

BUILDING ON THE ROCK

CC Castle Rock, CO, impacts lives and marriages with love, honesty, and God's unchanging Word.

CC Castle Rock, CO



A bike trail near CCCR allows staff to offer water bottles and the Gospel to bicyclists who stop by for permission to park their vehicles in the church lot.



Brian teaches on 2 Corinthians 10: "We can either take our thoughts captive or allow them to take us captive," he said.



Senior Pastor Brian Abeyta, right; the parents of Alec Franklin, lower center, and other Calvary Chapel Castle Rock, CO (CCCR), began in 1998 and has recently grown to about

believers listen as Alec, 8, shares what he learned during his Sunday school lesson. 1,500. The church holds three Sunday morning services and one on Saturday evenings.

Story by Margot Bass
Photos by Geraldine Wilkins

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

Assistant Pastor Joey McKee prayed fervently before addressing the congregation he loved so deeply. He made announcements each Sunday—but today wouldn't be typical. He wondered how the people would accept his difficult words.

Joey's wife of 16 years, Chalyn, cried in the audience as he described their recent months. He too wept as he shared their marriage struggles—plaguing unforgiveness and bitterness that had come to a dangerous head. Senior Pastor Brian Abeyta and his wife Jenipher, after realizing that something was desperately wrong, had immediately given Joey and Chalyn a sabbatical from their ministry responsibilities. "He told us tenderheartedly that the most important thing was our marriage," Joey recalled. "He said he knew the pressure of ministry—and that we needed to take time off to get refocused."

The following 3½ weeks were grueling. Arguments, anger, guilt, confession, and emotionally intense counseling sessions filled Joey and Chalyn's days. They feared losing their marriage and their ministry. But they eventually experienced a breakthrough, gaining a new focus on serving the Lord together as a healthy team. "The problem wasn't the ministry—but ministry was a great place to hide," Chalyn explained.



Assistant Pastor Joey McKee and his wife Chalyn



The weekend worship team leads the church in praise on a Saturday evening.



Kevin Jenkins, right, high school intern pastor, helps Kyle Franklin, 11, learn guitar at CCCR's Monday night Guitar Fellowship. The group, designed to raise up new worship leaders, has encouraged men, women, and youth to learn guitar to God's glory.

Brian had said to Joey, "When you can honestly say, 'My wife is more important to me than the ministry,' then we can put you back in the saddle." That point had come. Everyone applauded as Joey finished sharing. Through the experience, Joey said he realized, "If we don't have our spiritual

vertebrae aligned with God, we become unstable in our relationships with people."

Life-Changing Transparency

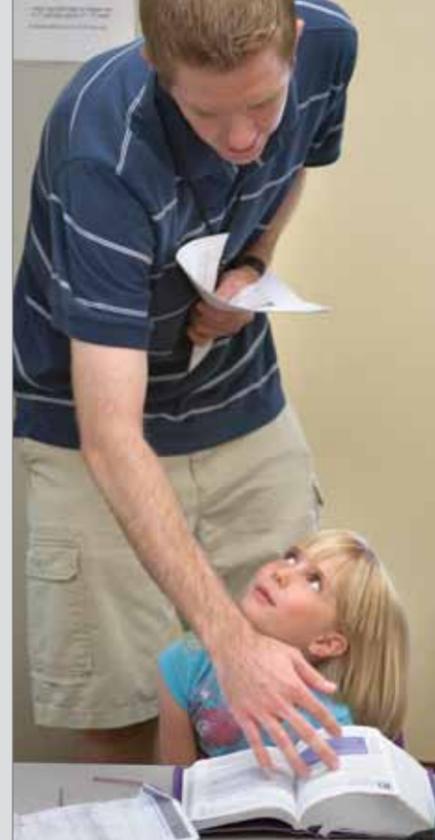
Attendees said this kind of vulnerability, especially among leaders, is a trademark of this rapidly growing church 30 miles south of Denver, CO. Planted in 1998 by nearby Rocky Mountain CC, Calvary Chapel Castle Rock (CCCR) now ministers to approximately 1,500 people. Brian left his position as assistant pastor at Calvary Chapel Newport News, VA, to assume leadership in 2003. He said the church's goal is to be "a place of hope and refuge for the lost and hurting. People are bringing unsaved friends, and many have become Christians." Chalyne added, "We're saved by grace and just walking it out. Here, you can bring all your junk to the cross."



The McMahon family worships together before the girls leave the sanctuary for their classes.

Chris and Nicole Kroger began looking for a church when they moved to Castle Rock in 2009. Upon visiting CCCR, "We immediately felt at home," Nicole said, because the message their first Sunday displayed Brian's desire to be transparent. After battling marriage challenges and Chris' drug and alcohol addictions, the couple was excited by this honesty. "The people are real," Nicole said. "They love the Lord, and you see that in their families, in their interactions. It isn't just a Sunday thing." Chris added, "Before coming here, 'bearing fruit' was just a term to me. Here the fruit was just falling off the trees. It was powerful, tangible, infectious."

The couple began to serve. "We had thought we could never measure up," Nicole remembered. "We have such an ugly past. But they said, 'You have willingness, and He's going to use you.'" Brian soon asked Chris to play, during a service, the only worship song he knew. The church responded powerfully to Chris' testimony of radical victory over his



Intern Pastor Brian Muhlhauser helps Madison Glick find her memory verse.

addictions. Ever since, Chris has been on the worship team. This Easter, Nicole sign-interpreted the service for the deaf.

Life-Changing Devotion

Brian, 39, said that after a well-received message he taught a year ago, "We as a church became more radical for the Lord." The believers were challenged to ask themselves, "Are we okay with where we are—in our personal walks with the Lord, in our families, in our marriages? If not, how can we change?"

At the same time, Brian intensified the church's crisis marriage-counseling program. "With the economy going bad, there have been major marriage problems," he said. "Over the last few years, people's stability has been taken from them." Brian and Jenipher, whose own marriage was in crisis 11 years ago, take each couple through six sessions, addressing unforgiveness, trust, communication, and love needs. "We've dealt with these same things," Brian said. "People come because they don't know how to get out of it, and they leave believing there's hope. That's a great reward: instilling hope in a seemingly hopeless situation." Only one of the 25 couples they counseled in the last year has not reconciled, he said.



After classes, Coreena Munsinger picks up her two daughters and one of Pastor Brian's daughters, right. Coreena and her husband lead CCCR's junior high ministry.

Every Monday night, Brian leads practical ministry training with the church's 24 associate pastors and interns. After a recent teaching addressing how husbands can have devotions at home with their wives, the evening concluded with the meeting's standard closing question—"What does it look like in real life?"

Life-Changing Love

CCCR is close-knit, according to longtime member Stephani McCaslin. "We feel like it's an extension of our family," she added. Stephani and husband Justan experienced their church body's love this spring after their two-year-old son Joshua fell out of a third-floor window. "I was a mess, devastated, not knowing if my little boy would make it," Stephani remembered. As Joshua remained on life support that first day, "Six or seven families from church showed up," she added. During the following month in the hospital, congregants constantly served the family. The couple requested blood donations when they feared Joshua might need additional surgery; within hours, more than 50 people from CCCR and another church had volunteered. The fellowship also provided gates to childproof the McCaslin's windows. "They knew we didn't have the money," Stephani said.

Realizing they needed God in their lives, Emerson and Mary Bonilla visited CCCR shortly after reconciling from a separation. Mary was accustomed to seeing everyone dressed their best for church; here, she was surprised to see jeans. The people they met were warm and friendly, and the Bonillas were hooked after hearing a message on the attributes of God. Emerson had previously been disenchanted with church, Mary said, but within weeks, he gave his life to Christ.

"Our questions are answered week after week," Mary said. "Brian hits us head-on with his messages, teaching us not to give up on our marriage, to forgive, to have patience. It helps us through the hard times." 🙌

To equip God's people for service, CCCR opened the Castle Rock Extension of CC Bible College in 2008. It offers part-time, intensive theology classes taught by CCCR pastors.

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