

Calendar of Events

April 2005

Date: April 8-9

Kettering, OH—*Being There* Conference
(for abuse survivors, all types)

June-July 2005

Date: June 29-July 9

St. Louis, MO—General Conference Session
(Exhibit)

August 2005

Date: August 3-6

Sacramento, CA—ASI Convention (Exhibit)

We are continually scheduling conferences throughout the U.S. If you'd like to schedule or sponsor a conference in your area, please call (530) 675-3608.

Please check our web site for the most up-to-date conference information and schedule.

www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

Current Project Needs...

- ◆ Printing our materials in Spanish.
- ◆ The development and printing of topical Bible studies for victims.
- ◆ The production of training videos for pastors, churches and victims.
- ◆ The production of a general introductory video about the ministry of The Hope of Survivors.
- ◆ The development & implementation of public service announcements to be aired on TV/cable.
- ◆ General and administrative expenses.

Donations are the primary source of funds that make it possible for The Hope of Survivors to maintain its ministry. Since The Hope of Survivors receives no denominational subsidies, your gifts are vitally important. Thank you for considering a tax-deductible donation to further the work of this ministry and bring hope and healing to wounded hearts.

THE **Hope**
of Survivors

P.O. Box 187, Clipper Mills, CA 95930

HopeSPEAK

Dear Readers:

It's hard to believe another year has come and gone! Time seems to pass so quickly, especially when you're busy, and we have been busy at The Hope of Survivors!

It is incredible to look back over 2004 and see what God has done in such a short amount of time! From our initial nonprofit application filing in February, to our official 501(c)(3) status in May, to presenting conferences in Alaska and Ohio, and sending brochures and newsletters around the globe, God has, indeed, blessed this ministry!

However, the greatest blessing and joy we have is knowing how the ministry of The Hope of Survivors has impacted your life in a positive manner. We receive letters almost daily telling how The Hope of Survivors has helped someone to face another day, to be encouraged, to trust in God again. We'd like to share with you a few of those comments...

"I received your newsletter in the mail and all I have to say is, I drank in every word of it and looked for more. I wish it would come out once a week, it helps me so much. Thanks to Steve and you both."

"I am amazed at all you get done and appreciate so much all you do for this ministry you have taken on. I, for one, do not feel as though I would have gotten through all of this without your encouragement, prayers and support."

"The growth of your ministry is evidence of the great need for education and support in this area. Thank you for your passion and understanding of these issues. I am just sorry that you had to go through such a horrible experience to bring you to this point where you can be such a help and a blessing in other people's lives. Thank you very much for your words of encouragement, the Lord only knows how much I need them."

"You've been a real blessing to me. Connections such as ours make me certain that God wants something from me. As much as I get into the pitiful victim mode, feeling so alone and isolated, I know that I truly am not alone. This is when Jesus is carrying me in the sand ~ and you are one of His vehicles!"

These brief testimonies inspire and encourage us to go forward with the work the Lord has called us to do. It isn't always easy and we certainly couldn't call it fun.

We are often very tired, overworked and emotionally drained, but it is at those moments when the Lord reminds us that He will refresh us and give us strength to do His will. After all, this is *His work*, not ours. It's all for *His glory* and we praise Him for His countless blessings!

As we look ahead in 2005, we anticipate the airing of the programs we taped at 3ABN in December. We pray these programs will reach those who need to hear the message, those who need help and comfort. We also anticipate the development of a Hispanic counterpart to the ministry—something the Lord is working out even as I write this.

There is much more ahead but space is running short! We will keep you posted on new developments as they occur and, as always, we thank you for your prayers and support.

May God bless us all as we seek to do *His will* in 2005!

In His care,
Steve Nelson

Volume 2, Edition 1, January 2005

Table of Contents:

Letter from the President.....	1
Traits of a Good Shepherd.....	2-3
Calendar & Current Project Needs.....	4

The Hope of Survivors
P.O. Box 187
Clipper Mills, CA 95930

Phone: (530) 675-3608 or (866) 260-8958
Email: Help@TheHopeOfSurvivors.com
Web site: www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

The Hope of Survivors is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization funded by individuals who support the mission and goals of the organization; survivors of clergy sexual abuse who are now thriving and desire to use their means to help others; and by grants from private foundations whose values are similar to those of The Hope of Survivors. All contributions are tax-deductible. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Traits of a Good Shepherd

As much as we wish clergy sexual abuse and misconduct didn't exist, we have to acknowledge the fact that, sadly, it does, and it affects the lives of thousands, if not millions, of people around the globe.

While the very nature of The Hope of Survivors' ministry necessitates focusing on the pain and devastation of clergy sexual abuse and misconduct; the hope, healing and comfort available in Christ; as well as the responsibility of the pastor, church and individual; we believe it is important to recognize and reiterate that pastors who "fall into sin" or who "prey on the flock" are the *exception*, not the *norm*. While this ministry stands for truth and justice, mixed with compassion and mercy, it by no means seeks to bring dishonor or reproach upon the house of God by discussing this issue but, rather, to bring glory and honor to God by providing information and assistance to those who are struggling and hurting.

We support God's chosen method in establishing the church and placing the pastor at the head of it in a servant-leadership role. We support and respect those ministers of the Gospel who are faithful to their calling. However, we recognize that, unfortunately, not every pastor is called of God, but some are in their positions as hirelings, and seek after their own benefit rather than that of the flock.

God calls pastors and church leaders—anyone who ministers to others' spiritual needs—to a higher calling, to a life of sacrificial service and devotion, a life dedicated and consecrated to God. When those who stand in Christ's stead tempt the people to sin or lead them astray, God is not pleased and is greatly dishonored.

We believe that time is short before Jesus returns and that God is using the ministry of The Hope of Survivors as one of His last mercy calls to those in His church. As it reads in 1 Peter 4:17, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" We pray His leaders, and all who love Him, will heed this call.

If we could but lift our eyes to Jesus, we would see a perfect Example of what a pastor should be. After all, Jesus was the Good Shepherd, the Pattern for all others. Could we, then, by looking

at Jesus, find a model for our pastors and church leaders today? Could we find a model for our own lives as well? We believe so. Some of the characteristics of Jesus and, therefore, of a true shepherd, are honesty, compassion, love, kindness, mercy, patience...this list could go on and on, but you get the idea. (There are many characteristics listed in 2 Kings 13:23; Psalm 78:38; Matthew 15:32; Matthew 20:34, Psalm 26:3; Psalm 36:10; Jeremiah 9:24; Psalm 86:15; Psalm 145:8; and many others!)

We know the Lord is compassionate, not willing that any should perish. We are told in Psalm 86:15, "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

Do we seek to emulate Christ? Can we encourage these same character traits in our church leaders? We believe we not only could seek them but, by the grace and power of God, live them. For additional characteristics and qualifications for service, please read the article entitled "Qualifications for Service" under the section titled "Are you a pastor?" on our web site, www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com.

There is instruction given in 1 Peter 5:1-11 for those who lead the church and have the care of the flock, "...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away....Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

As we can see from the above passages, a pastor or church leader is to humbly and gracefully administer to the needs of the flock. The role is that of a servant, not a dictator. It is of one who seeks the best interest of those under his care, not his own selfish interests. Christ never forced anyone to do, say, or believe anything. Neither should we. We should work for the eternal wellbeing of those entrusted to our care.

We plead with those who are battling with the enemy and are tempted to sin or, perhaps, are even caught in a snare at this moment, to seek the Lord while He may be found, to call upon Him while He is near (Isaiah 55:6). Seek Him with

your whole heart, turn from temptation and sin and live (Ezekiel 33:11). The Lord is calling you, even now, to repentance.

For those who are tempted, those who have fallen and remain unrepentant, or those who have been victims of CSA, we point you to Nahum 1:2-3 where we can see God's patience, mercy and justice. "God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. The Lord will avenge His own and He will not let the wicked go unpunished."

That applies to all of us...not just erring church leaders. We must all seek to be like Jesus, repent of our sins and follow Him. Justice will be served when God's mercy ends. Those who have hardened their hearts in willful disobedience will face their punishment. As one writer states it, "Even if wicked men talk the truth, some may receive it; but it does not bring those who talked it into any more favor with God. Wicked men are wicked men still, and according to the deception they practiced upon those who were beloved of God, and according to the confusion brought into the church, so will be their punishment; their sins will not remain covered, but will be exposed in the day of God's fierce anger." (Early Writings, page 99)

Sheep must look to a shepherd and the sheep in the church must look to a true shepherd. A true shepherd, one who loves God supremely, will obey the command Jesus gave Peter in John 21:17, "He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." A true shepherd, called of God, will feed the sheep, not feed on them.

We commend those who are called of God to feed the flock and who do it willingly and sacrificially to the honor and glory of God, and for the eternal benefit of the flock. May God bless you and continue to strengthen you as you strengthen and nourish the sheep in your fold.

We see, daily, the results of those shepherds who

have lost their hold on God, their first love of serving Him and seeking to save those who are dead in trespass and sin. If we could, for one moment, see through the eyes of Christ those whom He loves and died to save, we would then more fully understand the precious charge He gave us when He said "Feed my sheep." We would never desire to hurt or destroy the faith of even one of His precious lambs.

We need to maintain a living connection with our Savior. It is only by continually looking to Him and depending on Him to keep us from falling that we will all be able to discern right and wrong, and follow Him in truth and righteousness. May God help us to grow more and more into His likeness each day.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." 2 Corinthians 13:14



Steve and Samantha Nelson are co-founders of The Hope of Survivors. Together, they share how God brought them through the devastation of clergy sexual abuse. By God's grace, they seek to educate the public and to bring hope and healing to those who have been affected by this trauma.

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"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." —1 Corinthians 10:13alms 34:18, 19