

US Staff Conference Report

Dear Friend,

God's Perfect Timing - came through again! Thank you so much for your prayers together with the gifts of many who helped make it possible for us to attend the U.S. Staff Conference this year in Fort Collins, Colorado. We were able to be part of an amazing event: 5000 US Staff joining in memorializing the man who led us by faith for over 50 years. It was God's wonderful grace to us that Dr. Bill Bright should pass away just while we were all gathered together and could celebrate his homegoing to heaven. We want you to share in the sights and events we witnessed.

Impressive

It is always amazing how the conference staff take over Moby Gym (basketball stadium at CSU) and turn it into a wonderful stage and add air conditioning to the winter sport season building, garlanding the outside ramps with ministry displays and resources from all the varied parts of the Campus Crusade for Christ ministry. They even commandeered a parking lot for a country fair with ferris wheel and candied apples and funnel cake and everything.

5000 staff live in dorms, apartments nearby or hotel rooms while we learn Biblical truth, hear reports of God's amazing work around the US and the world, and are challenged by our leadership to trust God for the future.

Many of the music ministry staff lead us in awesome worship times that stir our souls with the glory and majesty of our God, leading us to "ask for the nations..." and Impact, the black American music ministry led some real heart lifting gospel worship times.

Our kids also commented that they were impressed. Andy spoke of how important Christian fellowship is for believers. Ben shared that he learned how important it is to share his faith as he went out witnessing as part of the Student Venture Getaway program for teens. Melissa was impressed by Dr. Bright's life and faith as she and the boys attended the Memorial Service with us. Each of our kids participated in a full program for their ages, while daddy also did his duty one morning being a dirty diaper changer for 1 year old babies in the child care.

Challenging

Messages by Bill Lawrence, Rick Warren and Steve Douglas got us thinking.

Steve notes that Bill's messages from the life of Moses really encouraged us to depend on the Lord, not ourselves; to depend on His presence, and to stay in the place His presence is and goes.

Rochelle was encouraged by Rick's reminder that fulfilling God's purpose in your life involves praising and knowing God a little bit more each day. That seemed like something she could do each day by faith even while busy with the care of the family and home.

Steve was motivated by Steve Douglas's final challenge to each staff to trust the Lord to provide disciples for them, so they can share their heart and vision for reaching the world and see more laborers raised up for the

Harvest. We want to trust the Lord to use us in many lives in our local church, as well as to encourage other churches and missionaries in evangelism through the use of the Jesus Film and other media tools.

Teardrops

Of course, central to this staff conference was Dr. Bright's passing on to glory. We will always remember the Friday morning satellite phone call link with Vonette (Dr. Bright's wife) from Dr. Bright's bedside, so tender and loving. There was the Saturday night announcement that Dr. Bright had passed away, followed by the powerful message of God's work in Iraq and Afghanistan and other places around the globe brought by Paul Eshleman of the Jesus Film ministry. Paul was a dear friend of Dr. Bright and spoke intimately of him while sharing his ministry report that he knew always encouraged Dr. Bright. Then, the staff memorial service held on Monday was a special highlight of the week. Vonette and family flew to Colorado from Orlando to be with us all, and Vonette shared with joy how Bill had passed on surrounded by his favorite hymns, his family, and the many prayers of us all. One speaker pictured Dr. Bright as a relay runner, passing on his baton of faith to us all, and we were challenged to take the baton and keep on reaching a lost world for Jesus Christ, following Dr. Bright who finished his course so well. Later we realized that that remark occurred at almost the exact moment of Dr. Bright's homegoing. It truly was an amazing, victorious Homegoing!

Great Joy

We were delighted to see and visit with many friends, some of whom had served the Lord in Japan with us in the past and some who are coming soon! Also, we were encouraged to see over 1000 new staff join us this time, the largest group ever! Among those new staff was a couple who had previously served the Lord in Japan, left staff, and now joined again to work reaching Japanese in the United States. As we sang the Lord's praises with 5000 other committed staff, we felt just so close to the joy of heaven! Wish you could have been there too!

As you pray for us and help send us out into the harvest in Japan, we are so grateful for the encouragement and challenge we received through this staff conference. We look forward to see how God will use these things in our lives in the days ahead.

Please pray for us as we return to Japan on August 25, arriving just in time for the kids to start school the next day! Joshua has been a great baby, but we are concerned about the 25 hour journey we face from Philadelphia to our home in Tokyo. Also, Steve will jump right into the plans for the special Christmas outreach this year as well as a trip to Thailand on Sept. 2 - 5 for a Human Resource Conference. We depend on your prayers and the grace of the Lord as we seek to make Jesus known in Japan. Thanks for helping make it happen through your prayers.

In His love,

Steve and Rochelle, Andy, Ben, Melissa and Joshua