

***Reflections on the Greatest Year of Our Lives***  
***From Mark and Margaret Noblin***

2003 blessed us with humility – a better understanding of God’s grace and greatness and a sobering reinforcement of our utter dependence on Him.

Mark bonded with great men of God in Uganda; wondered at God connecting him via email with a Kenyan pastor that led to Mark preaching a soul-reaping message from Luke 16:19-31 in the African bush; baptized in India; and was ordained in Guatemala, where he also was honored to help mentor and support a young pastor.

God gave Mark video skills out of nowhere and allowed him, a non-techie, to show them via a self-installed streaming video application on the internet. God used this technology to change at least one life forever by touching them with images Mark took in Uganda and calling them to the mission field.

God reached people’s hearts in church services from California to Florida to weep and cheer at the video images that Mark produced of redeemed orphans in India. Mark and Margaret spoke at a missions conference at a Florida church that for many years has supported orphans and were able to show them through the video what a blessing their church is to so many and how God is using them.

God also led us in 2003 to join Bent Tree Bible Fellowship, which embraced us immediately and has been feeding us spiritual steak consistently. We are in training to be “mini-church” leaders, where we will be challenged with modeling Biblical community in a small group setting and with reproducing leaders and disciples. Lord willing, Mark also will be leading a group of 20 first-time short term missionaries from Bent Tree to Guatemala in July.

Margaret has found many blessings at Bible Study Fellowship this year and seen how God has used the teaching of Israel and the Minor Prophets to show how He comforts us during trials. God provides unexpected blessings and friendships that give us encouragement at just the right moment.

While Mark was traveling and working with the orphans, Margaret was being challenged by changes with the family. Her mom, Marge, has been living with us over a year now and there are constant ups and downs with her health. And, on another family front, our daughter and son-in-law along with the grandchildren have moved from Austin to Columbus, Ohio. God’s comfort and provision during this grieving process of separation from loved ones has been a miracle.

We confess despite the incredible blessings bestowed upon us in 2003, we fight the enemy’s lies that it all amounted to nothing. Why is it as humans we tend to long for what we lack rather than treasure what we have? We have had many disappointments over the year. There have been misunderstandings in ministry relationships. There has been discouragement in our inability with some people in our support-raising efforts to share our vision in a way that portrays God’s call on our lives. Changing from the corporate world to ministry causes major disconnects! We have fallen short in support raising, although we have been blessed by deepening relationships and ministering to many others as we share our vision.

Our entrepreneurial efforts in trying to come up with “tent maker” income-producing activities also have not been sufficient. We’ve even considered re-entering the corporate world but the doors remain shut. Another exciting opportunity for Mark – serving as international communications director for Compassion International – failed to materialize after he made it to the “final three” and went through seven interviews in Colorado Springs. We now see that God was testing us to see if we really were committed enough to make such a dramatic change with Margaret’s mom living with us and the challenges that a move would have presented. But God was faithful and allowed us to stay in Dallas.

Much ministry work and unfinished business remains – like funding for an orphanage and a microeconomic program in Uganda. Which leaves us with the questions every moment: “What does it mean, Lord? Where do you want us?” Such incredible ways you have allowed us to serve, yet such uncertainty about what comes next and how. We know the answer to our own questions. It comes from Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

And He remains faithful in encouragement.

This week we heard from a friend in Kenya: “Praise the Lord. Get greetings from Kenya. My trip back home was fine and the Lord is doing an amazing work here. My church members and orphans really had a heart for you and always remembering you in their prayers.”

How cool! Kids praying for us in Kenya! Now that’s support directly from heaven! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Noblins.

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If you wish to share in our ministry, you may do so by praying for us, going with us on a short-term trip or giving financially.

Areas needing much prayer and support are funding for the first of 10 planned House of Hope Orphanages along Lake Victoria in Uganda (\$15,000 per orphanage); a microeconomic loan program to generate small businesses and jobs for members of Gaba Community Church, Kampala, Uganda (\$39,000); and support for the Noblins including videography, travel and ongoing ministry expenses. To make a tax deductible donation, please write “Noblins” on the memo field of your check and mail to:

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