

FAITH VERSUS FACTS

by Chuck Coleman



First Sunday service in the new facility



Some TYWCI youth workers

It is a known fact that America is experiencing an economic crisis. Many corporations have merged, downsized, or gone out of business altogether. Millions of Americans have lost their jobs and homes while others have watched their investments dwindle or even plummet, leaving current and future retirees wondering how they will survive. Financial institutions and auto manufacturers have solicited billions of dollars in bailout money from the U.S. government, while our national debt has soared to a record \$53 trillion.

Focusing solely on these facts can lead to widespread panic. As Christians, however, we are to examine the truth through the eyes of faith. Everything connected to the kingdom of God is based on spiritual truths. Because faith is a Kingdom principle, we are to turn to God for direction, basing our daily decisions and lifestyle on truth, not mere facts, which are temporary. Truth and faith, on the other hand, are permanent. When we give God an opportunity to intervene, He

is able to transform a potential hardship into a blessing. As this happens, we are able to demonstrate the faithfulness of God and the real meaning of stewardship.

Our family has experienced the manifestation of God's Word consistently in ways that defy statistics. The Coleman household consists of six of us: my wife, Pam, and me; our eldest son, who is a junior in college; our college-bound, twelfth-grade son; our daughter, who is a high school freshman; and a 20-year-old young man whom we've known since he was eight and who needed a place to stay. Our family of six has chosen to continue to be good stewards, thereby transcending the current economic crisis.

Over the years, we have sown our tithes and offerings faithfully. We dipped into our retirement funds to assist a ministry that needed a larger facility for its growing congregation. We emptied a personal account to purchase and equip a Sidewalk Sunday School truck for our outreach ministry. This faithful stewardship has led to

God's supernatural provision for our family and our ministry for many years.

We pastored a church for six years in the late 1990s. Then in September 2004, we founded Touching Your World Church International with 20 people in our living room. After occupying various facilities, including a high school auditorium, community center, catering hall, and senior citizens center, we searched for a place to call home.

In May 2008, we spotted a beautiful 33,000-square-foot church building for sale with a parking lot that accommodates 70 cars (a rarity in Philadelphia) and an asking price of \$2.5 million. At the time, we had 100 members and didn't possess even a fraction of the down payment for that type of acquisition. But the facts don't count when you're walking by faith. After consulting with godly men and women, such as Rick Fountain and members of our board, we made an offer. The seller accepted our proposal to lease the building with the option to purchase at \$1.8 million.

My experience has been that the Lord uses economic hard times to refocus the church and individual Christians on the things of eternal significance. The world quakes under economic distress, political unrest, and threats of war. But Christians serve an unshakable Kingdom, and in these times we are called to demonstrate the power and provision of the gospel as we bless the world through our faithfulness.

—Dr. A. D. Beacham, Jr.
Executive Director, IPHC World Missions Ministries



Pastors Chuck and Pam Coleman with Taylor (l) and Justin, two children from the neighborhood



Praise dancers

Throughout the summer, we held outdoor events in the church parking lot and a two-day tent meeting in a nearby park, ministering to hundreds of people in the community. Our members were in one accord about taking a giant leap of faith and agreed that we should move into the new facility before our church's fourth anniversary. God was faithful to allow us to do so.

In September 2008, we moved into our new church home, which includes a beautiful sanctuary, chapel, preschool, 12 additional classrooms, 10 offices, fellowship hall, and 3 kitchens. Dr. Ron Carpenter, Sr., executive director of Evangelism USA, Pastor Rick Fountain, director of Church Planting and Development, and Rev. Macon Wilson, director of African-American Ministries for the IPHC, were present to witness our first service in our new church home. Since that day, our membership has doubled from 100 to about 200 within four months, and God continues to perform incredible miracles.

The fact is that over 50 percent of our members are under the age of 25. Even with this growing and youthful congregation, we are seeing hundreds of souls being saved through creative outreach efforts. Alcoholics and drug addicts are being delivered, marriages are being restored, and children and youth are hanging out at church instead of on the streets. Our community is being transformed before our very eyes. God is proving that with faith, the facts just don't matter.

Recently, God instructed my wife to leave an \$83,000-a-year job (plus generous benefits) and devote her time and administrative gifts to the daily operations of the church. This move defies logic for a family of six, yet the congregation and we continue to sow and reap financial and human resources despite the facts.

Obedience is the key to stewardship. Isaac learned this truth. God told him to sow in the land of famine, and when he obeyed, he received a hundredfold return in the same year of sowing.

God desires to do the same thing today. He wants to show the world that He is not limited to this world's system. We can show the world that we are blessed by applying Kingdom principles and being faithful stewards through whom God can work.

What has God instructed you to do? Some things He asks of us may not make sense according to the world's way of thinking. But my wife and I understand that facts and faith are not synonymous. God's directions to us were clear: "The way you spend your time and resources over the next few months will help determine the course of this ministry over the next few years." We are willing to take God at His absolute word because we intend to continue to see lives transformed here in Philadelphia and beyond. 🕊

Chuck Coleman pastors Touching Your World Church International, a growing congregation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. To hear a special message from Rick Fountain, director of Church Planting and Development for the IPHC, visit the Evangelism USA website (<http://evusa.iphc.org/chrplant.html>).

Welcome to the new normal. What used to be the standard is not, especially in regard to the economy. The only constant in this whirlwind of change is our immutable God. He continues to be our Jehovah-Jireh.

*—Bishop Curtis Belcher
Golden West Conference*