



April 2008

Dear Friend,

My heart is filled with an urgency of reaching people with the Gospel like never before, and here is why: While in New Orleans, last October, a young man attended the WOW JAM; he was a notorious drug dealer and his entire life had been filled with crime and violence. He accepted Jesus that day in New Orleans and returned the next day to be baptized in water. His life changed radically as he started attending church and reading his Bible each evening on the very front porch where he used to sell drugs.

One evening as he read his Bible three men pulled up in a car, got out, went up to the porch and shot him to death . . .

I am glad we went down there, thank you for sending us. He is in heaven along with a 12-year-old girl that came to the same WOW JAM and accepted Jesus. She was killed in a car accident three days later. Her mother is grateful we came down and shared the love of Jesus because her daughter is in heaven; thank you for praying and giving so we could go. But, there are so many more to reach.

I know you will be encouraged as you read the latest stories and see the pictures from our most recent trip (in March) to South Louisiana where we ministered to 8,000 people in 7 WOW JAMS with 2,200 people accepting Jesus. As I am writing this letter to you, we are preparing to leave for Brazil for 10 days. I will be speaking to 5,000 pastors and meeting with teams to identify locations for WOW JAMS in Brazil. They have wanted WOW JAMS down there for some time. We have also been talking to leaders in South Africa who are excited for us to come and do WOW JAMS there.

This year we have added the following cities to our tour: in California – Oakland, Long Beach, and Hanford and in New York – Albany and Schenectady. This is in addition to the 11 cities we have already planned. Also, we are very close to setting dates for JAMS in Nashville and Atlanta. Our 2 Mission Weeks (Los Angeles and New York City) are filling up with teams from churches from around the country. Please pray about participating in one (or both) Mission Weeks, especially, New York where we can always use more volunteers.

As you can already tell from this letter I need your help more than ever. If you were ever to come to California to visit us you would not find a large WOW building with a huge staff. We rent an office space with 6 full time staff and 7 part time staff. We are small; yet, we will personally minister to over 80,000 people this year in the neediest places in the country. We will feed every one of them a hot meal along with free bike repair, haircuts, groceries, family photos and all the other things we do at a WOW JAM to let people know, in this challenging time, there is a God who loves them. We anticipate over 10,000 people accepting Jesus this year!

We will be able to accomplish all this by mobilizing over 6,000 workers from 100 churches around the country. But I need your help, too! I am very grateful for the grants we have received from the Foursquare and Brown Foundations, the generosity of the New Orleans Hornets (NBA team), Frito-lay, Pepsi, Coca-Cola and many other corporations. I appreciate the churches that raise budgets for us to come. But with all of that we still need to raise \$500,000 to meet all the financial needs of the WOW JAM tour this year.

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I know these are difficult times in our country but people need Jesus and the harvest is so ripe. Linda and I have committed everything to His work, to go where He sends us; and now I am asking you to once again stand with Linda and me in prayer and financial support. Please pray about supporting WOW with regular monthly giving; and, also, to consider a special gift this month to send us to new cities and back to New Orleans.

Will you join with us?

Ecclesiastes 11:3 says, “Whoever watches the wind will not plant and whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.” My friends, please do **not** focus on the winds of hell that can blow across this land for that will cause you to live in fear; do **not** be captivated by the clouds of gloom that often form over our society for that will lead you to despair. But, look up – for He is your source of strength – and then you will plant seeds and, together, we will reap the harvest!

I look forward to hearing from you. May God richly bless you.

Your Urban Missionaries,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen and Linda Tavani". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed names.

Stephen and Linda Tavani

It was only 12 Noon, but the sky was growing dark, the temperature was 37 degrees and a cold rain was falling as we stood in the parking lot for the first 2008 WOW JAM, in La Place, Louisiana. As I prayed, "Lord, this is a tough way to kick off the tour," Pastor Neil Bernard came walking up to me. We had just had a great rally, the night before, in his church (New Wine Fellowship) and they had purchased this shopping center which contained an empty K-Mart. We both looked at each other with the same idea . . . and, the first ever indoor WOWJAM was birthed!

In ministry you must be flexible. We set up all the tents in this huge K-Mart; but, the truck would not fit inside, so Glenn Todd (part of our crew) built a stage out of some old cabinets he found in the back of the store. Everyone worked together as we hung the banners from the ceiling and set up the sound system. The local sheriff brought 10 prisoners from the city jail to help set up tents! By 4:30 p.m. there were 1,200 people inside enjoying the JAM! By 7:30 p.m. – 380 of them had accepted Jesus!!!



The next day in Baton Rouge (Gardere) the weather was beautiful. Pastor Fred and Sister Betty Guerin teamed up with other local churches for their first WOW JAM. Just as I was giving the altar call, 3 hard-core gang members moved into the crowd intent on creating problems. Immediately, I began to preach directly to them. One walked away but the other two came forward to accept Jesus, along with 167 others from the crowd.

Here are the two guys, one is wearing a silver chain with a golden gun and hypodermic needle around his neck!



Then . . . when he and his buddy came back the next day to be baptized with 14 other people. He was wearing a chain with a gem-laden silver pair of PRAYING HANDS around his neck!

It was on to New Orleans for 5 WOW JAMS (in a row) with 30 churches and the weather was perfect every day! Marla Clinesmith, our City Coordinator, did a magnificent job along with the Steering Committee, local churches and organizations. Jefferson Parish President Aaron Brussard opened doors and was a true partner for the WOW JAMS down there.



The kids had a blast!

Linda climbed on top of a Hummer for a good look!



Glen Guidry (owner of Le Maison Creole), one of the best caterers in town, brought his crew and portable kitchen out to feed 7,000 with jambalaya, hamburgers, red beans, rice and hot apple pie!



Our 2008 colors – orange, yellow, blue and green – looked great!

Another first was to have an optometrist, Jeff Silbernagle, give eye exams and free prescription glasses.





The New Orleans Hornets (NBA team) invested substantially in the WOW JAMS not only financially; but, their players, cheerleaders and mascot came out and brought a book mobile to give away hundreds of books. This picture shows how this player, Ryan Bowen, towers over me. It's a winning partnership for the people of Louisiana. The Hornets even beat the Lakers, while we were in Louisiana.



Pastor Antoine Barriere, one of the host pastors and member of the Steering Committee was a strong support bringing out many from his church to help. He also brought 60 members of his 100-man choir to minister in song. The power of God fell as these men sang and when I gave the altar call hundreds came forward each night.



Entire families came forward to receive Jesus.



This man came up to the truck crying and asking for prayer for his family. He said they needed God. I held his hand as I prayed for his family to accept Jesus.



The last WOW JAM was in Gretna where we were welcomed by Mayor Ron Harris and a huge crowd. The next day was the baptism and many came out to be baptized, including this man in the picture (left) who rededicated his life to Jesus.



This last picture and story mean so much to me.

Last October, a man who would never go to church and had a troubled life came to the baptism where a young drug dealer, who had been saved at a WOW JAM was being baptized. This man (pictured with me) was so convicted about his wayward life that he jumped into the pool, with his clothes on, and said, "I must be saved!"

Here he is 6 months later. He told me that the Holy Spirit came into his life that day and he has not been the same since. He now goes to church and has led many members of his family to Jesus.

Please keep standing with us and supporting WOW JAMS as we take Jesus to the least, the last, and the lost.



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