

wow jam

WINNING OUR WORLD

Bringing Hope to People in Need



Dear Friend,

September 2011

This picture of the WOW JAM truck arriving in New York City with the Twin Towers in the background is a haunting reminder of the first time we went to NYC for a week of WOW JAMS. It was 16 years ago as we left the hospital with our newborn twin girls Sierra and Nikola. All we had were the blankets they were wrapped in, some diapers, bottles and two car seats as we headed to the airport. We were flying across the country to meet Kathy Hernandez who had just joined WOW a few weeks earlier, and the WOW crew on the East Coast.

We had been invited by Bill Wilson, Pastor/Founder of Metro Ministries, which has the largest Sunday School in the world, to do WOW JAMS in the poorest places in New York City. The first night there, Bill took us to the top of the Twin Towers and as we gazed at the twinkling lights of the city at night, my heart broke for the millions there that don't know Jesus. We prayed that God would use us to reach people with the love of Jesus.

I remember Linda and I sleeping on a mattress on the floor of this inner city apartment holding our newborn babies in our arms so the rats would not bite them. We had to make sure there was no milk around their little mouths because that would attract the cockroaches that were everywhere.

A few thousand people came to the first WOW JAM that week. As I got up to preach, Linda was sitting in a rocking chair next to the truck rocking one of our newborn babies. A little boy with a dirty face came up to her and said "Lady, when you are done rocking your baby, will you rock me?" That is where the rocking ministry started. From that day on, we have brought out rocking chairs to the WOW JAMS where thousands of babies and little kids have been gently rocked by sweet Christians full of the love of Jesus. Many times they would be rocking crack babies or babies that have been abused. Thousands of diapers have been given out at that tent.

We returned to New York City every year and started bringing interns from around the country. Some even stayed there and joined the amazing staff at Metro. I remember one year Bill Wilson came into our room early in the morning and in his gravelly voice yelled "Get up! They shot up your WOW truck!" He then handed me a smashed up bullet that he had dug out of the steering wheel of our truck. 2,000 people got saved that week. We never did fix those bullet holes on the side of the truck.... it is a constant reminder of God's protection and the need for us to keep going.

As part of the tour, we would always go up to Boston after NYC to do WOW JAMS. From there, we would fly home on a Tuesday morning on United flight #11 to Los Angeles. In 2001, we started the tour a week earlier so we left Boston on Tuesday Sept 3rd. Seven days later, United flight #11 left Boston and an hour later crashed into the North Tower in New York City killing all those aboard.....

I remember shortly after 9/11, standing at ground zero and feeling in the pit of my stomach that America and the world would never be the same. I remembered the night I stood on top of those towers which seemed so strong and permanent, a true testament to man's ability to reach up and almost touch heaven...but came crashing down in a matter of hours.

Life can change so quickly. In the book of James we are reminded, *"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanishes away"*(James 4:14). I know that is not a verse we keep on the fridge, but then again, why don't we? Are we so in love with our lives or so deeply immersed in our pleasures that we cannot bear to be reminded that one day it will all disappear like a passing mist?

I remember this little saying that went *"Soon this life as we know it shall pass ... only what's done for Jesus will last."* We kept going back to New York and over the last 16 years in New York alone, approximately 112,500 people have attended and 15,750 accepted Jesus. We helped plant two churches and about 650 interns received training.

9/11 impacted so many lives in so many ways. My wife Linda's father passed away the next day and she could not fly home for her father's funeral because all the planes were grounded. There are many stories today of the children that were effected by 9/11. Many describe the fear and heartbreak of losing family that has led to drug and alcohol addiction.... they are labeled "the 9/11 generation". It breaks my heart that people's lives are being defined by their disaster rather than by their DESTINY. That is why we have asked you to support us so we can go to people whose lives have been devastated by disasters large or small. I believe that people can be healed by the love of Jesus and start to live the destiny God has for them instead of being imprisoned by the disaster that befell them.

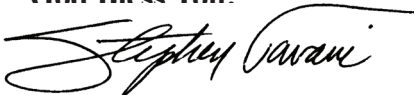
It still amazes me to watch thousands of people gather at the WOW JAM with no violence, arguments or trouble. Just four hours after we begin a WOW JAM, hundreds come forward weeping and accepting Jesus with many being filled with the Holy Spirit and getting healed. On top of that, hundreds have been baptized right there in a blow-up pool! All of this in the space of a few hours in the neediest places in the country.

This has been a tremendous summer with thousands accepting Jesus. Monthly financial support through giving, however, has been very low. I am asking if you will please keep us in prayer and please give this month so we can continue to reach people with the love of Jesus. I realize it is difficult for all of us right now, but for those of you that can, I ask that you do that this month.

We would love for you, your family and a team from your church to join us in ministry at one of the WOW JAM Mission Weeks next year in New Orleans in March, Los Angeles in June or Detroit in July. Hundreds of people have attended and they went back home changed, charged and challenged to reach people with the Gospel! Linda and I look forward to hearing from you this month. Thanks for your prayers, encouragement and support.

"It's only a minute, but eternity's in it." Make your vapor count!

God Bless You.


Stephen Tavani



***Our first time in NYC!**