



## The History of the Ministry

Because you're dying to know

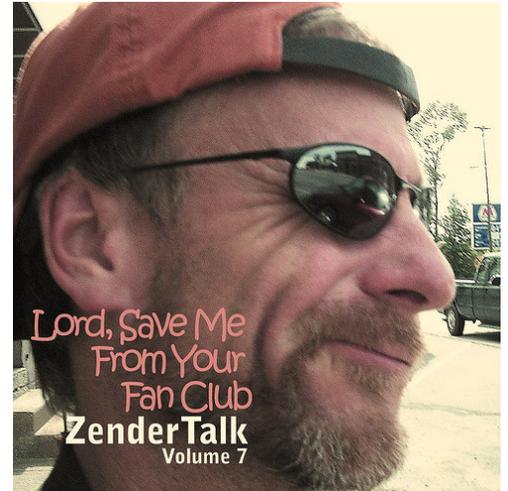
**H**ello, everyone. This is Martin Zender, coming to you live from my undisclosed location in a humble town that brags of not a single traffic light. Oh, well. The Savior of the world was born in a barn, so this encourages me.

Mine is not a huge organization, and neither is Starke & Hartmann a Fortune 500 publisher. All of what you've been reading and hearing about God through my books and my website is the result of a vision I acted upon 17 years ago yesterday. It was not a literal vision of winged beings, but a mental picture of what God called me to do in my prime of life. And that was to tell the news of the evangel of the grace of God to those who have never heard it. I wanted people to know that God was more gracious, powerful, and loving than Billy Graham said He was.

### Employment, 202

I worked for the U.S. Postal Service from 1985 through 1993. When I got hired, I felt like I'd struck gold. To work for the Postal Service was thought to be a dream job. I guess it was. It was a secure job with good pay and benefits. The only way one could lose it was to kill supervisors and co-workers, and even then the bosses could still probably use you to deliver mail on Saturdays—in an emergency. By the time 1990 rolled around, I was making \$17 an hour, which at that time (and still today) is a decent wage. I needed a decent wage to support my wife and growing family.

Since I was eight years old, I have been conscious of the hand of God upon me. I always felt a sense of destiny, like God was going to use me to do something important. Growing up, I had no idea what it was. For a while, I wanted to be a veterinarian. Then I wanted to be a professional football player. When I was ten, I wanted to be an explorer. I would



have settled Kentucky, but Daniel Boone had already done it. Then I thought that a professional drumming career might be in my future. I did end up doing that for a while, playing Top 40 hits to drunken veterans at the VFW. I belonged to a group called—I'm sorry to say—The Polytones. I did whatever my hand found to do, never losing my sense of awe for life and what it could hold.

All this time, I loved to write. By the time I turned eight or nine, I was writing poetry and short stories. My mom's favorite poem was, "The Zoop." I wrote "The Zoop" in the fourth grade. It was about a strange creature with short black hair and a red tail that lived in the bathtub. One dark and stormy night, The Zoop fell asleep and met his demise—along with twenty gallons of water—via the drain.

### Out the window, into God's arms

I stuttered when I was a kid, which is a surefire way to hate school. My twelve years of compulsory education were terrible years because of wanting to talk fluently and not being able to. When asked to stand up and read aloud, I would pretend to lose my place. I'd put on a big show of

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being stupid, and it worked. The teacher would tell me to sit down, and all the kids would laugh. I was glad to sit down, but I never saw what was so darn funny about a poor kid losing his place in a book.

All through school, I would “forget” to do oral report projects. “Memory lapses happen,” I’d say to my irritated teachers. Part of my grade problem in school was that I dodged assignments that would have required me talking in front of the class. Another part of my grade problem was that I snuck out of bathroom windows occasionally—for a breath of fresh air. The upside of being a stutterer was that I found fluency in the written word. So I wrote things like “The Zoop,” and found meaning in life.

As you know, I was raised in the Catholic Church. There was always a religious influence in my life, at least on Sunday mornings between ten and eleven o’clock. I knew at an early age that I loved God, and that I wanted to be on God’s side—especially when hell started. I spent years of Sundays staring at the crucifix above the altar at church, trying to figure out what exactly happened to Jesus in Jerusalem that year. I did the whole Lent thing because I wanted to be like my Lord and Savior. I prayed the rosary in bed at

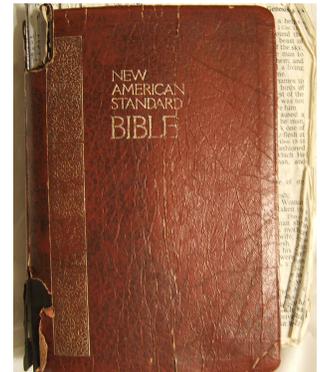
night; I went to confession; I skipped recess a few times to kneel at the altar railing in the church and pray for souls in purgatory. I couldn’t stand the thought that there were decent people floating around against their wills in some dim, celestial soup, all because I was throwing a ball around the playground instead of praying my brains out.

In the spring of 1979, I had what the Christian religion would call a “born again” experience. I was watching the mini-series *Jesus of Nazareth* on television, and the drama of the final installment of Jesus dragging His cross to Calvary moved me. I felt overwhelmed by God’s love and I went into my bedroom and cried. I told God then that I had to find out Who Jesus was and why He died for my sake. This was the same feeling I’d had years before—the feeling of wanting to know what happened at the cross—only now I was embarking upon an intelligent search.

I bought my first Bible at this time, a New American Standard. I still have it. I read that Bible three times.

Things were starting to make sense—sort of. I still believed in eternal torment, however, so I couldn’t make total sense of the cross. I still believed that a person had to go to church and eat the Magic Bread in order to be right with God.

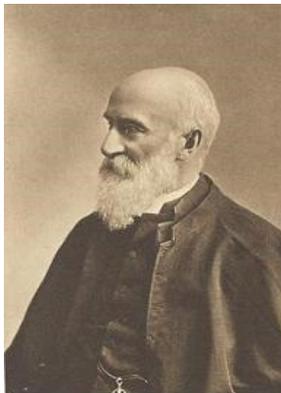
In 1982, my future father-in-law, Art, bought me a concordance. I didn’t know what it was. I said, “What is this, Art?” He told me it was a reference tool that listed every word in the Bible. He gave me a crash course in using it. He showed me the Greek word *aion*, and how it was wrongly translated



“eternal” and “everlasting.” Art didn’t believe in the doctrine of eternal torment. I picked up the concordance and thought what a nice doorstop it would make. I didn’t know how anybody could not believe in a doctrine that was “all over the Bible.” Art showed me how the doctrine of eternal torment wasn’t in the Bible at all, but I didn’t believe him. God had given me a temporary spirit of stupor.

A year went by, and I married Art’s daughter, Melody. Melody knew the truth of what Jesus had done at Calvary, so I tried to change her mind. I did it civilly, because Melody looked great in her blue jeans and I didn’t want to make her mad. I almost convinced Melody that Jesus was a failure, but she stubbornly remained smarter and more spiritual than me, in spite of the misappropriated scripture passages I whispered in her ear at night.

In 1984, Art gave me a book written in the late nineteenth century by a man named Andrew Jukes. Jukes was a man of large, archaic words. His book was called, *The Restitution of all Things*. That book changed my life. I could not deny the weight of evidence; Jukes had loaded up on about 1149 facts and presented them in neat order. And so, Jesus



was, indeed, the Savior of all mankind, as 1 Timothy 4:10 had so plainly declared Him to be. I’m sure Jesus breathed a heavy sigh of relief when I jumped on His bandwagon.

The alternative to the salvation of all was now too ridiculous to consider. The Christ of my childhood grew ten times, like the Grinch’s heart. My heart grew, too. It was a thing of Mt. Crumpet-like proportions to learn that the righteousness of God worked alongside His love. I knew that God was love, but I

thought He had to condemn people simultaneously because He was righteous. Then I found out that God sending Jesus to the cross to rescue all humanity *was* righteous. So saving humanity was righteous *and* loving, all at the same time. God loved with the purest love known, and He proved Himself righteous by demonstrating His love for all at the cross. The result would be the eventual reconciliation of the universe through the blood of His Son.

Now I really began studying.

### To write or not to write

Allow me to return to my writing career. I’d been working for the Postal Service for five years; the year was 1989. I began to wonder if I could convince people to pay me for writing. Friends had told me for years that I had what it took to write professionally. I only half believed them; the other half of me thought they were nuts. Truth was, I feared success. I was intimidated by the prospect of becoming adept at something mightier than the sword.

I went to the local library and took out two books on how to write better, and one book on how to launch a writing career. Those books sat in the passenger seat of my blue Gremlin for two weeks. I didn’t open one of them. The rain blew through the holes in my Gremlin door and dampened the covers of these books. I knew that if I even cracked one of the books, my world would change forever and life would become an uphill battle for me. So when the two weeks were up, I rumbled up to the library chute and dropped the damp volumes into the chute, unopened. I had dodged the bullet. But God never seems to run out of ammo.

The next year, I got the books again, only this time I read them. I credit my postmaster and supervisor for my change of heart. I credit them for eventually making life in the Postal Service miserable.

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I started writing better, and became an observer of life. I wrote essays about my family, about the Gulf War (the first one), about plastic yard ornaments, and about the strange way cashiers returned change. I actually had the nerve one day near Christmas to send one of my essays to *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Ohio's largest newspaper. I had written an essay about not being able to lie to my oldest son about Santa Claus. I let a few days go by, then started checking the newspaper every day



to see if the story had made it. I never saw it, and I was really disappointed. A couple weeks went by, and I

called the editor to whom I'd addressed my submission, inquiring after it. The editor's name was (and probably still is) Jim Strang. Making that call was harder than calling a girl for a date. (I was an insecure writer back then.) Jim Strang said, "Oh, yeah, wow, what a great story that was. We ran it on the 16<sup>th</sup>. You'll be getting your check in about a week." I hung up the phone, stunned. The story had run two days after I'd mailed it, and I'd missed it. Everyone in northeastern Ohio had read it except me. Along with the check would come a copy (called a "tear sheet" in the industry) of my essay. When the check and tear sheet came, I stared at them, gratified. I'd become a professional writer.

I began writing feature stories for a medium-sized newspaper then, called the *Mansfield News Journal*. They called us correspondents. After several months at the paper, I got my own column, complete with accompanying photo. I wrote about flies taking over the world, about why I hated to mow grass, about my favorite cat, and about how Barbie (the doll) nearly committed suicide outside her New York apartment one Christmas day. My

editor Jeannie Gorgas thought my creative machinery leaned toward the eccentric, but the public liked me. In addition to my *News Journal* columns, I kept sending stories to *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and the paper kept publishing them and sending me checks.

I was surprised when one particular *Plain Dealer* story saw print. I had transplanted modern, politically active Christians into first-century Jerusalem and made them successfully rescue Jesus from the cross. The story ran at Easter. It was called "When Christians Rescued Christ." The story was so controversial that Jim Strang got into trouble for publishing it. I got bold and brassy on the heels of that, sending my already-published material to bigger papers—just to see what would happen. Within a year, I had bylines in the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and other major dailies.

Besides my growing family, my loves at this time were studying scripture and writing. It was only natural for me to begin putting the two together.

## Go thou and do likewise

In 1983, my wife had introduced me to the work of a man named Ray Prinzing. Ray lived in Boise, Idaho, and wrote a newsletter called *Letters of Truth*. Every three weeks, Ray self-published this paper—a simple, six page letter stapled on the upper left-hand corner, folded over once and slapped with an address label—mailing it to anyone who wrote asking him for it. He had around two thousand subscribers. Ray Prinzing believed in the success of Christ, and I learned a lot from his writings. When John Lennon first saw Elvis swinging his hips and making girls scream, he thought to himself, *Hmm, now there's a good job*. That's exactly what I thought to myself when I found out that Ray Prinzing was writing about God on six pieces of typewriter paper, mailing it to people, and earning a living from it.

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In 1985 I began my own six-page publication, modeling it on Ray Prinzing's *Letters of Truth*. I called it *Food For Thought*. I'm pretty sure it was boring. I did pack it with truth, though. I mailed to eleven subscribers. I thanked my father-in-law Art at this time for the Young's Analytical Concordance he'd given me; I'd since found something else to stop my doors with. (I still have that concordance.) I kept trying to improve my writing. After six months, however, *Food For Thought* still had eleven subscribers.

Then came the fateful day in 1992 (three children now added to the mix) that I looked at myself in the mirror at 4:30 a.m. and asked myself, before going to work, what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I knew that the answer wasn't: put the same letters into the same mail slots for the next twenty years. As I was formulating my answer and debating whether or not to shave, God Himself posed the question: "Forget about money, Martin. Forget for a moment that actions have consequences, and let's play a little game. If you could do anything you wanted for a living, what would it be?" Well, when He put it that way, the answer was simple. "I would study and write about You," I said to God. "I would study and write about You full time, and continue to share the truth with others." "Would you shave?" God asked. "I'm not sure," I an-

swered. "Probably."

This was a big joke. It was a game I was playing with myself—*wasn't it?* No one quit the Postal Service; no one was that stupid. I had a wife and three children to support. But I remember thinking that there was a gaping need in the world for truth about God. It occurred to me that, in order to find happiness, people needed to hear right things about God. They sure weren't getting this in church. People were chronically distraught, and didn't know why. They thought more church was the answer, but this only made the problem worse. Millions were imprisoned in religious bondage. I felt for these people, and I wanted to help them. The phrase began to circulate in my mind then: "Studying and writing about God is a legitimate living." This was an awkward phrase, but it sufficed for circulating purposes.

I sized-up my prospective field and noticed how unfit the current penmen were to communicate with a young, modern audience. Few even considered the people they were writing to "an audience." I was troubled as well that so few people published truth full time. I didn't understand the hesitancy to pour every ounce of resource into battle against religious deception. It was as if people were giving all their energy to their "real jobs," then relegating whatever was left to the defense of the Deity. I didn't get that. It was a tragedy to me. I knew that the Christian religion, with all its false teachings, was spending millions, even billions of dollars training thousands of people to labor full time in teaching the world—what? About a God of conditional love whose attempt at salvation at Calvary was too weak to overcome Adam's sin.

Slowly, a week at a time, I began to think



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more seriously about leaving the Postal Service.

Have you ever hatched something that you would call a “crazy idea,” but then, because the idea is so crazy, you dismiss it? But then a day or a week later it resurfaces, only this time with some of the craziness sanded off to make it seem less daft? But then you shake it out of your mind again anyway, because it still scares the daylights out of you. But it doesn’t stay away because it really is a good idea; it’s just different. It creeps back into your head and lodges behind your eyes. This went on with me for a month.

I don’t remember the exact moment I knew I would do it. I’ve probably blocked it from my mind, so terrifying was it. There were moments after making the decision that peace overwhelmed me. Other moments fell like concrete to the back of my skull. What would I tell my parents? My in-laws? My boss? How could I know for sure that I could make enough money to support my family?

I went for a walk through the woods around this time, wrestling with angels and demons. It was a pleasant walk, except for the demons.



During a break in the action, God gave me a life-changing thought. With my old *Food for Thought* publication, I was forcing myself to write like Ray Prinzing. I was trying to write “spiritually.” I wanted to sound adult-like and scholarly and smart. The life-changing thought was that the world of spiritual seekers already had a Ray Prinzing newsletter. What it needed was a Martin Zender newsletter. And I knew the guy! “So *that’s* why I only

have eleven subscribers,” I said to a big tree.

I realized then that I was going to have to stop trying to write like other people and start writing like myself. As obvious as it sounds now, this was sweet revelation to me. As the revelation settled, several of my troublesome demons ran for cover. I felt free. I would write my scriptural newsletter just like I wrote my newspaper essays. Why should I change hats and switch voices just because I wrote about plastic chipmunks one minute and the God of the Universe the next? I was funny, satirical, and a bit crazy in my essays and newspaper columns. Why not carry that natural bend to my new newsletter? I’d cram it with cartoons, and maybe some of my own drawings. *Was this legal?* I had never seen such a newsletter, but as the saying goes, a writer writes what he can’t find at the bookstore. I imagined that such a publication would appeal to the truth-seeking public. I didn’t know for sure, but I was willing to find out.

## Dollars, but little sense

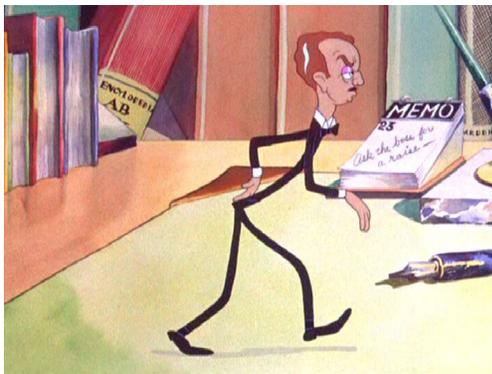
Just before leaving the Postal Service, I went to a financial counselor. This was a terrible mistake; I would have been better off banging my head repeatedly against a steel pipe. The counselor asked me how many subscribers I had for my proposed newsletter. “Eleven,” I said. But then it came to my mind that a few of the people probably wouldn’t like my new cartoons. So I corrected myself and said, “Possibly only eight.” The counselor’s face went blank. He still had a mouth and a nose and all, they just weren’t doing anything. The counselor then asked me how much I was going to charge for my new publication. “Nothing,” I said. This was the first time I had actually heard myself talk on this topic, and I didn’t like how I sounded. Neither did the counselor.

The counselor asked me if I’d had any money saved up. I was finally able to answer briskly and with confidence, telling him that,

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four years earlier, a fellow-worker had talked me into signing up for a retirement account where the government matched my contribution, up to 5%. In four years, the account had grown to \$20,000. I was impressed by this figure—when I heard myself say it. The counselor, however, was *depressed* by it.

“That’s barely enough to get you through your first *year*,” the counselor said in a mocking and incredulous tone. “You’re going to be *thin*.” He kept saying this word, “*thin*.” I was wishing he would quit saying it, but he became enamored of it. And he continued to italicize it. Any monetary fact I could muster in my favor (and there weren’t many) was met with “*thin*...you’re going to be very *thin*.”



“You’re going to be very *thin*,” he kept saying.

At full irritation now, the counselor began scratching numbers and symbols onto his chalkboard. I was confused by the numbers and the symbols. The numbers and the symbols, together, seemed to indicate a horrible future for me. The indication was that I would have to mortgage my house, get a second job, prostitute my wife; perhaps sell my children. Honest to God—I had no idea what the man was talking about. Never one to be confused with Charles Schwab, I became dazed. All I saw on the board were a bunch of numbers, a bunch of %’s, a bunch of \$’s, and one or two ©’s. I wanted to cry.

Finally, the man stopped attacking his blackboard and looked at me. I pretended to look

back at him, but I was far inside my brain searching for a happy place. I finally nodded solemnly, got up, shook the man’s hand, thanked him for his time, and then walked from the building like Hermann Goering must have walked from the Nuremberg trials. I called Melody from a pay phone and said (I remember these exact words): “It’s all over. We can’t do it. We’re idiots.” It was months later when the realization hit me: when God paints you into a corner, your course is unavoidable and God’s will *will* be done. *Fear not to be an idiot. In fact, God employs such. He habitually chooses these kinds of people to confound people like Charles Schwab.*

Still, I walked through a tunnel of fear. As I went through the motions of submitting my two-weeks notice, I endured times so paralyzing that I couldn’t talk. The reality of what I’d be putting my family through sunk in. Once a person quits the Postal Service, he cannot go back. A person in postal employ needn’t worry about burning bridges—the government does that for him. The only marketable skill I had was the ability to put words together in a sensible and entertaining fashion. Still, I was walking off a cliff; freelance writing was one of the hardest businesses to make a living at, especially when the writer charges no money for his product. Thank God for *Reader’s Digest*. A quote I read in that magazine around this time said: “When you jump off a cliff, you *will* build wings on the way down.” I thanked God for the quote, and I lauded Jesus for the genius who had italicized the “will.”

Comfort was not to be found in concrete realities at this time, for this was a walk of faith. All the concrete realities screamed, “Fool!” Yes, there was the twenty thousand dollars at the credit union, but that was only to help underwrite my first year. I knew how quickly that money would evaporate. But again, faith is not about seen things. If you can see clearly how you’re going to get from Point A to Point B, faith becomes void.



October 1, 1993

I quit the Postal Service on October 1, 1993. Every time I went to the credit union to withdraw from the precious account, I'd feel sick. Big numbers turned smaller and smaller. I dreaded the day when everything would turn to zeroes. That money was my security. I thought I was walking by faith, but I wasn't because the money was a safety net. This may sound strange to some, but the day in 1994 when I withdrew the last dollar from that account was a great and glad day. Why? I had nothing more to lose. This was the day when I started walking by faith. I drove away from the credit union that day exhilarated. I had graduated downward to the end of the rope, the place where God worked His finest miracles.

The newsletter began to slowly build a readership. As I suspected, people had never seen anything like it—and they were ready for it. At its peak, my little publication visited 600 mailboxes. Big deal? It was to me, and to the owners of the mailboxes. As I said, I never charged money for the newsletter. I told people: "If my writing helps you; if it changes your life; if it gives you peace and introduces you to the glories of God, then pay me what you think it's worth." And by this method I made a living. I honestly never worried about income; humiliation kept me busy enough. God humiliated me again and again, financially. But as often as He crushed, He blessed.

It all balanced out—the gives and the takes—and my family and I led a safe and cozy life. Melody stayed home and together we raised three young men. And I wrote as if my life depended on it.

### The dumb shall speak

Allow me to regress. When God pulled me from my postal grave in 1993, I told Him that I would do whatever it took to spread the good news. I began going to conferences to listen to qualified teachers, and to learn more about the amazing salvation won for the world at Calvary. At one such meeting in Windham, Ohio in early June of 1994, the conference organizer, Ted McDivitt—a subscriber to my newsletter—approached me in my little plastic chair and said, "I have a speaking slot open tomorrow at 2 p.m., and I'd like you to take it."

Well—damn. *Why did you just do that, Ted? Why did you purposely approach me in my comfortable plastic chair and ruin my already*

**I crossed my arms, closed my eyes, turned off my brain and said, "Sure, Ted."**

*perilous life? At best, you have just spoiled my enjoyment of your wonderful conference; at worst, you have damned me to a perspiratory hell. I promised God that I would take advantage of every opportunity to teach truth, and yet now*

*you have set my worst fear before me: public speaking.* I'll never forget what I did at that moment. I crossed my arms, closed my eyes, turned off my brain and said, "Sure, Ted. I'll do it."

I may have slept an hour that night, but I doubt it. Worry was my nightcap, dread the case around my pillow. Around 2 a.m., I decided to speak on a subject I'd been studying: Paul's thorn in the flesh. At 6:25, the sun

rose upon the day of my death. Reaching my car for the ten-mile drive back to Windham, I hoped for battery trouble. But alas, these pesky batteries never fail when you want them to.

Several speakers spoke before me. I envied them because they were finished. They all came up to me and wished me luck. I tried to answer, but all my spit was gone. As the Romans prepared my cross, a big German guy named Herb Dirks came up to me and said, "I give you some advice." I could only stare at him. "Get up, speak up, and shut up," he said.

I still had time to go into the tiny bathroom and kneel at the soap-caked sink. I prayed to God that He would somehow speak through me. I begged Him to get me through my trial. I felt so weak and insufficient. I have tried, since then, to never forget that feeling.



I took the lectern and faced fifty people, ninety-seven percent of whom were older, wiser, and better-salivated than me. It is not a figure of speech when people say that knees knock; mine literally rattled like castanets. My

heart was beating like something out of a Poe tale. In the midst of this torture, I began to speak.

The age of miracles, apparently, is still upon us. How else to explain what happened? God took my weakness and turned it into strength. I know He said He would do that, but I never really believed Him. Following my little prayer in that bathroom, God had freed me to make an ass of myself, if need be; I was free to fail. Approaching that podium, I realized in the depths of my telltale heart that the message outweighed the messenger, and that people weren't here to listen to me, but to what God would have to say through me. Words came. They didn't come flawlessly, but they came. Like Christmas in Whoville, they came just the same. God slowly settled my nerves and made me fluent.

Somehow, a half hour passed; I had drank three cups of water. Afterwards, people shook my hand (it had finally stopped shaking on its own) and said, "Hey, that was so *interesting*." I was so relieved. I just kept nodding my thanks. And then I really had to use the bathroom for purposes besides praying.

After that, people asked me to speak at their conferences. They did this not just because of my Scriptural knowledge, but because I'd learned liberation at the podium. I never forgot the lesson learned at the soap-caked sink: I was only a vessel of God, sent by God to deliver His message. Thus educated, I had dodged the mortal enemy of all stutterers and public speakers in general: self-awareness. After all the years of being stopped up, however, I was like a calf leaping through spring grass. Nobody could shut me up.

Back to my writing career.

## The Seattle Revelation

After six years of newsletter writing, the numbers peaked. I was interested in numbers only because the more people I could convince of the truth, the more people would

magnify God in their hearts and minds. I was not out to build a kingdom, but to get people to believe in God in spite of what the clergy told them. But after six and a half years, I found myself preaching to the choir. While my subscribers and I were getting smarter and smarter, the world was getting dumber and dumber. I wanted to reach out to a larger audience. I wanted to take the good news message beyond these insiders who had known the truth their whole lives. My choice was either give the satiated scholar-types more and finer details, or break down upon a people I'd never met.

I had a bend for the sunrise.

It was at this time that I thought about writing a book. Writing the newsletter satisfied me for a while, but I wanted my words in a more permanent format. Newsletters went to paper drives, generally, but books outlived their authors. God kept saying to me over and over again, "Write a book...write a book...write a book." I took Him seriously.

In 2000, my family and I got invited to Seattle to share the grace of God with a small group there. At first, I didn't want to go; I was already doing too much traveling. But here was an opportunity for my family to travel together to the Pacific Northwest, where I'd never been. Our hosts, Stan and Ruth Hartmann, believed in our work. So off we went to the land of Starbucks. Maybe we'd see a whale.

What a wonderful time we had. No whales surfaced for us, but something significant did happen at a restaurant outside of town. After one of the meetings, Stan Hartmann took another guy and me out to lunch. I always love it when this happens, not just because of the food, but because of the intimate fellowship

with likeminded people. It was raining, naturally, but the booth we picked inside the restaurant was completely dry. At the booth, while picking at my salad, I began telling Stan about my idea for a book.

Stan asked me if I'd ever looked into starting my own publishing company. I said I had, but that it seemed the chicken way out. I always wanted to get published, I said, by a big, New York firm. Stan asked if I thought my ego was involved in that. I told him that my ego was president of it. The other guy at the table laughed so hard at that comment that he choked on his café mocha. Stan said

that some notable names in literature had started at small firms, or published their books themselves. I said, "Name two," and he said, "Mark Twain and Walt Whitman." I said, "Name two more." The other guy laughed so hard at *that* remark that I thought we were going to have to Heimlich him. Stan kept talking, and the more he talked, the more attractive his idea looked to me, and the more the other guy

quit laughing. For one thing, I would retain creative control of my work. For another, I'd be able to keep most of the profits, rather than surrender 80% (the pathetic industry standard) to a publisher and agent.

I left Seattle whaleless, yet inspired.

### Company time, and a new book

I have one other sibling, a sister, who is two years younger than me. She's also a believer. She's a smart girl, too, because she loved "The Zoop." Kelly always did believe in me; she knew that I'd be a successful writer some day. Melody and I returned from Seattle, took Kelly to breakfast and asked her, "How would you like to start a publishing com-



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pany?” Kelly set down her orange juice and said, “Really? Okay.” Such a great kid. And smart. On a Monday afternoon, then, about five months later, Kelly and I found ourselves on the fourteenth floor of a high-rise in Akron, Ohio, signing legal documents to form a corporation called “Starke & Hartmann, Inc.”



Kelly and me bookending Mom and Dad, since deceased. 1977.

I picked “Stark” because it was the name of the county Kelly lived in (with an “e” added for flair), and “Hartmann” in honor of the man in Seattle who started me on the road to frequent despair and blinding joy.

All I needed now was a book. Where to begin? How complex should it be? How many topics should I cover? Should I write about hell? Salvation? Free will? Death? Sin? All of the above? I needed to get down to basics.

What was the main religious issue in people’s lives? It was the same one the woman at the well asked Jesus about in John 4:20: “You Jews say that Jerusalem is the place people ought to worship,” she said to Him, “yet we and our forefathers worship God in this mountain. Where do you say we should worship?” It’s the same thing people are hung up on today: where should we worship? Jesus answered, “Truly I say to you, the hour is coming when you will neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father. The hour is coming, and is already here, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”

I would write about the problems of going to church.

Three months later, I had finished the manuscript of what would become *How to Quit Church Without Quitting God*. It was my newsletter in book form. It had the same type humor, the same kinds of cartoons, the same hard-hitting, no-apologies truth. I believed that this book would find its niche in the publishing world and promote truth in a larger way than my newsletter ever did. And it has.

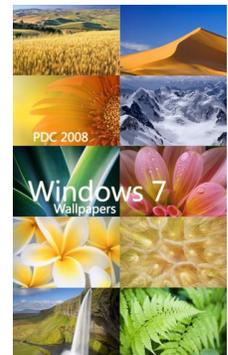
All 3000 copies of *How to Quit Church Without Quitting God* are out there somewhere; we have no more left. The world hungered for it, and they got it. So thank God. And yes, I’ll soon be writing an updated paperback edition—thank you for asking.

## The circus done come

When it comes to writing about truth, I have often referred to myself as “the clown outside the tent.” This means that I consider myself the literary link between the regular guy on the street and scholarly works like Andrew Jukes’ *The Restitution of all Things*. While Mr. Jukes’ book helped me, it was so scholarly and archaically written that the average person would bail out of

it on page one. To employ another metaphor, I consider myself Windows on the scholars’ DOS. I am the happy little colorful icon atop the vast and complicated operating system. People get the same truth and scholarship from me as they get from the multisyllabic, cartoonless wonderdudes, but they go away blessed and smiling. I can’t think of a better way to make a living.

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298 09-10-96 5:06p COPY (BEFORE H
341 09-23-96 1:21p AUTOEXEC.BOR
448 10-24-96 12:09a AUTOEXEC.DOS
467 01-16-97 8:37p AUTOEXEC.01
504 04-04-97 3:12p AUTOEXEC.001
504 04-19-97 12:11p AUTOEXEC.H01
547 09-10-96 1:35p NETLOG.TXT
572 04-19-97 12:11p AUTOEXEC.BAT
928 06-13-97 9:32a SCANDISK.LOB
086 05-29-97 8:57p TEXTFILE.WVE
641 02-02-07 10:39p MSDOS.SYS
160 10-24-96 8:38p CPMDINFO.DAT
349 05-31-94 6:22a WINR20.386
752 12-19-96 12:00a TEXTES_01.doc
383 05-10-97 1:03p PROLOGUE.NET
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# The History of the Ministry

# History 101

Thank you for reading me, and for supporting my work over the years. This is an organic outreach, which means that I do not get paid by a soulless corporation. This work is supported by you, the body of Christ. Underlying all—the giving and the receiving—is the inspiration of God. The Social Security Administration sends me my statement every year, and I see what I could have earned over the past seventeen years had I remained in government employ. Doing what I do has personally cost me around \$150,000—probably more. I rarely look at it that way, however. I think, instead, of what it would have cost spiritually had I not done it. For one thing, I would never have met any of you.

I continue to rely on your love, your prayers, your encouraging words, and your support of this ministry. My entire life has felt like a series of miracles, but most miracles pale beside the longevity of this work. I consider this the noblest work on Earth, and yet potentially the most discouraging. Still, I thank God for every day He enables me to do it. I never take it for granted. When discouragement comes—as it inevitably does—God makes sure that someone writes me to say how blessed they have been by my work. It really does help; it keeps me going for another day.

Thank you again—all of you.

Remaining your servant in Christ,

*Martin*

Those wishing to contribute to Martin's ministry, may click here. Thank you!

[http://martinzender.com/donation\\_mz.htm](http://martinzender.com/donation_mz.htm)

—Kelly Stokoe, Starke & Hartmann, Inc.

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