

# LASTORY



## a family thing

A Kingdom Pictures Release "A FAMILY THING" A KINGDOM NEWS NETWORK PRODUCTION

Featuring: RON & LINDA BRUMLEY • BARRY & JUDY BLADE • ROBERT & MARTHA MELLON  
JOE & DEIRDRE MONTEZ • STEVE & ELAINE VILLANUEVA • JERRY & ERLYN SUGARMAN



Church of Christ

KNN

A KINGDOM PICTURES RELEASE

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PRODUCTION  
DESIGNER EMILY BRINGARDNER



# a family thing

KINGDOM MILESTONES	
COUNTRIES PLANTED	115
NUMBER OF CHURCHES	291
SUNDAY ATTENDANCE	147,135

LA SUNDAY ATTENDANCE			
4/27	12,500	5/11	11,092
5/4	11,020	5/18	11,078

*"Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD. May the LORD bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, and may you live to see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel."* Psalm 128:1-6

In the beginning God created the family and it was good. Satan entered the picture and the family turned bad – one of the first two brothers killed the other. Since then the battle for and within the family has waged. Too many nuclear families are ravaged by neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, incest, adultery, abandonment, drugs, drunkenness, separation, divorce, etc. Satan even uses religion to alienate one family member from another. I grew up in a home where there was much love, but my father went to one church and my mother went to another. I felt the tension and I saw the tears caused by religious division. Some of us suffered the attacks of family when we made our decision to become totally committed disciples of Jesus Christ. This was not the way that God intended family to be.

In the new beginning – the new birth through baptism into the family of God – God begins to recreate the family into what he originally designed it to be. Husbands learn to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Wives begin to respect their husbands in a way that is not based on performance. Children learn to honor their parents, just because they are their parents. Parents learn to bring their children up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

**More and more we are witnessing disciples baptizing their moms and their dads. Couples on the brink of divorce become disciples and not only decide to stay together, but to build great marriages.**

This issue of *LA Story* is devoted to family. In my role as spokesperson for the International Churches of Christ, I am occasionally asked by some antagonistic news reporter if we discourage young disciples from spending time with their parents who are not disciples. Then they more

aggressively ask if we try to split up families. This gives me the opportunity to share about the power of God to reconcile families and to tell a few of the numerous family victories that have been won in God's Kingdom. God is not a god of confusion and disunity, but of peace, love and wholeness. More and more we are witnessing disciples baptizing their moms and their dads. Couples on the brink of divorce become disciples and not only decide to stay together, but to build great marriages (such as the Montez' and the Villanueva's on page 5). Even couples who have divorced and gone their separate ways before becoming disciples are sometimes reunited (such as Barry and Judy Blade on page 4).

Divorce is the scourge of twentieth-century families; half of them are divided because of it. Yet, divorce is nearly unheard of in the International Churches of Christ. Our critics say, "Of course, you don't have divorces in the church because you expel anyone who divorces." Certainly, we prohibit divorce, except for the biblical reasons of adultery (Matthew 19:9) or abandonment by a non-Christian mate (I Corinthians 7:15). But there is more involved than just a prohibition of divorce, because the Catholics have similar prohibitions and their divorce rates are reported to approach 50%. The difference is that disciples are taught and trained to build family – family as God created it to be.

I thank God for Gloria, our three daughters, their three husbands and our grandchildren. I thank God that he has shown us the way to build family and that all of us have loving, concerned disciples in our lives to help us fulfill God's plan for family. There really is peace in spiritual Israel. It is A FAMILY THING. ■

# BUILDING A GREAT FAMILY by Ron and Linda Brumley

*"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain"*  
*Psalm 127:1*

## Editor's Note:

Ron and Linda Brumley have served as Elder and Women's Ministry Leader in churches in San Diego, Chicago and Denver. They recently moved to Seattle, Washington to serve with Scott and Lynne Green, WorldSector Leaders for China. All four of the Brumleys' children are disciples married to disciples.

The most important element in building a family is LOVE. A parent must love each child individually and love the whole concept of being a family. Then they must teach their children to do the same. Children do not naturally possess the qualities of love described in I Corinthians 13. The process of raising our four children to become disciples and now being "consultants" in raising our seven grandchildren has been a fun and challenging 34 years. Obviously, on God's scale of what's important, love holds the number one and two place on the all-time hit list of commands (Matthew 22:38). Any effort, therefore, to capture the core of God's intent for parents in training and instructing their children (Ephesians 6:4), must begin and end with love.

## Train Them To Have Loving Characters

We don't have to train them to be *characters*, that usually comes naturally. From the time they were babies, we realized that Greg (34), Meredith (32), Gretchen (27), and Matt (24), needed, for the sake of their character development, to be snuggled and played with. Learning peoples' names, greeting people with hugs and kisses and learning to have and demonstrate a genuine interest in others was all a vital part of their training and instruction.

God's kind of love is distinct in that it is unconditional. If our children are to have loving characters, we must train and

instruct them to love regardless of their "mood" at the moment and to take responsibility for how our lives affect other people. This includes our smiles, our warmth and our concern. It has been a delight watching Meredith work with her children, Mikey (3) and Becca (4), to develop others-centered characters. It shows! (Proverbs 20:11) The greatest impact our children can have on non-Christians is by their interaction with them.

## Teach Them To Love Family

Family devotionals, meal times, trips and chores are great venues for training and instructing our children to love being a family. Instead of mom and/or dad barking out orders regarding

went through a very difficult few years, when he wasn't sure he wanted to be a Christian. Several people in our lives helped. His greatest influence, however, was his big brother Greg, whose love drew Matt close to God.

Training and instructing is a method that works for anything you want to impress on your children's hearts. Our three-year-old twin grandsons, Jason and Tyler, yell "Bear Down Arizona! Go Wildcats!" with all the passionate enthusiasm of their father, John Snyder. This vocal loyalty to their father's alma mater is not genetic. It has been demonstrated, coached and praised.

## Teach Them To Love God And The Kingdom

For years, our entire family attended church meetings twice on Sunday, every Wednesday night and often on Friday nights for devotionals. We had Bible Talks in our home and weekly family nights. In addition, our children were each involved in school and community athletics. Frequently, we'd leave from an athletic event and go directly to church, with cleaning, changing and eating being done on the way. They grew up seeing all this as a normal family schedule - they saw us enjoying it and so they enjoyed it too. They grew up being trained to love the church.

Our oldest son Greg and his family formerly lived in the South where they were two hours from a church of true disciples. This could have been a stressful burden, but they turned it into a great family time. They now live in Jakarta, Indonesia and are learning to transcend the obstacle of a foreign culture and language for love of the Kingdom. Sara (4) and Tucker (3) are happily learning to speak and sing in Indonesian. They learned that no sacrifice is too great compared to the joy of being a part of God's Kingdom.

Disciples work hard on every front to build a godly family. But there is no area of our children's lives as worthy of our effort and sacrifice as training and instructing them to love life, love family, love people, love God and his church! ■



## All Together

▲ From left to right: Lisa & Greg Brumley (Sara & Tucker), John & Gretchen Snyder (Jason & Tyler), Julie & Matt Brumley, Linda & Ron Brumley, Mike & Meredith Holguin (Becca & Mke), Ada Louise Tucker - Linda's mom. All four of the Brumleys' children are disciples married to disciples.

homework or chores, a much more effective way to train them is to work together. This beats the "yell and tell" method. (We know, we've used them both).

A deep love of family has been indispensable in helping our kids get through difficult times. Matt, our youngest,



◀ John & Gretchen (Brumley) Snyder with their twins Jason and Tyler. John is the administrator for the AMS Region of the LA Church.

# IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU

by Maryann Rose and Marcia Lamb

## The Impossible Dream

As a teen, Judy considered Barry her “Don Quixote.” The tall, soft-spoken dreamer captured her heart with his desire to make the world a better place. But like many young people, as they grew up they parted, married other people and lost touch. Much later, after Judy suffered a devastating divorce, she contacted Barry to see what had become of his life. He, too, was divorced and they soon fell in love again and married. But all their efforts to raise the three teenagers from Judy’s first marriage while building a new family failed without God. Though it pained them greatly, they made the decision to part as friends rather than endure further strife.

Hurting and lonely, Judy raised her children on her own. Her daughter, Kimberly Thur, became a disciple while in college. Kimberly’s radical change influenced Judy’s decision to study the Bible with Helen Wooten and was baptized on October 14, 1992 becoming a great addition to the OASIS (Older Active Singles In the Spirit) ministry. Judy wanted Barry to have what she found in Christ. As he began

attending church and OASIS activities, Barry observed Judy and other disciples with a skeptical eye. He soon realized that the Kingdom of God was real, the Bible was real and was changing the world “one by one” through the disciples. After studying the Bible with Cecil Wooten, Barry was baptized on May 31, 1994.

Over the next three years, Barry and Judy’s admiration for each other grew as they worked hard at their individual relationships with God. Delighted to get to know each other and date as disciples, Barry asked his first love to be his “steady” in December of 1996. On April 4th, 1997, they were engaged to be married.

As they plan their June 28th wedding, Judy – 50 years “young” – exclaims that the “Don Quixote” she loved in high school had become a visionary disciple of Jesus. Barry adds, “I learned how to put myself in God’s hands and he gave me back what I loved most. Now, at 55, I really have more than I could ever ask or imagine.” ■

## The Power of a Changed Life

Satan moved into Robert Mellon’s house in the seductive form of cocaine. The oldest of six boys in a family in Jordan Downs, a tough housing project in South Central LA, Robert pursued a boxing career to stay away from drugs and violence. He resisted the temptation for a while, but after marriage, he had difficulty coping with the pressures of family life. He began to use cocaine, which left him unable to contain his violent temper. Sadly, his wife Martha also began using drugs. They made several failed attempts to get clean before she finally left Robert to protect their young daughter, Anna.

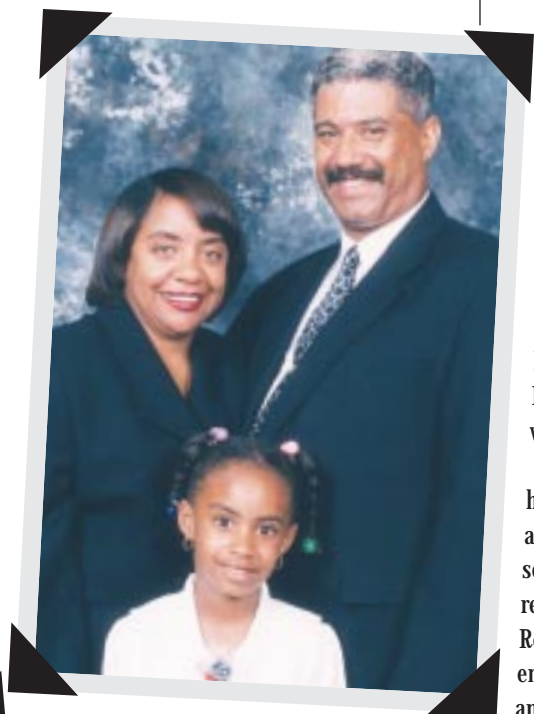
Despondent and angry, Robert began walking around with a concealed gun, contemplating killing members of his family, then himself. On one such day, God put a courageous young disciple, Maria Elena Cruz, in his path to invite him to church. He initially resisted her invitation, claiming all churches were the same and helped no one. She was persistent and Robert relented. Attending church services alone, he was amazed at the genuine love of the disciples. He soon brought Martha to a service, where they made a commitment to get their lives right with God. With the help of the Chemical Recovery Ministry led by Anton and Sharon Ivy, the Mellons conquered their drug habit and were baptized on February 2nd, 1997.

Since that time, Robert and Martha have set a great example in their devotion to God and the Kingdom by never missing a church service. While holding responsible jobs, Martha recently completed a Bachelor’s Degree and Robert is returning to school for a degree in engineering. Robert shares, “I was such a loner and now I love to pray with my wife and daughter every day. I’m so grateful God kept our family together.” ■



▲ Barry & Judy

Blade at Cecil & Helen Wooten’s 50th anniversary party. The Blades plan to be remarried in June of this year.



▲ Martha and Robert Mellon, with their daughter, Anna, are now experiencing the power of a changed life and marriage since their baptism in February.

# God reconciles families!

**L**ate night craving for ice-cream led Steve and Elaine Villanueva (pictured on cover) to a decision that would change their lives and the lives of their family.

In Steve's words, "we were like the 'Ken and Barbie' of the Latin community." Two years ago, Steve and Elaine's life and marriage looked perfect. They lived in an upscale neighborhood of Walnut, California. Both had great jobs, attended a prominent church and they owned a Porsche. However, within the walls of their home, their marriage was empty, marked by cruelty and frustration. They were on the verge of a divorce. In desperation, they specifically prayed for God to send someone to help. The very next night while getting ice cream, Steve and Elaine helped disciple Lorena Ortega with her car. In return, she invited them to church.

After numerous re-invitations, the Villanueva's came to church and heard Willie Flores speak. Willie and Tonya along with George and Deborah Violante studied the Bible with them. Steve and Elaine were both baptized July 23, 1995 and are now a part of the great Diamond Bar Sector led by Steve and Jacqueline Gansert.

Out of gratitude and joy for their new lives, the Villanuevas began sharing their faith with their family members. Steve first converted his sister Nina and two brothers Edward and Mark. From that point the message of hope spread to in-laws, cousins, aunts and uncles. (See Joe and Deirdre Montez story.) Elaine's sisters Kathy and Carla and her mother Bonnie were also baptized. In April, Elaine's grandmother Angelita was baptized. In the two years since their baptism, the Villanuevas have also been blessed with a son (Stephen) and a daughter (Alyson). Who would have thought that God would answer so many prayers through a craving for ice cream! ■

▼ Steve & Elaine Villanueva's gratitude for their salvation is evident in the 16 members of their family (pictured at right) who were baptized since their baptism in July 1995.



Since their baptism in October 1996, Joe and Deirdre Montez, uncle & aunt to Steve Villanueva, are now enjoying the marriage God planned for them.



## From Hopeless to Hopeful

**D**ivorce papers were filed and had already been served when Joe and Deirdre Montez made one last, desperate attempt to save their marriage and spare their four small children from the agony of breaking up the family. It was then that they accepted an invitation to church from their nephew, Steve Villanueva, hoping for the best but expecting the worst. That Sunday, Jim Hornbuckle, intern for the Diamond Bar Sector of the IA Church gave a powerful message on faith. At different times during the service, both Joe and Deirdre secretly suspected that their nephew had phoned the minister the night before and told him all about their problems. They felt he was speaking directly to them.

Both Joe and Deirdre were intrigued to be asked to read along in the Bible during the worship services – something not done in churches they had previously attended. The Scriptures came to life and both began feeling hopeful for the first time. "That night I fell in love with my husband again," said Deirdre. After studying the Bible for three weeks, they both became disciples of Jesus Christ on October 13, 1996. Since then God has incredibly healed their marriage. "I truly thought our marriage was over. I now love my wife more than ever. God had a different plan for our lives and it is awesome," says Joe. ■

# PUTTING "FAMILY" IN FAMILY GROUPS by Jerry Sugarman

## Editor's Note:

*Dr. Jerry Sugarman and his wife, Erlyn began leading a family group of six in 1995. Now the group numbers 40 disciples in two groups. It is no wonder they are a Shepherding Couple in the North Valley Sector of the IA Church.*

## Hospitality

We endeavor to have one meal or game night per week at our house, including Christian and non-Christian guests. Real evangelism occurs through hospitality. It is a great way for our friends to see our relationships and hear us share our faith in a warm, natural setting. Visitors are also amazed that we are able to have so much fun without indulging in the sins of the world.



▲ "Chasing Waterfalls" – Sugarman family group outing (pictured on cover).



Above: The original Bible Talk group: Dennis & Judy Vander Hook, Erlyn & Jerry Sugarman's, Diane & Tony Soto. Right: The family group today.

## Creating Family

When I was growing up, my physical family had traditional camping trips that we looked forward to each year. This year our family group is planning to charter a fishing boat, do picnics, go on group dates, hike up Mt. Whitney and go on our annual camping trip to Yosemite in July. These events are guaranteed to provide a wonderful opportunity for both children and adults to focus together on God and one another.

## Motivate & Inspire with Vision

We feel our family group is the most powerful bunch of Christians in the world and we tell them this often. We have a Family Group Mission Statement, which one of our members developed and put on plaques for each of us.

During one of our camping trips, we stood in the shade of the world's largest trees (The General Sherman) with a spiritually young couple we were discipling. Holding up a tiny pine cone, we told them this giant of a tree started young and small. We then shared with them the vision we had for them to become spiritual giants in God's Kingdom. That was a discipleship time we'll never forget.

## Loyalty and Teamwork

In the North Region it is easy to have loyalty and teamwork with leaders like Mark and Connie Mancini and Ron and Renee Quint. Erlyn and I know that if we want unity in our family group, we need to be great team players with the leaders God has given us. ■



◀ Another disciple is added to their number in the Sugarman's family group.

▼ Sugarman family group outing at the General Sherman in Sequoia National Park.

## Consistent Daily Evangelism

Daily evangelism is the single-most important element outside a great prayer life with God. The leader of every family group sets the standard for the members as they see us sharing our faith and having personal guests at church. Since Erlyn and I have been family group leaders, beginning late 1995, God has blessed us with 31 baptisms.



# VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

Philadelphia Campaign Kicks Off the Presidents' Summit for America's Future

This year the HOPE for Kids\* program caught the attention of both local and national media. At a time when volunteerism is in the spotlight, CBS national news chose Leonard Brown, national spokesperson for HOPE for Kids and a member of the San Diego Church of Christ, as their "Volunteer of the Year."

On April 19th, the HOPE for Kids national outreach saw 29,000 volunteers in more than 50 cities devote nearly a quarter



▲ Colin Powell takes in a good laugh with a boy at the HOPE for Kids rally held at the Philadelphia Art Museum on April 19th, 1997.

◀ A great day for HOPE in Philadelphia

▼ Rosalynn Carter expresses her gratitude to the HOPE for Kids volunteers of the Philadelphia Church of Christ.



of a million hours helping America's children. In a door-to-door canvassing campaign, they educated parents about critical childhood health issues and left valuable information with each family.

The following week, the Presidents' Summit for America's Future was held in Philadelphia. The kick-off event was the HOPE for Kids rally at the top steps of the Philadelphia Art Museum made famous in the movie "Rocky." Attending the event was Philadelphia Mayor Ed Rendell, Pennsylvania State Senator Shirley Kitchen, Harris Wofford, CEO of Corporation for National Services, and key note speaker, General Colin Powell, chairman of the Presidents' Summit for America's Future. To the delight of the dignitaries, the hundreds of volunteers and especially the children, the HOPE for Kids *Story Tree Gang* and dancers from the New York City Church of Christ performed.

During the rally, General Colin Powell said that "the Summit begins with HOPE for Kids." He went on to say that HOPE for Kids is what the Summit on volunteerism is all about. While a number of local television stations covered the event live, the rally and outreach event appeared that evening on every

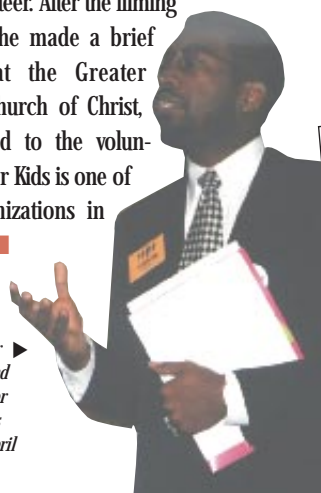


local news channel and even on CBS and NBC national news.

The following day former First

Lady Rosalynn Carter taped a public service announcement for HOPE for Kids, urging people to volunteer. After the filming was finished she made a brief appearance at the Greater Philadelphia Church of Christ, where she said to the volunteers, "HOPE for Kids is one of the best organizations in the country." ■

▶ Doug Webber, VP for HOPE worldwide, and National Director for HOPE for Kids, signs people up for the April 19th outreach.



# BOOK RELEASES



## The Fine Art of Hospitality

– a DPI publication

In *The Fine Art of Hospitality*, more than twenty spiritual leaders offer practical and biblical advice for preparing your home and heart to draw others into your life and into God's family. This book is designed to give you

practical help with cleaning, upkeeping your house, food shopping, meal preparation, planning dinner, parties and showers. In addition, *The Fine Art of Hospitality Handbook* is a great source of tips, wisdom and includes more than 200 recipes from around the world.



## Raising Awesome Kids in Troubled Times

by Sam & Geri Laing – a DPI publication

Sam and Geri Laing have not only written a book that provides answers, but they have a family reflecting the principles taught in God's word. A must read for everyone with children. You will laugh, cry and you will change!



## Friends & Lovers Couples Study Guide

by Mitch & Jan Mitchell – a DPI publication

We are excited to announce the newly released *Friends and Lovers Couples Study Guide* written by Mitch and Jan Mitchell. This book helps couples put

into practice the concepts learned in Sam and Geri Laing's book *Friends and Lovers*.



## The Financial Planning Handbook

by Larry Burkett – a Moody Press publication

Practicals about managing your finances with a series of easy-to-follow worksheets that allow you to structure and maintain your family budget. It is sensible, realistic and easy to use.

\* HOPE for Kids is a service mark of HOPE worldwide

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Volume 4, Issue 5, June 1997

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Ed & Karen Townsend .....(805) 373-5184  
John & Karen Unzueta .....(805) 988-3777

### Deacon/Deaconess

Keith & Robin Bauer; John & Andra Walsh; Jim & Beth Beiermann; Ken & Sara Maupin

## Tri-County Super Region

Cory & Megan Blackwell .....(310) 672-7300

## INLAND EMPIRE REGION

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Eric & Yuriko Stallworth, Administrators .....(909) 980-1152

### Palm Springs Sector

Randy & Donna Haragan .....(619) 360-6777

### Riverside Sector

Tim & Linda Montoya .....(909) 485-2453

### San Bernardino Sector

Anthony & Saun Galang .....(909) 484-9055

## SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

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Brian Beceiro, Administrator .....(213) 385-5434

### Inglewood Sector

Chuck & Carol Bray .....(310) 673-4500

### Mid-Cities Sector

Bill & Lisa Hamilton .....(562) 904-0466

### Dominguez Hills Sector

Doug & Angella Wens .....(310) 515-4882

### Prime Time Sector

Anton & Sharon Ivy .....(310) 643-9736

## SOUTH REGION

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Ted & Kathy Ott, Administrators .....(562) 433-6806

### Lakewood Sector

Mike & Dena Sanicola .....(562) 860-2664

### Long Beach Sector

Jeff & Mary Wadstrom .....(562) 433-4813

### Peninsula Sector

Steve & Theresa Forster .....(310) 798-0679

### Deacon/Deaconess

Brian & Karen Plymell

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