

SMI *From My Perspective...*

"If God wants me sitting on a bucket in the middle of the road pointing toward the sky, then that's where I want to be."

I remember a conversation with my best friend a couple of years ago. We were talking about not knowing exactly what God wanted us to do but knowing that whatever it was, we wanted to be in the center of His will. He said to me, "If God wants me sitting on a bucket in the middle of the road pointing toward the sky, then that's where I want to be."

I've often thought about his comment. I've wondered what my reaction would be if I saw someone doing just that. Would I laugh because I thought he looked silly? Would I be embarrassed for him? Would I think, "This guy has lost his mind!"?

Think of Job in the Old Testament. Think about what he went through. Can you imagine the comments he had to endure from his wife and friends? They thought he had lost his mind. Even though much of what was said by his friends made sense, Job knew deep in his soul that they were wrong.

I think we often sense the Holy Spirit leading us to do something, but our fear of the unknown, the desire to stay within our comfort zone, selfishness or just plain rebellion, keeps us from responding the way God wants us to. Let me challenge you to have the faith to respond the way God wants you to respond – even if you do have to sit on a bucket.

At SMI, we are trying to be intentional about everything we are doing. Praying through decisions, asking tough questions, and listening to the needs of our churches and seminaries has kept our board of directors focused as they seek to make changes within the organization. Many of the changes at SMI have been results of our trying to be what God wants SMI to be. Part of our role is encouraging our student ministers and helping them to not be afraid to take bold steps, strengthening their ability to respond to God's request of them even if it may seem a little unusual. If we are willing to be open and follow in faith, we may not find ourselves sitting on a bucket, but we all will find ourselves in the center of God's will. And as others watch, may they always find us passionately pointing to Jesus.

Jimmy R. West
Executive Director

MINISTRY FOCUS

Stepping Out in Faith

After being baptized, God started placing me in leadership and teaching roles. He kept pushing me to step out in faith. It was two years ago that He really asked me to step out in faith. *I heard God tell me to start becoming the pastor that He had intended for me.* I heard reaffirming remarks from others. So I knew this was the direction God has for me. I have begun that process of going towards vocational ministry by taking one seminary class a semester for the last 2 years. And the reason I have now contacted SMI is because *I believe God is taking me on another step of faith. I have left my job of 13 years because the distraction of the secular job and its rewards were keeping me from realizing the trust that God wants me to have in Him.* It is interesting that SMI's website says to "step into the water." This morning my wife read to me from Joshua 3 that it wasn't until the priest stepped into the water that the Jordan River was stopped from flowing. Sometimes God asks us to step into the water to see His power.

"Peter" is a recent applicant of SMI. Reading his story, we were impressed with his commitment to follow God whole heartedly and forego worldly rewards. His sacrifice indicates a circumcision of the heart—cutting away that which crowds God out, seeking praise from God rather than men. [Rom 2:28-29] Like the rest of us, he is in process of becoming who God wants Him to be.

When "Peter" told his Christian friends about his step of faith, unfortunately they questioned his irresponsibility and offered criticism rather than support. "Why would you do such a thing?" Frustrated and discouraged, "Peter" has not continued the application process with SMI. Having stepped into the water in faith, he as seen the wind rather than the power of God.

May those of us in the Kingdom deeply encourage and support such steps of faith, whether personally, through prayer or financially. Always, as members of the Christian community we should stand ready to motivate and strengthen one another to continue in faith—no matter the cost, making every sacrifice necessary to become more like Christ.

Pray for "Peter" and others like him. Pray their eyes would be fixed on Jesus, the author & perfecter of faith, to endure the cost of such sacrifices and experience God's power. "The eyes of the Lord look to and fro throughout the earth to strongly support those whose hearts are completely His." [II Chron 16:9]

If you are a **ministry partner** of SMI... perhaps you have a story of how this investment has blessed you. **You are an integral part of God's plans playing an important role in His Kingdom.**

We want to hear from you.

Journey of Faith

One Step at a Time

As a **minister-in-training** with SMI... Your life is full. You're growing in ways you never imagined. **God is using you to minister to those in your path.** We want to hear from you.

• Don't Forget About Matching Gifts. . .

Many companies will match contributions made to non-profit organizations through their employee matching gifts program. We have received matching gifts from companies such as Hewlett Packard, Exxon, AXA Financial, etc. as a result of donors' efforts to access these resources. Maximize your gifts by checking with your company to see if they have a matching program.

• 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.

• Newsletters Wanted!

Students, please add SMI to your mailing list. We always love to know what is going on in your ministry and in your life.

• Can We Pray for You?

If you have a specific prayer need, please let us know. We want to be available to pray for you. If possible, we may be able to help in some way.

• Please Pray for SMI!

In completing our transition, SMI and its board of directors are continuing to sense God's leading and direction and beginning to take bold steps. Pray for our faith to trust God's provisions. Will you join us as a ministry partner through prayer?

• Ministry Needs:

SMI seeks donations to provide marketing resources. SMI seeks ministry partners to help support operations.

Contractor Stats! (2003-2004)

School	Students	Contributions	School	Students	Contributions
Alliance Theological	1*	0	Liberty	1*	0
Asbury	2	\$9,455	Mennonite Brethren	1*	0
Baptist Bible	2	\$500	Moody	1	\$3,230
Baylor/Truett	1	\$11,204	Multnomah	1	\$17,516
Bethel	4	\$43,438	North Park	1	\$330
Calvary Baptist	1*	0	Phoenix	7	\$30,995
Calvary Theological	2	\$3,240	Reformed	4	\$13,800
Canadian Southern	1	\$2,065	Regent College	1	\$22,005
Capital Bible	1	\$10,805	Regent University	2	\$26,927
Christian Theological	1	\$22,289	Southern Baptist	3	\$10,729
Columbia Biblical	3	\$1,200	Southern Seminary	1*	0
Covenant	14	\$91,600	Southwestern Baptist	4	\$4,115
Dallas Theological	68	\$405,538	Talbot	13	\$45,245
Denver	3	\$14,390	Trinity Evangelical	9	\$60,086
Fuller	7	\$2,230	The Masters	3	\$55,207
George Fox	1*	0	Tyndale	1	\$1,945
Golden Gate	1*	0	Western Seminary	6	\$6,693
Gordon-Conwell	2	\$14,823	Westminster	3	\$31,320
Grace Theological	1	\$1,435	Wheaton	2	\$11,295
Int'l Graduate School	1	\$170			

Nearly 1 million dollars in support of student ministries!

*Recently approved students

Our Vision

Our hope is that students will not only be blessed financially through SMI but they will be enriched spiritually 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 ministers-in-training to gain practical experience while in seminary by contracting with seminary students to perform ministry projects in their cultural setting.

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Sojourning...
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