

# Stop and celebrate goodness

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

Well it happened. We celebrated 10 years of ministry in the Ojai Valley last Sunday. It really is fascinating to reflect on our experiences and God's faithfulness. There remain so many people and organizations to thank for their support and friendship that I cannot even try to name each one. Ultimately, it is God that we are acknowledging in gratefulness for all of the many blessings. But what does it all mean?

I have to admit to you that I was holding my breath to see if anybody would show up to the event and I was amazed at the response. Ping-pong and pool tables, a football and Frisbee, a Jolly Jump, a playground, and a plethora of delicious food and you have got the makings of a great party. Few people had realized our roots in the game room at the Jack Boyd Community Center. We debuted the newest CD coming out of the church. It is an outreach tool to communicate the hope and life-changing message of Jesus through hip-hop. Even those who really don't like this style of music appreciated the value of getting God's word through in a hearable way to a generation who have been deprived of these truths. It was genuinely uplifting. There was even an "open mike" time. The whole evening closed with a worship service in the chapel that combined phenomenal harmonies with hearts of thanksgiving to Jesus. It was energetic. There was an excitement in the air and unity of the soul among God's people. It was good!

Partnering pastors throughout our valley and beyond were invited. We read some messages from ministers who couldn't attend and were exhorted in person by another to expect great things from an amazing God. And that really is my point in writing to you today. You see, our time is less of a reflection on things past than an anticipation of wonderful times to come. This produces faith today in our loving God who reaches into the lives of his children.

As people share their testimonies of radical life changes, one thing becomes clear; it is God that grabs hold of the individual and not the reverse. Climbing the stairway to heaven is an impossibility that leaves people empty and depressed. The simplicity of the message that "Jesus loves you" produces more explosive power to live an amazing life than most realize. It opens the door to find truth in a relevant manner. In short, Jesus instructed that we look no further; he is truth. And many lives tell that story.

I don't know if you will find this strange or not but one of our main points for celebration was regarding what hasn't happened yet. Specifically, marriages that have yet to be restored that will be, families that are not currently reconciled but will, addictions that are currently strongholds that will be broken, and atheists, agnostics, Hindus, theosophists, Muslims, "in name only Christians" and others, that will put their lives in Jesus' hands. Many of these will be our future ushers, elders, teachers, and preachers in our church. This is the story of so many in our congregation today and is the record of the ministry of Calvary Chapel in general. We are celebrating those who think they are outside of Christ and have never imagined themselves as being in this body, let alone leading, who are already written in the Book of Life. We have begun to thank God for the beautiful stories that only he knows.

The Bible defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Unlike the way we hear a lot of people talk about it these days, faith is "substance and evidence" of future and unseen things. The same passage further instructs "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:1,6). How about you? Are you one of the ones that we are thanking God for in advance who is in need of restoration, reconciliation or help? Maybe it is one of your friends or family members that need what only Jesus can give. Have hope! Add faith to your prayer. Expect amazing things. God loves you!

Our family loves to go to Disneyland. They sure know how to throw a party! And they use every anniversary as an excuse to turn the whole year into a promotional extravaganza. Their marketing people are ingenious. Right now it is the "Year of a Million Dreams" — not a day, week or month, but a whole year of festivity. That makes for a bunch of revenue for Disneyland, but seen differently, it also produces a lot of smiles on the faces of children and their parents. In the Scriptures, we have the Year of Jubilee. It is an extended time to stop and celebrate the goodness and faithfulness of God. I want to finish with this challenge: What in your life needs to be celebrated? Chances are that you have a lot to thank God for. Why not stop today and dedicate some time toward reflection and celebration in anticipation of God's continuing hand on your life. Maybe it is time that you had a party!

To read other articles by Pastor Dan visit [Ojai Valley News Articles](http://OjaiValleyNewsArticles)

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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### **Sunday Worship:**

**9:00 & 10:30am**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

### **Mid-Week Study:**

**7:00pm Thursday**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View