before, there was no way I thought Jesus could be the answer because everything associated with God and Christianity had been so bad in my life. But these people planted the seed that got me thinking that Christ could be what I needed as my life sank further into the sin issues I was dealing with.

After battling sin and thinking about where my life was headed, one night it all finally came together. I knew I needed to come to Christ.

After a series of events, on June 14, 1977, at 11:30 p.m., I knelt on a sidewalk in Akron, Ohio and asked Jesus to forgive me and take control of my life. I was 21 years old. On that night, 2 Corinthians 5:17 became real: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away: Behold, all things are become new.”

Starting that night, God changed all my desires. I became one of those smiling face people.

I loved to go to church, something I never did before. I loved to fellowship with believers and study God’s Word. A year later, my pastor told me about Word of Life Bible Institute, and I decided I wanted a deeper walk with the Lord. I wanted to get grounded, and God led me to join the Class of 1979.

I never pre-registered for the Bible Institute. My pastor told me that if God was leading me, Word of Life wouldn’t send me home. My Bible study small group at home had a going-away party for me and handed me an envelope with enough cash to pay my way. I knew God’s hand was on me.

I drove 533 miles in a junk car with no heat to get to the Bible Institute, and I was so happy. I showed up the day before class — campfire night.

That year, I got grounded in God’s Word, and 34 years later, I still have my verses down. They stay with you, and you’ll always use them.

I met the love of my life when working in the dish pit at the Bible Institute — Beverly Garber, now Beverly Duma. We’ve been married 32 years and have five sons, three daughters, and seven grandchildren. Three of our kids — David, Bryan, and Sarah — are Bible Institute graduates, and two sons, Daniel and Michael, are attending right now.

As for Beverly and me, we are stewards of a family business in Ohio. That is our ministry. We are called to support the Lord’s work and meet the needs of our employees. I also serve as a Sunday School teacher and elder at Maranatha Bible Church.

You cannot know the will of God unless you know the Word of God. God’s will is in His Word.

It was God’s Word that has shaped my life to where it is now, and it is God’s Word that can change your life, too.

F

Tell us how you ended up at the Bible Institute in Florida.

I came 3,200 miles, from the other corner of the country, to the Bible Institute in Florida as a “job transfer” in 1997. I had been a Word of Life missionary with local Church Ministries in Washington state for 12 years. The opportunity to be a professor at the Bible Institute does not often present itself (after 1.5 years, I am still the newest professor at the U.S. campuses), so when I heard an extension campus was opening in Florida, I began asking about transferring.

How did you get into teaching the Bible?

Educationally, my story begins in 1970, when I was in the second year of a five-year program to become an engineer at General Motors Institute (now called Kettering University, in Flint, Michigan). It was then that I asked Jesus to be my Savior through the ministry at the nearby Riverside Baptist Church. I earned my engineering degree in 1974, took an educational leave of absence from General Motors (I worked in things like “car crash testing”), and enrolled at Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary.

After a recession caused me to lose an associate pastor position, I returned to seminary and then took an associate pastorate at Bethany Baptist Church in Seattle, Washington.

On what earth took you from crash-testing cars to teaching the Bible? What did God do in your life?

Well, I got saved in my second year of the engineering program back when General Motors was the largest company in the world. By that point, I had been around Christian friends for some three years — first in high school and then again in college. I knew they had an inner joy, peace, and purpose I lacked in my life.

I also came to understand before I was saved that to become a Christian meant that I must change my focus in life. I had natural abilities as an engineer, so I thought I could pursue that career, make a lot of money, and, of course, live happily ever after. Yet I was a “seeker” of the truth about Jesus, and I believe the Lord showed me the way, calling me not only to salvation but also to a greater purpose in life than I had up to that point.

After I was saved, I had several long conversations with influential older Christians like my college calculus professor, Dr. Bolander. He and others helped me see how I could become a true disciple of my Lord Jesus. He encouraged me to finish my engineering degree and to get involved in my local church. I worked with the teen program, which was involved with Word of Life, and began to help out at some evangelistic activities in our area.

I began teaching in the church on a regular basis. So, 20 years before I became a professor at the Bible Institute, I was teaching doctrinal studies to teens at my church each week. Little did I know that the Lord was going to use all of it as preparation to continue my work with young people at the Bible Institute.

What makes Word of Life unique, and why did you want to stick around?

My wife, Fran, and I first chose to come on staff with Word of Life and, from time to time over the past 27 years, have chosen to remain with Word of Life instead of moving on to some other ministry based upon one primary observation: Word of Life continues to afford the two of us a greater opportunity of service for our Savior, Jesus Christ, than anything else into which we could be investing our lives! We could be involved elsewhere, make more money, and perhaps gain greater fame or a more impressive title. Yet we have chosen to invest in the lives of the 120-plus young people that each year become our students. It is our goal to help them grow in their walks with the Lord as we pastor them like a “one-year youth group.” They truly become “our young people,” whom we love!
The National Volunteer Program is an opportunity for people to use their gifts and abilities to help with the ministry needs of Word of Life New York. The purpose of the program is to assist our staff in creating and maintaining an environment in which students can be trained and equipped for future ministry, our guests can be refreshed in God’s Word, and the Gospel can be clearly proclaimed.

The program hosted more than 650 volunteers in 2012, including people who came on their own, couples and families, retirees, youth groups, and church groups. You don’t have to be a professional or highly skilled to volunteer. Although some of our volunteers are trained in a craft, many know just the basics or are willing to simply do whatever needs to be done. Projects involve carpentry, clerical work, electrical jobs, general labor, health care, housekeeping, heating and air conditioning repair, computers and technology, kitchen work, landscaping, lawn care, maintenance work, masonry, mechanics, painting, and much more.

Some of the major upcoming projects in the first half of 2013 are:

- Bible Institute: Remodel dorms
- Ranch: Remodel cabins
- Inn: Remodel STC housing, upgrade roofing
- Family Campground: Build a pavilion for the youth program
- All camps: Cleanup and landscaping; volunteers and counselors for camping season

We are indebted to the services of our volunteers. The support they provide cannot be measured.

The National Volunteer Program is a labor of love. Please ask the Lord how He will allow you to be used as a volunteer with Word of Life in 2013.

For more information, check out volunteers.wol.org or email us at nvp@wol.org. You can also call David McClain, our program coordinator, at 518-494-6369.
The Bible is filled with generations. Hidden within the many genealogies and stories of parents and children is a two-fold purpose. People are called not only to follow God’s direction for their lives but also to pass on the Truth they learn to those who come behind them.

Abraham was given a promise, and Isaac and Jacob carried it until the nation of Israel formed. David was told by God that he was just generations away from seeing a Savior come from his line. The Israelites, for years and years, watched their children grow up among them, taking God’s promises into the next wave of life.

In the Bible, one generation is measured as 40 years. That same time frame — 40 years — also marked momentous eras in Jewish history, most notably the wandering in the desert, when an entire generation died away after dismissing God’s hope for entering a new land.

The lesson to be learned is that one generation can fail to continue what has come before — or one generation can turn away from unbelief and forge ahead by God’s leading.

But the best stories of generations in the Bible are those of blessing, where parents train their children according to sound teaching. One generation rises up to follow God, and their children rise up as well.

Last year marked the 40th anniversary of the Word of Life Bible Institute’s founding, meaning the school is officially in its second generation. For years, parents have been sending their children to Schroon Lake, Hudson, Owen Sound, or now Jeju Island. But in recent years, many of those parents aren’t just sending their kids to a school they heard was great. They are pointing their children to the campuses that once changed their own lives.

We’ve rounded up a few students attending the Bible Institute this year who have parents who are alumni — as well as some of the alumni who encouraged their children to go to Word of Life — and asked them to describe why they made the choice to come to the Bible Institute and what it has meant to them.

Not surprisingly, many of the alumni whose children are now studying in the same system that began 40 years ago have fond memories of when they first came, and they can affirm why they wanted their children to follow.

These are just a few of their stories. We would love to tell more, and to hear from any alumni about their experiences at the Bible Institute and beyond.

But, most of all, we want to celebrate a new generation following Christ, as the generation before, which pursued truth and God’s guidance. May we all see another fruitful 40 years.

“His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation.” (Luke 1:50)
Ruth (Nazarian) Zaharek

The Bible Institute was always there for me as an option, but being as rebellious as I was, there was no way I ever wanted to end up going. Luckily for me, I decided to do STC on the Island, and during my junior summer, my life completely changed. I rededicated my life to Christ, and during that time, I realized how much God wanted me to go to the Bible Institute. My life needed a major change, so I knew that was where I was meant to go. I knew I was in for an adventure. God taught me that there are real people in this world who won’t treat you like trash — people who will show you love. I’ve been given such a support group that half the time I’m not sure how to respond to it.

My parents didn’t really influence my decision to come, but they did open the window of opportunity. I’ve always been somewhat of a hopeless romantic, and the fact that my mom met my dad here was the little push I needed to remain patient for a love that could actually last.

FUN FACTS: The Zahareks have been involved with Word of Life for three generations. Ruth’s dad would have wanted his girls to attend Bible Institute, but due to his passing, his wife kept the family involved through his memorial fund. Now my second daughter, Michelle, is there, and it’s been an amazing year so far. My son is hoping to work at Word of Life this summer, too. So each of us has been impacted by this fantastic place! I just can’t imagine where I’d be without the influence of Word of Life.

Michelle Zaharek

Word of Life has had a huge impact on my life. When I was a teenager, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do with my life. I had no clear direction and needed discipline. During my junior year, I met my dad here, and we’ve been married 27 years. Once my husband and I had children, we wanted them to experience Word of Life camps. Even though we lived 11 hours away, God made it possible. Each year my children went was a life-changing experience. My oldest daughter, Kristyna, decided that the Bible Institute was where she needed to go, and we were thrilled. Now my second daughter, Michelle, is there, and it’s been an amazing year so far for us.

John and Kimberly (Neve) Lingelbach

I learned about the Bible Institute at a very young age, considering my parents met each other there. They wanted me to come for at least one year to have a firm foundation in the Word of God before diving into a secular university. Since I’ve been at the Bible Institute, I’ve started realizing that every little thing we do is part of God’s plan. He knows what is best for us, and we should trust Him more than anything or anyone. By the time I graduate next year, I hope God will set out the direction He wants me to go. I will be attending the University of South Florida, and with the Biblical foundation that I will be gaining here, I plan on living for God in all things, especially in a non-Christian environment.

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John Hobbs

To God be the glory for His working in our lives, and we are grateful to Word of Life for its ministry to many. It is far-reaching, and we will know in eternal celebrations the impact we have had on others.

Debbie (Baker) Hobbs

I attended Word of Life Bible Institute in 1985 on a recommendation from my father to know the Word of God in depth. As many graduates say, it was the best year of my life. I gained friendships, was trained for ministry, studied the Bible, acquired godly mentors, and learned where God was leading my life. I was also blessed to meet my husband at Word of Life, which I was not expecting. I can also see from life experience how the Lord used that year to help me have a bolder witness in reaching out to others.

Our three children all agreed to attend the Bible Institute before beginning their careers. This was a blessing to our hearts, as we well knew the impact it would have on their lives.

In 2006, my husband was diagnosed with cancer, and we endured the anguish of this disease for four and a half years. He went home to be with his Savior June 12, 2011. Our Word of Life foundation kept us always trusting, remaining strong, and staying steady in this path of suffering God chose for us. Mike’s testimony was a bold witness to everyone he met, but most of all, God’s Word comforted our hearts throughout the journey. Our children were strengthened to see the faith of their father and how his love for his Lord never wavered.

To God be the glory for His working in our lives, and we are grateful to Word of Life for its ministry to many. It is far-reaching, and we will know in eternal celebrations the impact we have had on others.

Julie Ann Hobbs

My parents gleaned so much knowledge from the Word and Word of Life, an intimate relationship with the Lord at the Bible Institute that they made attending a mandatory suggestion for all three kids. I loved the idea of gaining a strong Biblical foundation, so I went to college to live among people who were searching for answers, so I gladly accepted my parents’ wishes to come.

After this year, I plan to attend Liberty University to study nursing. I hope God will use this year and my ministry experiences to help the sick and injured I will be working with in hospitals. That way, I can share my love, hope, and joy for Christ when people are at their lowest points.


**Valerie J. (Shrack) Donley-Mure**

In spring 1982, my parents attended their regional Child Evangelism Fellowship directors conference, which was at the Word of Life Institute. During the announcements one evening, the director of the inn, Don Lough, Sr., talked about the ministry of Word of Life, and said that just nine miles down the road was a Bible Institute where young people could learn the Bible in one year. It was less than two months before my high school graduation. I was scheduled to leave the day after for two months of ministry with Child Evangelism Fellowship in western Germany, and I was planning to get home just in time to pack and leave for Liberty Baptist College, which I had dreamed of attending since I was 9 years old.

When my parents returned home, my dad said, “I know you have your heart set on going to Liberty, but while we were in New York, we heard about a one-year Bible Institute. You don’t have to go, but I would really like you to consider going there for one year first.” I dismissed the thought, graduated, and went to Germany. But throughout the summer, I couldn’t get the Bible Institute out of my mind and prayed about what I should do. I decided to honor my father and go there for one year.

I had been involved in music, choir, band, and ministry my whole life, but I did not try out at the Bible Institute because I had no clue what the Collegians were, or what the “Collegians” were. Then, the Collegians performed “Revelation” for the incoming student body. I said, “That’s what the Collegians are. I want to be a Collegian.”

But my roommate said the chair director was “really nice,” and she said she would ask him if I could try out. Well, as they say, the rest is history. I was part of the Christmas musical and stayed to do tours the next year.

I would call home each week and tell my parents all about the visiting professors and what they were teaching. By the time I returned after Christmas break, my younger sister, Merrilea, wanted to come for the next year.

After graduation, I went on tour with Word of Life, and that “really nice” music teacher and my friend, Brian Donley, asked me to go to the banquet with him. We were married less than two years later and raised our six daughters across the street from the Word of Life Ranch.

Brian had a great love for the Bible Institute and the ministry of his beloved Collegians. We involved the girls any way we could. We wanted them to love the ministry of Word of Life as much as we did.

They knew they had to eat three meals a day, breathe air to live, and attend the Bible Institute when they graduated from high school. Although Brian passed away one month before our daughter graduated and did not have his own daughters as Collegians, they all kept our desire for them to attend.

Word of Life Bible Institute is one of the best places for a person to set aside one year of his or her life to dig deep into God’s Word under the ministry of many top-notch Bible teachers. The impact lasts for eternity.

**Joanna Donley**

When I was born, I was destined to come to the Bible Institute because I was a staff kid.

I remember being in fifth grade and having to diagram sentences, and I didn’t like it. So, when Bible Institute students would come to my house and diagram verses, I thought, “I do not want to go to the Bible Institute and diagram verses!” But I got over that. I wanted a Biblical education before going to a secular school, so I would have a solid foundation.

And I really wanted to come because my dad really wanted me to.

I always wanted to go to the Bible Institute in Brazil or Hungary, where they teach in English, but I heard about Jeju in a newsletter, and it sounded different. It was in Korea, and on an island, and the community (of students and staff) was smaller.

One major thing I’m learning is to run the race set before you. God has called us to run a race, and we need to be trained. We need to be trained to apply God’s Word to daily living. I have made friends with people who really love the Lord and who have been an encouragement to me. One thing I really like is how close you get to your roommates and dorm-mates as well as a lot of other students. They are like your second family. You can talk to them about anything, and they are always there for you.

I love it here. It has exceeded all of my expectations. I was really nervous because I thought everyone would be Korean and I am American, but it has worked out well.

**Anne (Halbert) Wieder**

I was a fairly new believer and a recent high school graduate when a godly Christian family told me about Word of Life Bible Institute. I had very little knowledge about the Bible and was convinced that I needed to know more and learn how to apply God’s Word to daily living.

Life at the Bible Institute was so different than anything I had ever experienced. As I look back over the past 25 years, I am so thankful that God led me there. I have learned so much through the daily studies and disciplines as well as the invaluable experience of traveling with the Collegians. To this day, I still remember many of the lessons the professors taught us and I am thankful for the godly staff.

I have been married to my best friend for the past 20 years and have three amazing children. As our oldest son heard my husband and I talking about our experiences at Word of Life (my husband was a camper on the island), he began asking questions. God soon made it very clear that the Bible Institute was the place for him. Interestingly enough, our diplomas will have the same graduation date of 2012. Due to illness, I was unable to complete the program. Twenty-five years later (yes, it’s a coincidence), and we will share the year 2012 as our finishing date. To God be the glory! Today, Word of Life Bible Institute has prepared me for real life and real ministry. It is not just book learning but practical, hands-on experience that equips believers to live in today’s world, enabling us to make godly choices.

I teach piano lessons each day and have the privilege to serve God in my local church in worship ministry, women’s ministry, and ladies’ small group Bible studies. The education I received at Word of Life has helped shape who I am and has a direct impact on the way I teach my students and relate to others.

**Brad Wieder**

I became aware of Word of Life Bible Institute from my family. My mom and qunt went there in 1977 and they said they liked it, so I decided to check it out. My parents thought the Bible Institute would be a good foundation and would give me direction for my future.

I have made friends with people who really love the Lord and who have been an encouragement to me. One thing I really like is how close you get to your roommates and dorm-mates as well as a lot of other students. They are like your second family. You can talk to them about anything, and they are always there for you.

I love it here. It has exceeded all of my expectations. I was really nervous because I thought everyone would be Korean and I am American, but it has worked out well.

The first reason I decided to go to the Bible Institute was that my mom had decided before I was born that I should go, so she loved it, and it was great for her to get a firm foundation in the Bible before going out into the world.

I also thought it was a good idea to go to Word of Life because I’ve had a sheltered missionary kid life. (Jay has been in India for the past 12½ years.) I wanted to get a foundation and get closer to God before going to scary America, which is just really different than what I’m used to.

Right before I left for the Bible Institute in Jeju, my mom asked me if I was going because she wanted me to or because God wanted me to, and I definitely felt that God wanted me to come.

I chose Jeju because I love Asia and I love Korea. I have so many amazing Korean friends. And I saw it as an opportunity to travel more with the trip to Israel that the school takes. I’m really looking forward to that.

The main thing I’m learning is to run the race set before you. God has called us to run a race, and we need to be trained. We need to be trained to apply God’s Word to daily living. I have made friends with people who really love the Lord and who have been an encouragement to me. One thing I really like is how close you get to your roommates and dorm-mates as well as a lot of other students. They are like your second family. You can talk to them about anything, and they are always there for you. I have really learned a lot about God’s Word and how to apply it to my life.

The first year, Jeju

**Joseph (Jay) van den Akker**

I was a fairly new believer and a recent high school graduate when a godly Christian family told me about Word of Life Bible Institute. I had very little knowledge about the Bible and was convinced that I needed to know more and learn how to apply God’s Word to daily living.

Life at the Bible Institute was so different than anything I had ever experienced. As I look back over the past 25 years, I am so thankful that God led me there. I have learned so much through the daily studies and disciplines as well as the invaluable experience of traveling with the Collegians. To this day, I still remember many of the lessons the professors taught us and I am thankful for the godly staff.

I have been married to my best friend for the past 20 years and have three amazing children. As our oldest son heard my husband and I talking about our experiences at Word of Life (my husband was a camper on the island), he began asking questions. God soon made it very clear that the Bible Institute was the place for him. Interestingly enough, our diplomas will have the same graduation date of 2012. Due to illness, I was unable to complete the program. Twenty-five years later (yes, it’s a coincidence), and we will share the year 2012 as our finishing date. To God be the glory! Today, Word of Life Bible Institute has prepared me for real life and real ministry. It is not just book learning but practical, hands-on experience that equips believers to live in today’s world, enabling us to make godly choices.

I teach piano lessons each day and have the privilege to serve God in my local church in worship ministry, women’s ministry, and ladies’ small group Bible studies. The education I received at Word of Life has helped shape who I am and has a direct impact on the way I teach my students and relate to others.
Kimberly Easton

It was not until I took my daughter to the Bible Institute in Florida this fall that I realized Word of Life’s impact on my entire life.

Like my daughter, I was active in Teens Involved. My desire was only to sing, but God had a much different plan for my life. I really wanted to win the national competition for singing, but I ended up winning in Bible storytelling. It was then that God tapped me to be a storyteller, and I have been telling stories ever since.

I went to the Bible Institute in New York then transferred to Liberty University, where I studied telecommunications and journalism. I have since worked as a news reporter and anchor in Lynchburg, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

While attending Liberty University, I met Andre, my future husband and Lake’s father. I remember how excited he was to meet someone who attended the Bible Institute and how he had heard we knew everything there was to know about the Bible. Word of Life has such an impressive reputation.

I fondly remember our dating days and how Andre would call me “Lake,” referring to me being from the Bible Institute in Schroon Lake. Andre would call me “Lake” so much that people would compliment me and say my name was unique. I would respond, “Kimberly is a common name.” They would say, “No – I mean ‘Lake.’ Isn’t that your name?”

After Andre and I got married and found out we were having a girl, we named her “Lake.”

Now, I must admit it did not take long for Andre to realize I did not know everything there was to know about the Bible. What ended up impacting me the most were the life skills I acquired while attending Word of Life.

The discipline of reading my Bible and praying every day, scheduling my day and ministering to others were skills that helped propel me to success in life.

Unfortunately, my marriage dissolved, but God’s presence remains in all of our lives. My journey with Christ has come with unexpected challenges, but I have always been assured of one thing: Christ is my all in all.

Now, to see God send my daughter Lake to Word of Life is amazing. God really does design our paths. I am so thankful for the love they have for Christ, and that they strongly believe in God’s unconditional love, His forgiveness, the need to trust fully in Him, and the importance of being in His Word every day.

Lake Alexandria Whitehead

I decided to come to the Bible Institute after I went to camp in New York. I found the love of God for the first time and decided to give Him my all. I wanted to learn more about God’s Word and build a stronger relationship with Him, and I’ve already learned so much! I’ve grown much closer to God than I ever imagined I could. God has given me an eternal perspective for everything. All I need to do is follow Him and His will in obedience.

Part of the reason I’m here is because of my parents’ influence. I was so blessed to have parents who love the Lord. My mom went to the Bible Institute, and she’s just been a living testimony of God’s faithfulness. I saw the love of God and skills she learned at the Bible Institute, and I wanted to be that strong, organized, and disciplined woman in Christ.

Kimberly Grocott

Both of my parents went to the Bible Institute, and they played a big part in my decision to come. They were constantly telling me how the Bible Institute helped them develop a deeper relationship with God. My dad said that setting aside one year to focus on building a better relationship with God would be well worth it and would change my life. Today, I am so thankful for the love they have for Christ, and that they strongly encouraged me to come to Word of Life.

I have learned so much about God’s unconditional love, His forgiveness, the need to trust fully in Him, and the importance of being in His Word every day.

If you want to share the story of where your life has gone since the Bible Institute, email alumni@wol.org, mikebub@wol.org, waynel@wol.org, or emstanbuler@wol.org. You can also visit vjonlinejournal.blogspot.com.

STAFF NEWS

In May 2013, Tom and Fay Phillips will be moving into a new role with Word of Life and relocating to the Schroon Lake area. Tom will serve in an advisory role to the ministry in Florida and will travel with Bible Institute music teams from the New York and Florida campuses. He will also continue as the camp director at Word of Life Island and Snow Camp.

Rich Andrews will become the new director of Word of Life Florida. Rich has been actively involved in the Florida ministry for the past 13 years, directing the youth camp, overseeing the Bible Institute Ministries Department, and taking many leading roles in the Gospel Productions presentations. Rich will be reporting directly to Mark Strout, executive dean of the Bible Institute.
Wilfredo Bobe (’74) is an intern pastor at Greater Baptist Church in Wilford, New Hampshire. His daughter graduated from the Bible Institute in 2012.

Debbie Sansville Fanus (’79) is a special education teacher and teaches junior church. She encourages everyone to reconnect at Homecoming on Memorial Weekend at the Bible Institute campus in New York. It's a great opportunity!

John Walker (’82) is involved in a theatre ministry. He would like to encourage everyone to keep serving, keep praying, and never give up.

Rosario (Ros) Favoza (’84) and her husband have a vending business. They are involved in a ministry that shares the Gospel with people in a drug program and in a church Bible study.

Victoria (Mahairs) Sotoe (’93) and her husband pastored an Inwood Church in New York City. She studied marriage and family therapy in graduate school. She shares the Gospel with people in a drug program and in a church Bible study.

Michele (Lockwood) (’99) Robert Cumbeline (’98) are missionaries with Word of Life in Senegal, West Africa. Michele would like to share that God’s grace is sufficient to keep us going.

Kelly Smith (’01, ’03) has been involved in drama and puppetry with Word of Life Teens Involved. He married Kimberly Nolan last year and are planning an ongoing service to SYME School of Youth Ministry Education in Japan.

Christopher Schmucker, 39, of Paramus, New Jersey, went home to be with the Lord on January 9. Chris was a Bible Institute student in New York in fall 1999 and is the son of Rev. John and Joyce Schmucker of Paramus Bible Church. He is also survived by his brothers Paul, Marc, and Jeffrey. Chris was in the National Guard.

Jeremy Bieskecker (’08, ’09) is trying to establish a full-time Gospel Kingdom ministry. He says that becoming a Word of life student was one of the best decisions he ever made.

Rachael Williams (’11) is majoring in psychology and hopes to graduate next year and help with a church plant back home in Connecticut. She helps with youth ministries in Connecticut and Ohio.

A Family of Bible Institute Students

Shirley Richards

Renee (Hince) Kern recently shared the heritage and legacy of service for the Lord and our country that her family experienced through Word of Life. She wrote, "All of our children have come to personal relationships with God. We are so thankful to participate in deliberate parenting and to use the base that was established as children and expounded upon at the Bible Institute to encourage further commitment to God within our children. Our legacy is truly serving God in an active and deliberate manner."

Hallard A. Hince (her dad) and his family of five came to the Bible Institute from Minnesota in September 1979. He completed his studies in August 1975 and then served as a pastor until 1984, retiring due to medical reasons. He was married to Joan Hince-Erickson, who wrote the Pervasion of Salvation: Idols in the Christian Church. In January 2001, Hallard went to be with the Lord, and Joan went to be with the Lord in 2003.

Hallard’s Bible Institute connection continued well after he graduated. His four daughters also came to the Bible Institute and carried what they learned into each of their life paths:

- Mary Joan (Hince) Fultz (Class of 1977) married Thomas Fultz and lives in Bovey, Minnesota. Mary is in charge of community programs and outreach in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The couple has five grandchildren and four children.
- Lynn Marie (Hince) Danielson (Class of 1978) was working with the University of Minnesota when the Lord took her home in August 2005. Lynn and her husband, Mike, have two sons.
- Renee (Hince) Kern (Class of 1981) retired from the military after 23 years in the U.S. Coast Guard. She is married to Lt. Edward Kern, RN. They have two sons. Renee volunteers at their Christian school and at the family’s local church in St. Augustia, Minnesota.
- Lori (Hince) Christolson (Class of 1982) has been a full-time missionary to Inland China for 25 years. Lori and her husband, Mark, have three sons and one grandchild.

Homecoming

What it is: A special time for alumni to come home to the Bible Institute and reconnect with the Word of Life family.

When: May 24-26, 2013

What’s happening: Evening devotions, study hours, and then on the third week, it started to snow, and it didn’t stop the rest of the year.

Jonathan VanDyck (’94) I remember Youth Reachtout with Rick Wurken in the summer of 1994.

Brad Schmidt (’95) I will never forget the Open Air Evangelism trip to Chicago and the great time we had in the van ride out there.

Andrea (Mille) Barnard (’96) I remember Daniel White getting hit in the eye with a ping pong ball and having to spend time in the hospital.

Tara (Eddy) Spurlin (’97) Housing in the Japan dorm and riding bikes everywhere (skirts and all!) because it was so far away from main campus. All 11 girls in the dorm were close and bonded deeply through evening devotions, study hours, and countless hours of stories and laughter.

Linda (Klump) Moser (’76) Someone brought a sheep — yes, a sheep — into the dorm above the dining hall.

Sylvinda (Birchard) Alfred (’78) I remember when it poured rain at graduation. We rushed into the tabernacle very discouraged, and Pete gave us all singing “Cheer Up Ye Saints of God!”

Rosario (Baez) Faresce (’84) I remember the Snoopy theme song being played on the piano and Dr. Davis’ and Dr. Wicks’ humor.

Jodi Rabquer (’92) When Martin jumped in front of my tube at Snow Camp to keep me from hitting a tree!

Richard Kroeger (’93) I remember when there was no snow for Snow Camp. Everyone prayed, and then on the third week, it started to snow, and it didn’t stop the rest of the year.

How to make it happen: Call 518-494-6600 to book your reservation. Please email questions to alumni@wol.org. Alumni Director Emeritus Wayne Lewis at wayne@wol.org.

Homecoming is based at the Bible Institute’s new director of Alumni Gathers.

April

April 26: Bible College and Seminary, Clearwater, FL; 6 to 8:30 p.m.

April 27: Victory Journal, Clearwater, FL; 6 to 8:30 p.m.

April 28: Victory Journal, Clearwater, FL; 6 to 8:30 p.m.

April 29: Victory Journal, Clearwater, FL; 6 to 8:30 p.m.

April 30: Victory Journal, Clearwater, FL; 6 to 8:30 p.m.

April 31: Victory Journal, Clearwater, FL; 6 to 8:30 p.m.
A successful life — now, that is a goal that should cause us to stop and think, and maybe even take us to our knees as we seek God’s direction. In Matthew 25:21, in the parable of the talents, Jesus says, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” Now, that is a successful life! The master commended his servants for their faithful stewardship of his resources equally even though they received and returned different amounts. He even would have commended the unfaithful servant if he had just used the resources in a minimal investment (the bank).

What are you investing in? God has supplied your every need and has given you the opportunity to give to the needs of others. If you have not built generous giving into your success plan, you cannot be a success in God’s eyes. Think about all those who could be helped if you invested generously in their lives. When you give, you lay up treasures in Heaven and place yourself in a position for God to bless you! What could be a wiser stewardship of His resources?

As an alumnus of the Word of Life Bible Institute, you know the magnitude of the opportunities to support or serve those in ministry. You remember Missions Conference, missions trips, camp, chapel, and many other times in your own church where God placed a need on your heart. How are you answering His call? It is our ministry to assist God’s people in fulfilling this heart desire. Please contact me for practical solutions for laying up treasures in Heaven.

Contact Howard Leach at 518-494-6214 or howardleach@wol.org