

Colorado Springs



Pastor Al Pittman and Jean Elsarboukh greet each other after worship service.



The church facilities provide a panoramic view of the mountains.



Calvary Worship Center offers opportunities for fellowship with an open area that includes a bookstore, café, and expansive lobby.

Story by Christmas M. Beeler
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Calvary Worship Center

Led by Pastor Al Pittman, believers at Calvary Worship Center are making disciples and reaching out around the world. Church leaders attribute their growth to a passion for the Word. One young man shared his testimony.

A Renewed Mind

For Garrett King—nicknamed “Stitch”—life was a confusing maelstrom. As a teen, Garrett had heard the Gospel but never surrendered to Christ. When he joined the military, his mental instability intensified, and he was released from the service. Struggling with delusional thinking and other mental disorders, he wound up on

the streets and began using illegal drugs. Always clad in black and covered with tattoos and piercings, he often cut himself and withdrew from other people.

His life was a living nightmare: He heard and saw demons; he couldn’t decide some days if he was a man or woman; he confused reality and delusions; he was haunted daily by depression and fear. Finally, through government assistance, he got an apartment and got off the streets. With a safe place to sleep, he lay awake in bed one night. For the past several weeks, he could not stop thinking about God. He knew he needed help. Tonight, he knew he needed God.

With his girlfriend Ashley asleep beside him, the 25-year-old man prayed, “God, I know that I can’t wait until I’m okay to come to You. I need You now. I lay down all of these things I don’t understand and surrender my life to You.” A little while later, he couldn’t get his many prescriptions filled. Garrett resolved not to go back to illegal drug use and instead to trust God. In a few days, he was thinking clearly for the first time in years. He knew the Lord had healed his mind.

Shortly thereafter, Garrett and Ashley were sitting in Calvary Worship Center, a Calvary Chapel church in Colorado Springs. As Pastor Al Pittman taught from

the Bible verse by verse, Garrett and Ashley felt as if God was speaking directly to them. *How does this guy know the very questions I’ve been asking?* Garrett wondered. They continued to come to church, and soon Ashley accepted Christ as her Savior.

Wanting to obey God’s Word, Garrett and Ashley married in January of 2008. Later, one of the pastors, Mark Bofill, offered to mentor him. “It was an answer to prayer,” Garrett remembered. “I had been crying out to God for help.” He and a dozen other young men now meet routinely with Pastor Mark for encouragement and prayer. Earlier this year, Garrett got a job that enables him to support his new family.

“I would not be where I am today without God,” Garrett said. “He cleaned me up, got me away from the darkness I was in. This is the first time in my life that I can think with a clear mind. The only healing I found was through Christ.”

When he feels weak or discouraged, Garrett stands on Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Another verse close to his heart exhorts believers to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good ... and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2b). Garrett added, “God has renewed

my mind as I've been keeping in His Word, in prayer, and in fellowship. ... He has made me a 'new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Now he encourages others who struggle with mental confusion or drugs. "I believe God can reach anyone," he commented. "Even though people might stray really far, God can lead them through all of that. ... God's love was the biggest thing that drew me to Him."

But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
Matthew 19:26

Making Disciples

Mark Bofill, the senior high youth pastor, remarked about Garrett, "God is using his example here. He's very zealous and willing to serve in any way. He's always coming to me with questions about the Bible or to ask for prayer."

He added, "Jesus called us to make disciples, not simply converts. A disciple is someone who is always learning and growing in their faith."

When mentoring others, Mark said, "Everybody's different." He tries to encourage others in their faith no matter where they are spiritually. "The Bible said about Jesus that 'a bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench' (Matthew 12:20a)—meaning that He wants to fan into flame even a small spark of faith. For that bruised reed, He wants to heal it." Mark added, "If people know you have a genuine love for them, they are going to respond—just as we love Jesus because He loved us."

Garrett is just one example of the power of God's Word to change lives at Calvary Worship Center. However, that power was not always so evident in the once-struggling church.

Living Hope for a Dead Church

Senior Pastor Al Pittman recalled how God sent him from New Mexico to teach the Bible in Colorado. After feeling led to return to Colorado—where he had lived for many years before moving to New Mexico—Al had called a friend in ministry to get his counsel about taking over the pastorship at Calvary Worship Center in Colorado Springs.



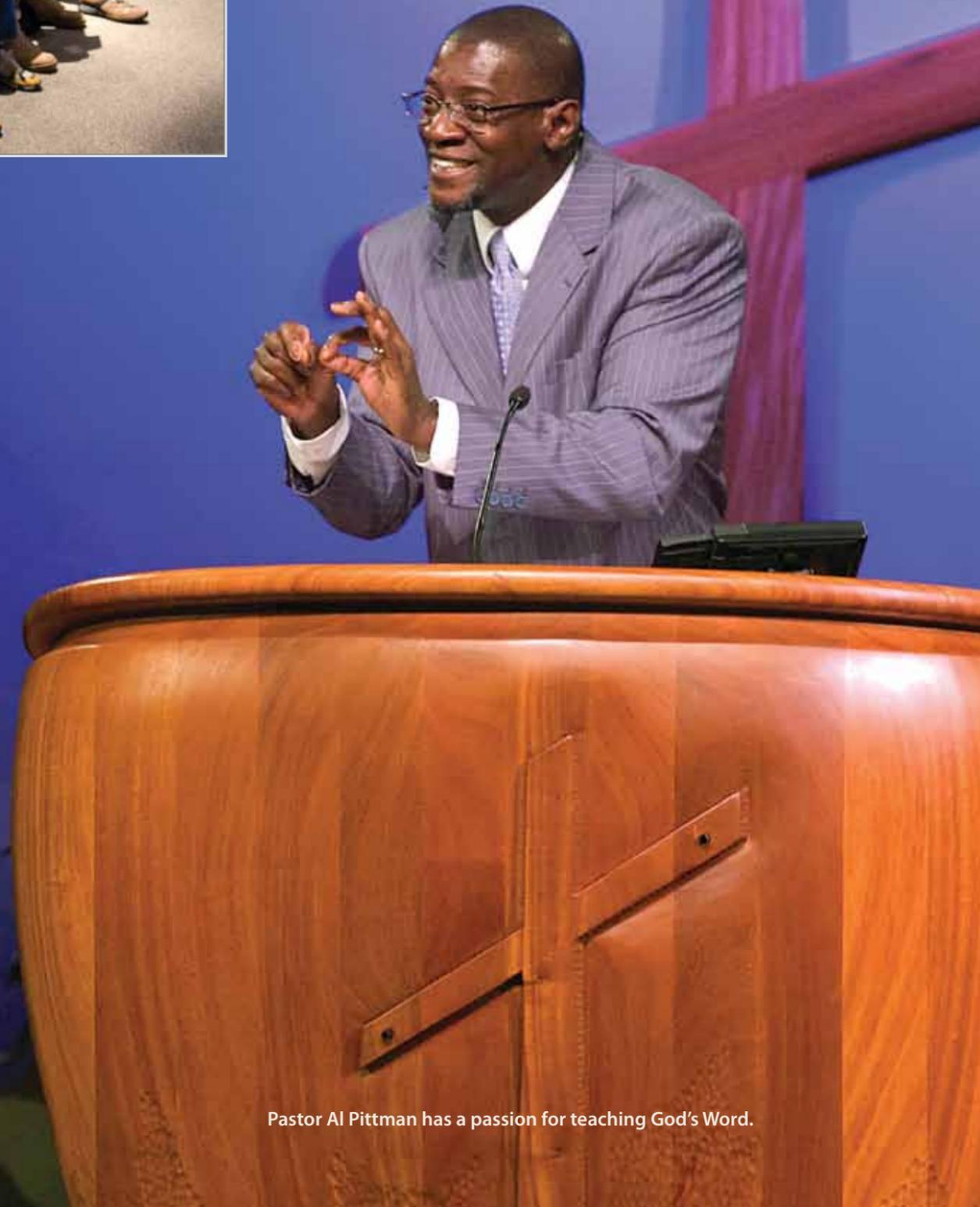
Calvary Worship Center church family prays together during Sunday worship.



Norma Pittman, Pastor Al's wife, ministers one-on-one after the service.



The worship team leads the congregation in praise.



Pastor Al Pittman has a passion for teaching God's Word.

"That church is dead. If you take that job, you may be going up there to preside over a funeral," his friend said. Al winced. He thanked his friend for his counsel, got off the phone, and bowed his head.

"Lord, You heard that: They say it's a dead church. What do You want me to do?" he prayed. He felt the Holy Spirit reminding him that God has the power to raise the dead, just as He raised Jesus back to life after the crucifixion.

As Al and his wife Norma prayed together, they felt clearly that God was calling them to Colorado Springs. Though they enjoyed serving at Calvary Chapel Albuquerque under Pastor Skip Heitzig, Al felt the call of God was unmistakable. With other words of encouragement and confirmation, they moved to Colorado Springs in 1997.

"I knew that, logically, if you wanted to plant a church that would grow, you would not plant it on the west side of Colorado Springs," Pastor Al said. "You'd plant it on the east side, which is constantly expanding. ... I've heard it said that the west side is where churches and pastors go to die. But God called us here." In that part of town, nestled at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, the community has become known for Wiccan groups, occultism, and New Age philosophy, he related.

When they arrived, they found a remnant of believers interested in studying the Word but few Bible study groups. Feeling a strong call to feed the sheep, Al taught verse by verse on Sunday mornings and during the week. Believers grew in their faith and the fellowship grew in size—from 100 people to nearly 1,500 today who attend dozens of different Bible studies each week.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Peter 1:3

"The Lord grew His church," Al said. "When people come, I tell them that this church is a miracle. It's something that God did—not a plan of man. It was a total, sovereign work of the Holy Spirit."

Reaching Out

The fellowship also supports missionaries in Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Kenya, and Colombia. Pastor Al and several others recently returned from a mission trip to Nairobi, Kenya. “It’s exciting to see God use His people. To watch God raise up a fellowship from the dead and see it now bring hope and life to others around the world—it truly is a miracle,” Al said.

Believers also reach out to each other. The Pittmans were greatly encouraged by the fellowship when their son, Nathan, was critically ill a few years ago. Norma recalled, “Every evening, someone would bring us a good meal. It was such a witness to the staff at the hospital. You couldn’t see the walls in Nathan’s room for all of the Get Well cards. God used that time to touch the hearts of many people in our fellowship and unify us in a way we had not known until then.”

Balancing Family & Ministry

Having been a pastor’s wife for more than 15 years, Norma shared her priorities: Jesus first, then her spouse, the children, and ministry.

“I think the No. 1 thing a pastor’s wife must do is to let God be your all,” Norma said. “Let your happiness, your satisfaction—

everything you need—come from the Lord.” Second, she said, “Love your husband and pray for him; support him in his various areas of ministry. Be his best friend.”

Having children while in full-time ministry requires balance. “When you’re a mom with little ones, don’t try to do it all. Your children need to be a priority,” she said. “Don’t be afraid to let other women assist you; it’s not an admission of failure to do so. You will have plenty of time to teach and serve at church, but when your kids are little, they need you.”

To other women in full-time ministry, she encouraged, “Take time to get away with the Lord—even if it’s just a few minutes a day. A pastor’s wife should never derive her sense of purpose and self-worth from the praise of others, but from the presence of the Lord.” She cited Psalm 73:26, which says, “My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” 🙌

Calvary Worship Center

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Using hand motions, children’s ministry servant Sonya Roberts joins the children in singing worship songs.



Youth listen and read along in the Bible as youth leader Nathan Pittman, Al’s son, teaches from God’s Word.