

# SMI *From My Perspective...*

It has been said that the moment we begin to expect is the moment we run ahead of God. So does this mean that we should not have expectations or that our expectations are unbiblical? Not necessarily. It's okay to have expectations – to dream of pursuing our passions and accomplishing goals, to anticipate the future, even picturing it, but if these expectations become demands, we've stepped beyond God and into self-will. I think there is a fine line between expectations of realized hope in God's plans and purposes for what we do versus the expectations of self-ordained wishes. That line is often so easily blurred that it is difficult to discern at times the foundation of our expectations – our ego or will, or God's glory. Are we trusting in the flesh or God? One results in faith. The other results in frustration. One brings about dependency. The other fosters resentment. One stems from humility. The other is birthed from pride.

Allowing anything other than God to determine our expectations can only lead to disappointment and destruction. God's expectations are not always the same as the world's expectations or even ours. In the Bible, it was expected that Jonathan – son of Saul & Prince of Israel – would be the next king of Israel. Many were in disbelief when David was selected to be the next king by the prophet Samuel because David was young, inexperienced and not as handsome as one would expect for a king. Impressively, though, Jonathan was not threatened by this. He accepted God's plan fully – humbly setting aside his own aspirations and participating in God's plan by loyally offering his friendship and support. For the Pharisees, though, it was their expectations of the Messiah that kept them from realizing that He was right before their very eyes. Their expectancy was rooted in their own understanding. Their self-ordained wishes blinded them from seeing and experiencing God's plan. Can you imagine having Christ standing before you but not knowing or believing it because it didn't line up with your expectations?!

The relevant question is this: Is our expectancy rooted in God? If so, we will probably be led down paths we wouldn't have predicted. We will learn the discipline of assessing our motives and asking open-ended questions with complete abandonment before God, letting go of our preconceived notions. We will accept His hand of direction – even when it doesn't seem logical – with a willingness to follow regardless of the world's definition of success or achievement and regardless of the results. And we will look to His eyes for approval and receive from His hand the blessings that will lead us to rewards we never could have dreamed.

Together, let's ask God to help His plans be our plans and that we'll be faithful (and get out of the way sometimes) so that He can accomplish His work through us, even when it doesn't bring praise from man.

Jimmy R. West  
Executive Director

## MINISTRY FOCUS

*Normally, we would utilize this space to spotlight a particular ministry project of one of SMI's student contractors allowing you to see God at work in individual lives. However, we feel it is appropriate to take an opportunity to share with you an extraordinary story of a seminary alumni and fellow minister.*

### The Unexpected Reading of an Unsuspected Story

We met Ben Sheeran while being fitted for a suit at a specialty shop for men's clothing. Through conversation, we realized common ground. Both we and our spouses had been called of God to ministry—we were just embarking on our journey of seminary training, they had been in ministry for 10 years. Ben and his wife had graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. At that time, she served as Minister of Education at a larger church in town. Ben was pastoring bi-vocationally at Hochheim Baptist Church in Hochheim, Texas—a tiny town of 70 people just down the road. Shortly after our encounter, I had the privilege of preaching in Ben's place one Sunday and experiencing this small congregation of 30 firsthand. It was obvious this close knit family of believers missed their loved and respected pastor.

What is striking about Ben's story is that he holds a Doctorate in Ministry from Southwestern as well. With a doctorate, you wouldn't expect this unsuspecting little church to have the blessing of such a gifted and trained pastor committed to shepherding their flock. What is amazing is Ben's willingness to be used of God in an unlikely place. After 18 years of pastoring this church, Ben states: "It's been one of the greatest experiences of my life & a great honor to get to know every one of them. If you don't view ministry as an emotional investment in people, you're in ministry for the wrong reasons. Admittedly, there have been times when I wanted to go to a larger church, but days like today [having performed a funeral]—when I can cry because I've just lost a friend—I know I'm where God wants me to be. Yes, sometimes it can be frustrating because it's hard to see God's will versus our will."

We are thankful we met Ben early in our ministry life and continue to be blessed by his example. His call to ministry and his obedience in following God openly still impacts us today. Thank you, Ben, for your humble heart and serving spirit. May we all follow as willingly.

*Ben and his wife Evelyn live with their two children in Victoria, Texas. He currently teaches World History at Memorial High School and thrives on ministering daily through opportunities to impact young people in the classroom. On Sundays, Ben still commits his pastoral skills and training to Hochheim Baptist Church.*

Hope that is pinned to God, rather than people [or circumstances],  
has a buoyancy to it because it is grounded  
— not in our own illusion of how our story should read —  
but in the character of God.

A sense of expectancy rooted in the goodness of God  
keeps hope alive.

*Strong Women, Soft Hearts by Paula Rinchart*

### • Got Free Minutes?

If you have free minutes with your cell phone plan, please help SMI with stewardship of its resources by utilizing your free cell phone minutes rather than accruing long distance charges to SMI by utilizing the toll free number. Of course our 800 number is available to those students who need its access, but for those who can assist in this way, we would greatly appreciate it. This is a small but significant way you can bless SMI for its services and ministry.



### • Tax Guides/Sources

SMI provides to its students a free source regarding taxes and support raising. There is a limited supply of the [2006 Zondervan's Tax Guide](#) remaining. If you are interested in receiving one, contact the SMI office to request your copy.

### • Ministry Needs:

SMI seeks donations to provide marketing resources.  
SMI seeks ministry partners to help support operations  
SMI seeks board members with corporate mindsets who share our passion of investing in the next generation of ministers  
SMI seeks donations to provide refinement resources for our student ministers  
SMI seeks donations to underwrite staff salaries fostering intentionality in offering aid and accountability to our students through our InReach efforts

### • Spread the Word!

If you know of someone who can benefit from the ministry of SMI, please tell them about our ministry. Remember, it's not just students who can benefit—churches as well as schools and individuals benefit also.

SMI  
website



update

Expected launch:  
Summer 2006

Refining our communications  
to better facilitate  
the possibilities —  
for those  
who dare to dream.

coming soon

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## *Our Vision*

Our hope is that students will not only be blessed financially through SMI but they will be enriched spiritually and personally as well. During the time God has entrusted them to our care, our primary focus is to invest in this next generation of ministers. Our goal is to provide relevant resources to encourage and enhance their personal and professional growth. It is our desire that this investment in tomorrow's ministers will retain life-long effects with far-reaching rewards as they develop and equip those under their leadership and impact those who are involved in their ministries.

## Investing in Tomorrow's Ministers Today

- *Personally*
- *Professionally*
- *Financially*

## *Our Mission*

SMI empowers the next generation of ministers to maximize their opportunities today in order to increase their effectiveness tomorrow.

Student Ministries, Inc.  
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

*Sojourning...*