Stay Connected

Cover Story:
We Still Believe: Alumni Roundtable

Also inside:
14 Alumnus of the Year: Chris Gnanakan
18 Illustrating the Ultimate Superhero
Warmly,

I am thrilled with all that God is doing in and through your life. Be so secure in His sovereignty and love, you can throw “all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). So you can throw your seatbelt off and rushing to Him. With complete confidence in His plan and an incredible plan for your life. When faced with the cares of today, be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” Easier said than done, right?

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 be involved with the mission of Word of Life.

Be part of the Victory Journal
We want to hear from you! Whatever your story is, however you’re involved with the mission 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 ideas, 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.

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- Alumni News or Ideas for Longer Articles: alumni@wol.org
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**EVERY ISSUE**
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Happy summer, everyone! This issue marks one of the best times of the year, as we welcome a whole new class into our alumni family.

As we put together each Victory Journal, we always have many areas we want to cover. We want to encourage all our alumni, regardless of calling, class year, or location, and we want to keep you updated on what Word of Life is doing. We also want to tell many of your unique stories. It’s hard to find space to do it all!

That’s why we’re so excited about this issue. We get to hear from two people who are deeply instrumental in ministering to our Florida campus (Tom Phillips and Sarah Bubar). A recent Owen Sound graduate will tell us how God is using his vocation in art and comic book drawing to reach youth for Christ. We’ll send off a new class of graduates while getting some advice from alumni who have been there before. We’ll also see how one Word of Life institution — Tours — is developing into a whole new ministry.

FROM THE EDITOR

— Jen Slothower, Victory Journal editor

Tom Phillips has ministered with Word of Life for 29 years, 22 of them in Florida. This May, he began a transition from director of Word of Life Florida to a new role that includes leading music teams from the New York and Florida campuses, advising the Florida ministry (now under the direction of Rich Andrews), and serving as camp director for the Island and Snow Camp. He sat down with Wayne Lewis this spring to talk about some of the changes and what he’s looking forward to. For the rest of this interview, please visit bit.ly/tomsinterview.

Tom, I have often referred to you as Mr. Word of Life Youth Camp. This year, you have transitioned to training the next generation of youth camp directors. Most of our alumni have ministered at one of the camps. How significant is their involvement? It is incredibly significant, Wayne, because it means that they were right on the front lines with us, ministering one-on-one to campers for an entire summer. Camp stretches the counselors in many ways, but I believe most of them would tell us that it was an awesome blessing to see God change lives through their ministry. For one of our promotional brochures, I recently wrote: “The thing that sets our camp apart from other camps is our exciting, passionate counselors.”

What is unique about the Word of Life camp philosophy and program, and how do we adjust to the way students and culture are changing? Well, the philosophy of Word of Life camp is that the Word of God changes lives. So, we do everything we can with exciting programs, great music, and timely dramas to open the hearts of campers to the ministry of the Word of God. All the elements of camp break down the walls so that the counselors and speakers have every chance to be successful as they impart biblical truths.

What do you see for the future? What are some new things we are trying as we reach out to students, children, and families through camping? We realize that our culture in America is changing. Our children, students, and families are more connected than ever before. Their attention span is shorter. There are assaults on the home and the family that we never had as kids, and even though people are more mobile, they are also more skeptical about Christian ministries, especially camps. So, we are finding new, creative ways to take camp off our property.

In the Northeast, we have been running Camp Intersect, which is basically camp for a day. Our staff shows up with a big trailer, and when the back comes open, the excitement of camp pours out. We are running Camp Intersect in cities all over the Northeast, and we’ve had hundreds of campers with dozens of kids saved. It’s an amazing thing.

All of us who have been involved in a Word of Life camp for any length of time have a lot of stories, like Paul Bubar riding a motorcycle down the center aisle of Pine Pavilion and interrupting Jack Wyrten as he was making announcements. What is an incident that sticks out in your mind? My fondest memory of coming to Word of Life Island for the first time as a camper in 1967 was meeting Robbie Robertson at the dock. He was welcoming campers to camp. He asked me my name and where I was from, and for the next 10 years, he referred to me as Tom from Tennessee. He would smoke us at H-O-R-S-E on the basketball court. He would lead the music and make it fun. As a matter of fact, he made life in Christ seem like the most exciting thing going. He would exude passion every time he opened his mouth, and I remember saying to myself many times, “When I get as old as him, I want to be just like him.” Our oldest son, Rob, is named for him. He made a profound impact on my life.

To Tom Phillips:

What has been the biggest change you have seen in Word of Life ministry through the years? The most significant is their involvement? It is incredibly significant, Wayne, because it means that they were right on the front lines with us, ministering one-on-one to campers for an entire summer. Camp stretches the counselors in many ways, but I believe most of them would tell us that it was an awesome blessing to see God change lives through their ministry. For one of our promotional brochures, I recently wrote: “The thing that sets our camp apart from other camps is our exciting, passionate counselors.”

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So, with your move to Schroon Lake, Fay is going to get back to snow! Yeah, I have to say, Fay is really excited about coming back home. She was raised right here in Schroon Lake and graduated from Schroon Lake Central. I just get to come with her.

Tell us a bit about Florida and what you see for the ministry there. I believe that the best days ever are ahead at Word of Life Florida under the leadership of Rich Andrews. Rich is a camp guy at heart and has a great leadership focus. The team there is incredible, and there is a very unique culture with all the ministries together on one campus, including the RV Park, which raises more than $60,000 a year for camp scholarships. By the way, there are a lot of Bible Institute graduates who are swiftly approaching retirement age. If you want to stay involved in the ministry and culture of Word of Life, check out the Florida RV Park. There is no place like it: a great Winter Bible Conference season, regular Gospel concerts, fellowship with other believers, and the opportunity to get involved with our Bible Institute students and Florida Youth Camp on our beautiful 500-acre campus on the west coast of Florida.

Tom Phillips’ Word of Life Journey

1970-1971: Island counselor
1972-1974: Worked at the Ranger Camp
1974-1991: Started with Word of Life Clubs (Tennessee)
1979-1991: Word of Life Clubs (California)
1991-2011: Word of Life Florida
2013: Leading Word of Life Island, Snow Camp, advising Bible Institute ministry groups
Where Are They Now?

Church History teacher Dr. Tom Taylor was a Bible Institute favorite for years, and countless alumni have their own stories to tell about the always-entertaining instructor. Shirley Richards from the Bible Institute's New York campus checked in with Dr. Taylor and his wife, Ruth, to see how the Taylors are doing and to collect some memories for alumni to enjoy. Dr. Taylor has had an uphill climb this year as he recuperates from breaking his hip in October. Please join us in praying for Dr. Taylor’s recovery as we remember what made him one of the best.

Dr. Taylor was a guest lecturer at the Bible Institute from 1971 to 2010, including trips to the Florida and Owens Sound campuses once they started. That meant up to six weeks of teaching each spring, sometimes finishing in Canada on a Friday and driving all the way to Florida for the next week’s classes.

Dr. Taylor took on the nearly impossible task of teaching 2,000 years of Church History in 20 class hours. He had a gift for making all the details about people, places, and various “things” interesting by adding his sense of humor to the lectures. He was also known to give a harmonica concert or two during the class week, which students always enjoyed.

When I worked with Dr. Taylor and other guest lecturers, he would write “story tests” in which the test questions were embedded in the storyline. One line from a story test had a sentence that read, “The painter knew that his church was being persecuted by the neighborhood when he found a cactus leaf on the pulpit chair.”

Ruth Taylor says her husband always found their weeks at the Bible Institute exciting and profitable, with both of them blessed by the Lord, and their happy spirit. One memory she holds fondly is of the time Dr. Taylor said in a lecture that he always picked up pennies when he saw them on the street. The next morning, there were pennies all over the platform.

The 2002 yearbook for the New York campus, which was dedicated to Dr. Taylor, had more to say about the man it called “everyone’s favorite Church History teacher.”

“Dr. Taylor feels that people do not know enough about the history of the church, and he wants to keep them informed,” the dedication said. “He especially enjoys teaching at Word of Life because ‘I can use the same jokes every year!’ He loves keeping his students interested by telling of his wedding day, of which he claims, ‘I barely survived, and it was too much work!’ He loves to invest individual time in his students’ lives and distinctly remembers having Dr. Davis and Dr. Wicks in his classroom.”

The dedication also noted, “He warns future students that he is in the process of making new tests and says that they should probably begin studying immediately.”

Dr. Taylor left those students with some words of wisdom: “Always take advantage of the time God has given you to study His Word, and always remember to set our minds on the things above.”

Dr. Taylor also spoke at many Word of Life conferences and banquets, and he enjoyed fishing and gardening in his free time. (It’s an exciting day when the seed catalogs arrive!) He has also written a book, Your Old Testament Tool Box. I am thankful for the ministry of the Taylors over the years, and I’m sure students have great memories of his classes, too.

Feel free to share your memories of Dr. Taylor on our alumni Facebook group, or send them to alumni@wl.org if you want to be an encouragement to Dr. Taylor at this time.

“Where Are They Now?” is a column that will appear periodically in The Journal. If you have a story to share, contact the editor at editor@worldoflife.org.
As we looked ahead to sending a new class of graduates across the stage this summer, we thought it would be great to gather some of our current students together with alumni from throughout the years to see what everyone has in common. Some parts of the Bible Institute have changed, and some remain the same — and who better to give us a perspective on that than those who have been there for a year or two?

New Alumni Director Mike Bush, Class of 1981, hosted a roundtable at Homecoming Weekend. Here are some highlights from what the wide variety of current students, alumni, and staff members had to say. We could only scratch the surface in these pages, so be sure to visit bit.ly/roundtable2013 to read the rest.

Mike Bush: What is life like after the Bible Institute?

Daryle Bollinger (Class of 1979; Mount Joy, Pennsylvania): When I first left the Bible Institute, it was tough to go back home because we are kind of in a bubble here...

God opened up a lot of doors in my home church — I lead a small group and teach adult Sunday school. I went on a mission trip to Africa — to explore possibly being a missionary there — and I spoke in two churches. If you had told me 20 or 30 years ago I would be doing that kind of thing, I’d say there would be no way!

When I look back almost 35 years ago, I can say without a shadow of a doubt that if I had not gone to the Bible Institute, I would not be sitting here. I believe I would have walked away since I was only saved two years prior to coming to the Bible Institute. I needed that year of grounding.

Dave Holden (Class of 1979; Bow, New Hampshire): Daryle and I were in the same dorm, Japan, almost 35 years ago. When I was at the Bible Institute, I cut Jack and Harry’s hair, and I’ve continued cutting hair since. I graduated to doing presidential candidates, which has been kind of fun, and raising money for autism. My wife and I were pretty busy doing things for missions, and that was really enjoyable for us.

My year at the Bible Institute was the best of my life. It taught me a lot. I’m really thankful for the Bible Institute. I came out here with Daryle 20 years ago for the reunion, and I think I’ve been out here every year since for alumni weekend.

Mike: Some people have the perception that nothing has changed since some of us were here ages ago.

Academic Dean Tom Davis (Class of 1972; Schroon Lake, New York): I think probably the first big change
You’re an Alumnus: What That Means

If you’re flipping through the pages of the Victory Journal, that means you either graduated from the Bible Institute in the past or just joined our Alumni Association by completing your studies this weekend. To both groups, congratulations and welcome! We are so happy to have you as part of our alumni family.

You might be wondering what it means to be an alumnus of Word of Life. First of all, know that it’s just like any other school in that you can say you studied here, experienced life on our campus, and can come back at any point to see students walking the same path you once did. But secondly — and more importantly — know that being an alumnus of the Bible Institute is like being an alumnus of no other school. You aren’t just a former student to us. You are part of an active family that continues the mission and support of the Bible Institute wherever you are headed — all around the world!

Our alumni community of more than 18,000 members is dedicated to connecting and encouraging our wonderful family of graduates as they continue their education, establish their careers, launch out in ministry, and begin their families. This is accomplished through periodic emails, Facebook posts, regular reunions, and through the Victory Journal.

We will keep you updated on everything that is happening and how we hope to serve and encourage you through this publication as well as online at wordoflife.edu and wolvictoryjournal.blogspot.com.

Please be sure to share how we may serve you. As you move onto the next step that God has in store for you, you can rest assured that we will be praying for you and that you will always have a place to come home at the Word of Life Bible Institute!

was when we couldn’t seat everyone for a meal at one time. We used to have the idea of a family meal served by servers, and we switched up the seating from time to time to make sure the whole student body got to know each other.

Dean of Students Joe Schenke (Class of 1982, 1983; Pottersville, New York): As well, in the dining room back years ago we had to sit guy-girl, guy-girl. There was a strategy there. It used to be called the Word of Life “Bridal” institute.

Luke Reffett (first year; Dublin, Ohio): In that, I think the nutrition has changed. There is a salad bar at every meal. I said to my parents, “Did you eat like this when you were at the Bible Institute?” They said, “Not a prayer! We got the chicken patties and that was about it. Maybe we got some lettuce to put on the patty but not a salad as a choice.” I think because of the buffet, more choices are offered.

Wayne: How has discipleship changed?

Dean of Women Karen Smith (Class of 1979; Schroon Lake, New York): I remember during my year we didn’t really have disciples and discipleship. We had two RAs per floor, and they lived in the back apartments. There were no RAs in the rooms, and you sort of met with them, but I don’t remember feeling disciplined at all. I think with the RAs now living in the rooms and intentionally having training we have a lot more of that. We now have discipleship coordinators over the RAs. The discipleship coordinators are pouring into the RAs, and the RAs are pouring into the girls.

Registrar Adam Cook (Class of 1999, 2000; Schroon Lake, New York): That, for me, has been one of the nearest changes. I was a student when we had the staff advising program. I knew his name and where he worked, but I think I only met him once. Now, being on staff and being able to meet weekly and really get to know the people I am discipling has been wonderful, and I have been able to keep relationships going. One student I have been discipling has been a six-year process.

Wayne: Current students — what did you hear about the rules here at the Bible Institute?

Luke: I heard all about the rules — the playing cards and movie theater rules. When you actually get to hear the heart of the professors and the people in leadership, it’s not so much about the rules. It is about a relationship with Jesus. So, it honestly changed my opinion.

Matt Lossie (Class of 2013, first year; Jacksonville, Florida): I came from a very secular educational background that had no religious culture whatsoever. So, being totally immersed in that was kind of like a fire hydrant being opened up on me, which was amazing.

I think coming into the Bible Institute, one of the things I expected was to be confronted with the very Person of Christ, and that is exactly what happened.

Robin Jewell (Class of 1988; Naples, Florida): I think what you are asking is what about the student who is on the other side of that — the student who comes in and wonders what is up with all these rules?

Matt: I talked to Mr. Schenke about this a couple of months ago. I think the focus of discipleship has to be there. I don’t speak from much experience because I’m 20 years old. I think the only thing that can motivate people to do more is reminding them of what has already been done for them. I keep telling myself: love, motivates, not law.

Danielle Romanek (Class of 2013, first year; New York; Kerhonkson, New York): Coming into the Bible Institute I heard about the music principles. I thought we couldn’t watch any TV or listen to any music, but now we have the music standards based on the Word of God. At the beginning I thought it was strict, but then I understood it was the way of shutting out the world for a year and to just hear Truth.

Like Matt said, the motivator is love. Seeing the examples of leadership around campus — it is not just about the rules. It is more what you are motivated by. Did you break a rule because you didn’t want to do something, or did you break it because you honestly forgot or some other good reason?

Tom: You probably don’t want to hear that the year you were here you had to wear a tie all the time. Now we have gotten away from ties, and on Friday we dress down, and we still have rebels coming to class in either shorts or muscle shirts or whatever you have.

Dave H: It is really different from 35 years ago, but the culture is different in that you guys have a lot more distractions than we had. In some ways the rules were easier for us to comply with years ago than today because there are so many distractions out there.

Executive Dean Mark Strout (Class of 1982; Pottersville, New York): One of the interesting things I have noticed is that, on both sides of the issue, whether it be rules or privileges, the human ability to complain is unchanged. What I mean is that the Bible Institute the way it is today compared to when I was here in 1982 — it is a massive difference. I would be willing to bet money if I could that there is as much complaining going on today as there was years ago. We talked about the menu and the variety we have today. I concur 100 percent. The amount of food and variety boggles my mind compared to 1982. I would bet that there are still complaints about the food today.

Robin: I think one of the things we all face is determining what is appropriate for now. You can’t do what used to be “tours” forever because the church changes, the world...
changes, and people receive the Gospel in different ways.

Joe: One of the things we are trying to teach currently is organization. Nobody likes chaos. On the other hand, the more rules you have, the harder it is to remember and to be consistent in those things. But, the fundamental change in all of us when we become believers is that we no longer live for ourselves but for He Who died and rose on our behalf.

Mark: A lot of what we have talked about here pertains to student life. On the academic side, I would like to get a picture of what has changed and what has stayed the same. We still have a number of guest lecturers who have been coming for many years.

Tom: Tom Taylor stopped two years ago — he was here every year for 40 years. Charles Rylvie stopped maybe five years ago and John Whitcomb two years ago. (See page 6 for more on Tom Taylor.)

Mark: We still have some that date back in the early 1980s.

Tom: Ronald Showers just stopped this year. Of course, the structure is identical: three hours of Bible Survey, three hours of Theology for the whole year, 10 hours of guest lecturer, Phys. Ed., Christian Disciplines. We changed the name of Christian Disciplines — it used to be something else about the Christian life. It is the same course.

Wayne: What about the whole thing of semesters versus quarters?

Tom: That really hasn’t changed the number of hours a student has in the courses I had mentioned. The only major difference is we did shift Old Testament to where it used to be 60 hours and now it is 45. The New Testament that used to be 30 hours we have put up to 45. All the other hours were just kind of clumped differently to go from the quarter-hour system to the semester-hour system.

Wayne: Which makes it easier to transfer to other colleges.

Tom: Almost all of the schools now are on the semester-hour system, so it is a lot easier for them to interpret our transcripts.

Mark: Another thing that hasn’t changed in academics is the benches in Council Hall!

Tom: Or the windows!

Mark: What about ministries? How have they changed?

Karen: We used to go out on ministry to the same church. You were assigned a church all year, and you went to that church every weekend. Everyone left Friday after class — it was not ministry teams like we have now. We went to churches all the time.

Daryle: I didn’t leave until Saturday morning, and I went all the way to Fulton, New York, which is all the way over near Buffalo. We didn’t get back until 1 a.m. Monday. That was tough for me academically because I was tired Monday morning.

Robin: It was very different our way. We had many different groups of people who went to different places.

Mark: We are running more than 30 ministry teams right now.

Wayne: I’ve got a question — I would like everybody to answer with one word. What is at the heart of the Bible Institute? What do you appreciate about what happens here?

Matt: I think the heart of the Bible Institute is for us as Christians to learn how to live with maximum effectiveness. What I love about what Word of Life does is that we evangelize. I love Word of Life and its emphasis on the Gospel.

Luke: Jesus Christ is the heart of it — the pursuit of Jesus. I appreciate the equipping.

Tom: Integrity of the Word of God for both.

Adam: Growth and impact.

Robin: Evangelism and the opportunity of ministry.


Mike: The Word and seeing life change.

Mark: Sufficiency of the Word and Christ. I appreciate impact and life change.

Karen: The Word of God — not just head knowledge, but living by it. I appreciate discipleship.

Dave H: Training and teaching God’s Word in love.

Daryle: Growth and action. Many of us learn God’s Word, but do we do anything with it?

Danielle: Making disciples, and I appreciate the leadership and staff.

Joe: Sufficiency of the Word and sanctification.

Danielle: Chris’s love. Word of Life always points us back to the Word. I appreciate the challenge of applying it to our lives.

Laura Raw (first year; Hillsborough, New Jersey): Gospel, and I appreciate that we are very grace-centered.

Wayne: Doesn’t sound like a whole lot of change.

Robin: Something else I thought of was what was then and what is now — the opportunity of international ministry … I think that has changed quite a bit over the last few years.

Karen: I think that is one of the best things we have added.

Dave Rinear (Class of 2008, 2009; Hatfield, Pennsylvania): I traveled to Brazil with Micah, and some of the guys didn’t have a good perspective of why we were there. We were supposed to sing, and we sang in English because we didn’t know Portuguese. Micah pulled us out of a meeting and asked us why we were there. It goes back to what we were just talking about — the heart of Word of Life is to be a disciple and to make a disciple. Every time I go overseas I am challenged again.

Joe: Those trips have another dynamic to them. The trip itself is huge. Another dynamic is the impact on the students and staff who go with them — there is a gap-bridging element that takes place as the students and staff see each other in ways they have not seen each other before. I love it when staff I work with in Student Life get to go on those trips because they benefit our ministry and our ability to connect with students.

Matt: When I went overseas, I kept thinking, I wish we were there longer. I understand logically how that would be difficult. I was thankful, though, because I learned specifically how to be faithful with the time I had been given in the country. For that reason alone, coming back to the States I realized I need to be faithful with the time I am given. We are always going to wish we had more time.

Adam: That is part of the design of Missions Realities — to provide the hunger but not satisfy it. You need to keep going and keep pursuing. We have a higher staff turnover now than we did before. Many former staff members are now in the mission field because they went on a Missions Reality trip and caught the passion for global missions.

Mark: From the veterans of the Bible Institute to the current students, what would be one word of advice?

Dave H: You need to make choices in your life from God’s perspective. God’s will is a lot bigger than our personal interest. I remember Jack Wyrtzen used to say, “Go to the mission field first. If you have an opportunity to serve the Lord, do it.” … I’m hearing from you guys grace and mercy, so just continue in that way.

Daryle: Just keep walking with the Lord, and don’t forget your roots here. Don’t forget the blessing that you had a year or two here. Also don’t forget the friendships you make here. … Keep building the relationships you have — don’t let them go by the wayside.

Dave H: Daryle really had a heart for our dorm getting back together. … There was no difference in our love for one another as brothers. It was obviously the impact of what Word of Life did for us. We were on our knees praying for one another. … Our church just started a discipleship program where you disciple a new believer for so many weeks. When they finish, they disciple someone else. It just keeps on multiplying.

Keep on investing — one person at a time.
A Message to Fellow Alumni

Dr. Chris Gnanakan says he lives by three questions that he learned at Word of Life. He has passed this advice on to hundreds of thousands of other disciples in 91 countries through curriculum he has developed. He encourages fellow alumni to apply these questions to their own lives and to reflect on them each day.

1. Is God’s Word well used in my life?
   “Is my strategy biblical? Is my vision Jesus’ vision for the church? Word of Life gave me the acquisition of truth and the application of truth in real life. Through the habit of daily Quiet Time I have learned how to use the knowledge of God’s Word in my life each day.”

2. Is God’s work well done?
   “At the Bible Institute, I learned that work is divine. Nobody died of hard work! There is value in being a workaholic for God. You’ve got to give it all you’ve got! Integrity should characterize your work. It makes people respect you. Aesthetics and truth go together — people are attracted to it.”

3. Is my Lord well pleased?
   “Like Paul the apostle, my ambition is to please the Lord, the One who called me. Word of Life taught me to live for the pleasure of God. When I go to bed at night, can I see Him raise His thumbs? I think of Galatians 1:9-10 — like a conductor with an orchestra, sometimes you must turn your back on the world.”

Alumnus of the Year:
Chris Gnanakan

In last summer’s edition of the Victory Journal, we told you about Dr. Chris Gnanakan’s journey. He went from being a technician in Bangalore, India, to a church-planter on fire for God, thanks in part to the vision of Jack Wyrtzen and Wendell Calder and a scholarship to the Bible Institute in New York.

Chris is busy blazing new paths for contemporary global missions as the recently named executive director of Outreach to Asia Nationals (OTAN), an international organization dedicated to bringing the Gospel to restricted countries by training nationals in evangelism.

This past spring, Chris was given another distinction: 2013 Word of Life Bible Institute Alumnus of the Year.

“First and foremost, I feel humbled as a street kid from India receiving this honor from an international organization on the cutting edge of church and life,” he says of the recognition.

When studying at the Bible Institute, Chris says he gained a deep biblical knowledge as well as intensive training in evangelism, which he used to take the hope of the Gospel back to India. Through OTAN, he says he’s able to return the blessing given to him so many years ago by expanding the reach of the message of Christ in limited-access nations, including North Korea, Butan, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

The thousands of churches Chris has helped plant through both his own efforts and the training of others will carry his influence into the future. He wants his legacy to be his teaching — Chris encourages the nationals he disciplines to have a sense of urgency about their faith because he believes work ethic is the heartbeat of evangelism. But, while there is what he calls “prosperity in posterity,” he says he is also forever indebted to Jack Wyrtzen and Wendell Calder and his former mentor, Gene Tozer, for kindling his fire for the Lord and preparing to shine that light in the darkest corners of the world.

“The heritage I’ve received through Word of Life was so foundational and formative in shaping me and giving me the impetus for global missions,” Chris says. “I feel equipped.”

A Great Way to Stay Involved:
Superbowl Season

Fall is right around the corner, and at Word of Life, that means Superbowl season. Whether you’re an alum who has just graduated from the Bible Institute or one who pulled the perennial pizza all-nighter many falls ago, we’d love to see you visit a Superbowl and get involved.

Here’s some easy ways you can be a part, no matter where you’re coming from:
* Bring your youth group
* Come and counsel at the rally
* Volunteer to serve all night
* Sponsor unsaved students to come

You can get more information, sign up, or register students at superbowl.wol.org, which has information for each city that will be hosting a Superbowl this year. We hope to see you there!

Cities:
Orlando, Jacksonville, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Portland (Maine), Springfield (Massachusetts), Kalamazoo, Albany, Binghamton, Elmira, Glens Falls (New York), Kitchener, Charlotte, Cleveland, Columbus, Johnstown (Pennsylvania), Philadelphia, Providence, Dallas, Lynchburg (Virginia)
TOURS: A NEW FRONTIER

Word of Life has developed a variety of musical groups and dramatic productions over the years, including Tours around the country and Gospel Productions, based at the Florida campus. This year the ministry is moving away from hosting productions solely at the Florida location, and Bible Institute students will instead be touring several cities with a production called Magi.

Don Lough, Jr. and Harry Bollback sat down with Mike Calhoun, executive assistant to the president, to talk about this new time for Word of Life.

MIKE: Tell me about your passion for getting Bible Institute students into churches and communities with the new Christmas presentation Magi.

DON: It is important to me that we build close relationships with churches. As a ministry, Word of Life desires to serve the local church, and I believe this is one of the ways we can assist churches in reaching their communities.

MIKE: Is this presentation a tool for evangelism?

DON: Yes. This program will be a great blessing to believers of all ages. However, it will also afford an opportunity for believers to bring friends to a quality Christmas program where they will see and hear a clear Gospel presentation. We are building specific aspects into the program just to keep children engaged. This is a family experience, and it was created with the family in mind.

MIKE: I know another goal you have is for us to reconnect with our Bible Institute alumni.

DON: We are serious about reaching out to our alumni and reconnecting with them. We have asked Mike and Amy Bush to oversee this area for us, and they are aggressively reestablishing contact. I want to do more of this as we are on the road with this presentation.

MIKE: I understand you have some history with Tours even as a child.

DON: Starting when I was about 10 years old, my father directed the Collegians, and I had the privilege of traveling on Tours such as Ring the Bells and His Truth Goes Marching On. It was an amazing experience to be up close and personal with Bible Institute students and Uncle Harry and Aunt Millie. What a joy it was to see so many come to Christ night after night. The experiences that I have had over the course of all my tours — I have heard you talk about the numbers. We had more than two million tickets of those who attended all of our presentations.

MIKE: What was the largest audience you ever had?

DON: I think the largest audience we had was at Madison Square Garden — not in the big Garden, but in the smaller, 7,500-seat auditorium. We did three Christmas programs. We had about 21,000 people that day. We did it just like this: We opened the back door and let everybody out and then would bring them in by a different door.

MIKE: Would you do it again?

DON: Definitely! But remember, I did not do it by myself. I had a great team!

MIKE: When did the tour idea originally come to you?

HARRY: In 1975, Jack Wyrtzen asked me to take a group of Collegians out. He took one group, and I took the other. We called it The Living Christmas Tree. Basically, the students stood on risers and held a string of lights that one of the guys would plug in every once in a while. When I got back, Jack said, “What do you think?” I said, “Jack, it was terrible. Honestly, it doesn’t look like Word of Life — no class.” That’s when Jack said to me, “Why don’t you do something about it?” I said, “I’ve never done anything like this.”

MIKE: That’s when Let Freedom Ring was born, right?

HARRY: Yes. I had the advantage in that 1976 was a big year, and the story of Let Freedom Ring was a very patriotic story. Jack traveled with me and did a 10-minute Gospel message at the end. We started out on spring break in 1976. The response was overwhelming. We had taken a giant step of faith. We were in every giant theater you could think of and filled it. We had more than 90,000 people come to see it. There were hundreds of decisions. I decided while I was on that tour to write Ring the Bells.

MIKE: How many nights in a row would you tour?

HARRY: The full tour would be about 40 nights.

MIKE: About how many nights were you and Millie on the road?

HARRY: We brought them in by a different door.

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MIKE: Where do you anticipate taking the Christmas presentation?

DON: We will begin this year with one group in New York and New England and another in Florida and Georgia. However, we foresee us covering much of the East Coast and the Midwest as we move forward. Even this year, there will be a second Bible Institute ensemble going to the Midwest during the same timeframe. They will just not be doing the Magi presentation.

HARRY: I think about 120 days a year.

MIKE: Over the course of all your tours — I have heard you talk about the numbers. We had more than two million tickets of those who attended all of our presentations.

HARRY: Leander Chute was on the tour with me and would count the tickets every night. He was very precise, so believe me when I tell you that he counted them.

MIKE: What was the largest audience you ever had?

HARRY: I think the largest audience we had was at Madison Square Garden — not in the big Garden, but in the smaller, 7,500-seat auditorium. We did three Christmas programs. We had about 21,000 people that day. We did it just like this: We opened the back door and let everybody out and then would bring them in by a different door.

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It makes sense for Christians to be drawn to the moral goodness of superheroes. It’s hard not to be attracted to their strength, bravery, and life-saving feats as well. As Sergio Cariello, 2012 Bible Institute Alumnus of the Year and comic book illustrator, put it: “Jesus is the ultimate superhero.”

Jay Fabok, another skilled graphic artist and Bible Institute alumnus, has found that his connection to fictional superheroes — Batman, specifically — also helps him spread truth about the one true Savior.

Jay had been a fan of a Christian music group since he was a kid. At age 20, just a few months away from completing a three-year computer animation program, he went to a concert in London, Ontario, and listened to one of the band members share his testimony.

“I felt the Lord tugging on me,” Jay remembers. “He knew my dreams, and He said, ‘Jay, you can either continue down your own path and maybe you won’t have success or maybe you won’t. Or, you can give your life to Christ and follow me. I may lead you to different places, but I promise you’ll have a really great adventure. You’ve just got to trust me.’”

That night, Jay accepted Christ as his Savior and turned away from his sinful life. God used the band he’d loved since childhood to bring Jay home.

After dedicating his life to Christ, Jay felt led to go to Bible college. His youth pastor had gone to the Bible Institute at Owen Sound and encouraged Jay to apply.

“Going to the Bible Institute, for me, turned out to be the best year of my life.”

Attend the Bible Institute strengthened Jay’s relationship with God. But he also learned discipline and structure, which helped put him back on the right track to achieve his goals. Jay says every minute of every day he spent at Word of Life was used efficiently, and the time management skills he learned guide his work today as an artist with DC Comics, where he has strict deadlines and is expected to produce the highest quality work.

Another part of Jay’s job involves visiting schools and conventions and speaking with young people about his art. Through the experience of Open Air Evangelism in Toronto, Jay became comfortable sharing his testimony and teaching the Gospel. Jay’s work gives him a unique avenue to the hearts of colleagues who respect him and young people who look up to him.

“It doesn’t matter where you are in life — if you work in entertainment, at a factory, or in ministry — you have to give your job to the Lord and allow Him to work through it,” Jay says.

“Through my time at Snow Camp and summer camp, the Bible Institute put a burden on my heart for today’s youth,” he says. “My industry is about messaging toward youth, so I’m able to meet them face-to-face. I’m able to use my art as an ‘in’ to reach young people with the Gospel and grow them in their relationship with the Lord.”
1980s

Bruce Compton (’75) has served 30 years with the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey.

Melanie Bennett (’77) is a reading specialist serving at community centers in inner city Lansing, Michigan.

Caroline (Sims) Jones (’76) graduated with a degree in Biblical Counseling from Christian Heritage College, where she met her husband, a Navy captain. They have four daughters, whom she homeschooled from start to finish. One is a senior and another graduated from the Bible Institute last year.

Linda (Klump) Moser (’76) works in the kitchen of a local school. She and her husband are very involved with college-age adults at their church. Her youngest son graduated from the Bible Institute in 2010.

Sylinda (Birchard) Alfred (’78) homeschools her children. Four of the five have graduated. She is a leader in a homeschool support group.

Linda (Romsey) Wobbrink (’79) is teaching at the Lynchburg General Hospital School of Nursing. She and her husband, Larry, have two sons, Joe (19) and Chris (17).

Margaret Helffen (’79) is a member at Hyland Heights Baptist Church, where she is involved in the choir, baptism ministry, welcome ministry, and living cross ministry. She works as a hospital service coordinator for Medical Associates of Central Virginia. She has three children (Daniel Paul, David Here, and Elia Elizabeth).

Daryl Swartley (’80) is a Discipleship Action leader. He gardens and runs food services for Central Virginia Community College.

Jason Shugur (’89) is married to Lynn and has two children, Sarah and Jack. He is a classroom teacher, loves horseback riding, and plays guitar on the worship team at church.

Kimberly Lingebach (’88) runs a babysitting service and runs her own business.

Hope Compton (’84) is working at Bethel Baptist Church in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

Dave Eger (’86, ’88) has been on area missionary with Word of Life since 1988. He and his wife, Anita (Scott) Eger, Class of 1986, have two children, Brandon and Emily. Brandon is in second year in New York now after doing first year in Florida.

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Bennie (Low) Coelle (’95) married Eddie Coelle in 2002 and is a first grade teacher in Amherst County, Virginia.

Tracey Fox (’95) is teaching at Faith Christian Academy in Hurt, Virginia. The Bible Institute came for a school chapel, and she would like them to come again.

James Lane (’95) is a senior chaplain in Painesville, Ohio, and is working on a doctorate in ministry at Baptist Bible Seminary. He has five wonderful children: Susanne (23), James (21), Sarah (18), Rochel (13), and Rebekah (10).

Andrea (Millar) Barnard (’96) has worked at Lake City Bank as an expert float for the past five years. She loves to spend time with her family and encourages other alumni to continue holding forth the Word of Life.

Ruth (Rozelle) Adams (’98) is a nursery coordinator at her church. She is taking care of her husband, three boys, and a small hobby farm. She enjoys scrapbooking.

Tom Boyd (’98) is serving the Lord in prayer group, Bible Studies, and more. He has been married for 22 years and has two children.

Caroline Cahoon (’99, ’00) graduated with a bachelor’s degree in global apologetics at Arlington Baptist College in Texas.

Christopher Bowles (’05) is a youth pastor and an ordained minister. He is pursuing his masters in global apologetics at Arlington Baptist College in Texas.

John Turner (’06, ’07) is a youth leader and is pursuing a teaching career.

Beth (Lundin) and Dustan Horst (’08) are Word of Life area missionaries in Southern Ohio. They are having their first child in March. They would love to connect with you and your church to see how they can partner with your ministry.

Rebecca DeWitt (’00) is the senior pastor at Dolton Baptist Church in Chicago. She is serving the Lord in prayer group, Bible Studies, and more. She has been married for 22 years and has two children.

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Jared Burre (’08) is the Director of Public Relations at Appalachian Bible College.
Dr. Sumner Wemp, a beloved Bible Institute lecturer and bold voice for Christ for many years, went home to be with the Lord on December 25, 2012. He was born Clifford Sumner Wemp II on October 26, 1922, in Rochester, New York, and moved to Jacksonville, Florida, soon after.

When he was 17, Dr. Wemp accepted Christ as his Savior and, as he said many times, “He never got over it.” He was called to ministry and embarked on a long scholastic career that included many degrees, with stops at Bryan College, Samford University (then called Howard College), Dallas Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, California Graduate School of Theology, and Liberty University.

While at Dallas Theological Seminary in 1946, he met Celeste Magee Zimmerman at Scofield Memorial Church. The two were married for 63 years, ministering together in mentoring students and developing leaders, and they shared their love for missions around the world.

Dr. Wemp taught Personal Evangelism at the Bible Institute in 1988, 1990-1992, 1996, and 1998-2002. He wrote several books and many Gospel tracts, the most well known being his tract Your Ticket to Heaven.

In retirement, Dr. Wemp was active in encouraging and mentoring, and the same passion he showed in ministry was evident in his daily life, where he cared for friends and caretakers and regularly shared the Gospel.

Watch a video from September 2012, where Sumner Wemp shows that he not only still had a zest for life and Jesus but was also busy trying to convert whoever would enter his home: bit.ly/12jcPUJ

Sharon Wagoner
The New York campus said goodbye to a familiar face this year. Sharon Wagoner retired in February after serving as the school’s registrar since July 1997. Before that, she was the assistant dean of women in New York for 12 years.

Sharon was also active in her local church, Mountainside Bible Chapel, where she served as the church clerk and in the ladies’ missionary fellowship. Sharon is now heading to Sarasota, Florida to be with the Lord on December 25, 2012.

Euanna Pigford, who has served with Word of Life in some way for the past 47 years, finished up as the Bible Institute’s music coordinator in May and will retire from Word of Life at the end of this summer. Euanna has loved working with the students at the Bible Institute. She says, “My job is to prepare students for service after the Bible Institute.” She knows that God has placed us where we are for a reason and that we never know how He will use us. She has had an incredible influence in the lives of thousands of young people.

“Miss Pigford is one of the greatest encouragers I have ever met. Her inspiring optimism and love for people came from a desire to please her Savior. By modeling this, she taught us to have a passion for service and ministry for an audience of One.”

— Michael Kilbride, Class of 2009 and 2011

“Euanna always had a passion for musical excellence. She never would settle for merely OK or good, because she strives for the best. Combine that with her incredible loving spirit for her students, and she was not only a great teacher but also a good friend.”

— Dan Laugh, Jr.

“Sharon had the office right across from mine and typically got in very early most mornings. Sometimes I would try to slip by her door and into the office unnoticed, but invariably I would hear a cheery voice say, ‘Good morning.’ It was always a good reminder to me that we were a team at the Bible Institute, and keeping to ourselves was not an option.”

— Dr. Marshall Wicks
Passing It On
By Dave Keesling, cofounder of PhilanthroCorp

*Word of Life* wants to provide alumni with not only encouragement but also practical advice. This section focuses on stewardship, and, specifically, the measures *Word of Life* has set up to help people make wise choices for themselves, their families, and ministries they choose to support.

The things we accumulate over our lifetime — money, personal possessions, property — are simply gifts from God, entrusted to us to manage as His servants. But there comes a time when we all must make plans for transferring our wealth and responsibility to others, as God’s stewards. That’s what estate planning is all about — a process of determining to whom we will transfer stewardship of our property when we will no longer be in a position to exercise stewardship on our own. For the Christian, estate planning is maybe the most important act of stewardship he or she will ever undertake.

In my experience, each of us has three basic choices we can make in deciding who will take over our stewardship responsibilities. We can transfer stewardship of our resources: (1) to loved ones (2) to ministries that have impacted us and that have potential to continue impacting the world and (3) to the Internal Revenue Service.

Today, let’s take a brief look at the first of the three choices.

Gifts to children and other loved ones are a natural extension of our relationship with them. Those with children or a dependent spouse have a mandate from Scripture to take care of their dependents (1 Timothy 5:8).

As children mature, the period of dependency normally comes to a close. Gifts made after that are not for the purpose of fulfilling dependency responsibilities, but they are still an appropriate, God-honoring expression of love.

Wise parents sometimes choose to treat children differently from one another, depending on the impact that the parent feels that money, or lack of it, will have in a child’s life. That may sound like a radical idea at first, but when the estate transfer is viewed as a matter of stewardship, such considerations take on great importance.

Deciding how much is enough and how to leave it to make the most favorable impact is the core of estate planning for the Christian. Answers are not always easy, but the process can be rewarding.

Another unique option in estate planning is to “add another child” to your estate. The idea here is to “adopt” one or more ministries that you would like to remember in your estate and treat them as other children in your own family. This way, as you make your estate plans, all of your “children” receive special, heartfelt consideration.

*Word of Life* has partnered with PhilanthroCorp, a Christ-centered estate planning firm, to help you take care of your most important asset: your family. To ensure that your estate plan is still following your wishes or to take the first step in creating your will or trust, contact PhilanthroCorp at 800-876-7958. An estate specialist from PhilanthroCorp will work with you to determine a plan that fits you best.