

# ***Images at the Cross***

## ***Case Statement***

### **Historical Perspective**

Christianity started with a need that was overwhelming but that couldn't be met by humanity.

Humanity was created by God. A God of purity cannot abide disobedience in his presence and as Humanity attempts to usurp the role of the Creator in Genesis 1-3, they displace themselves from God's side. The family is split.

Time passes and as humans sin, they sacrifice both animals and fruit of the ground to rededicate themselves in covenant loyalty to a Loving Creator. A Loving God readily forgives and embraces his children. However, humanity continues to sin again, breaking the covenant and displacing themselves again from God. The family continues apart.

Humanity is incapable of cleansing itself from sinful disobedience. We all need a voluntary and perfect sacrifice that will cover all sins, past, present and future. God is a loving father seeking to protect and embrace his family and to stop the agonizing loss of his children into sin. His gracious offer of redemption and reconciliation comes through His Son, Jesus. With that perfect, voluntary, sacrificial death, Christians are eternally forgiven of the sins keeping us from our Heavenly Father, God. Christians are welcomed back into an everlasting life and into God's family again.

Before Jesus went to the cross to die, he lived on this world as a man and sought to help his brothers and sisters to deal with the daily problems that distract them from their relationship with and obedience to God.

Jesus told stories. These stories held deep meaning and required thought, but they were also relevant, nourishing and uplifting to God's children. All children want to be entertained and engaged. But just as Jesus entertained and engaged the lost of 2000 years ago, he did so with a purpose -- that we may learn more about God and his family relationship with us and that we may be transformed in the knowledge and desire to embrace our family again.

*Images at the Cross* has the same purpose.

As the world has progressed through time the emotional need for a family in which to belong, the need for salvation, and a physical and spiritual safety, has always been there. Some have heard the call, found out the meaning to the story and discovered that salvation. But for the vast majority, the call has gone unheard or perhaps misunderstood. We are, as a people, distracted and perhaps given too many choices on what to do with our time. Church sometimes seems an unappealing choice even to dedicated Christians and doesn't even rate as a choice to the unchurched or lost who fear they might be "judged" or unwelcome. And while

we are distracted, we are periodically awakened in shock by statistics for divorce, unplanned pregnancy, and broken families. Many times in our distraction, we unwittingly become these statistics.

Somehow, Christianity needs to wave its arms, get people's attention, and then help them to confront themselves and their daily life. If we can do that, then turn that attention to Christ, we can in time help meet humanity's eternal needs.

### **The Situation Today: Moral Decline**

Our country's economic wealth has exploded during the past 50 years. And in an economy of plenty, few look to God to have their needs met because they don't think they need to do so.

Conversely, our moral, family and spiritual values as a whole have plummeted to unthinkable depths. 50% of first marriages, 67% of second and 74% of third marriages end in divorce. (Jennifer Baker of the Forest Institute of Professional Psychology, Springfield, Missouri.) Unmarried heterosexual partners make up 8.1% of coupled households and only 63% of American children grow up with both biological parents -- the lowest figure in the Western World. (*The State of Our Unions 2005*, National Marriage Project at Rutgers University.) 7.8 million Americans paid about \$40 billion in child and/or spousal support in 2002. Unintended pregnancies among American women have reached nearly 50% with four in ten of these pregnancies terminated by abortion. Twenty-two percent of all pregnancies (excluding miscarriages) end in abortion. Additionally, the November 2008 election exit polls indicated that only 9% who voted were concerned about spiritual matters compared with 12% of those who voted in the prior election.

Reading between the lines, more and more peoples lives are being physically stressed, emotionally tattered, economically devastated, and spiritually shattered. People are not seeking God out in traditional churches as they once did. America, in it's shift to secularism, has systematically taken God out of everything -- marriage, schools, relationships, courts -- and this has had the effect of taking God away from us. In a society seeking immediate gratification, for some, God is not immediate enough.

Moreover, in recent days the economy has gone into freefall, jobs are eroding, stress has increased, and the tension is also immediate and palpable. People are more desiring of having their needs met, yet fearing that they won't or can't be. And they are not looking in the right direction for help. In a sinking ship, the world tells humanity that it's every man for himself. Conventional wisdom indicates that this attitude will only accelerate the trauma as individuals think more and more about themselves rather than their family and each other.

In America, there will never be a more necessary or better time to patch the holes on the sinking ship and help the drowning survivors into the boat. People need to have reaffirmed that we, as God's family, are all in this together and that neither He nor we are giving up the ship. Will you be the heroes to help plug the leak and save the drowning lost?

## ***Images at the Cross* Response to the New Dynamic: Revealing a Relevant God**

People, especially the unchurched, need to see a Relevant and Living God again. And while *Images* cannot present the end of all solutions, if the lost are not seeking the Word, *Images* wants to take the true Word of God to them. We need to draw the masses in through what they are seeking -- Entertainment. We need to approach people through non-church/non-threatening family friendly vehicles.

As a nonprofit, 501(c)3 charitable organization, *Images* already owns a tract of land conservatively valued at \$1,500,000 in a highly trafficked venue near Branson, Missouri, the entertainment capital of the Midwest. Branson has approximately seven (7) million visitors annually and the majority of visitors pass by the location. At this location, *Images* seeks to engage the unchurched through a secular entertainment venue that can present the messages of the Gospel and God's grace in a non-threatening way.

The majority of the site will be devoted to an engaging Disney-like family friendly production for entertainment and education including a first class multimedia and sensory experience. Targeted to family and children, this "Bible Alive" venue will be the best show/experience in Branson and the "hottest ticket" in town. The most beautiful part about this venue is that it is entirely Free to the public. As opposed to a static vehicle of entertainment, Bible Alive will be ever changing to provide a freshness and relevancy that will ensure repeated visits. In addition, Bible Alive will be constantly reviewed and evaluated to better serve the needs of the unchurched and provide practical teaching that helps bridge the gap between the Church and day to day living. As Branson is close to Carthage, Missouri, the home of the Precious Moments Chapel, we hope to partner with them in some form. We also plan to approach Big Ideas, the media producers of Veggie Tales, as another potential entertainment partner.

A second portion of the venue will be dedicated to the engineering wonderment of a 20 story snow white Cross overlooking a 100 foot elevated promontory. The Cross will be clearly visible for miles around including seven miles away near Branson itself. This unique monument will have elevators to take visitors to the 15<sup>th</sup> story level of the horizontal crossbeam where they can view the panorama of the Ozarks while being exposed to a presentation of the importance of the life of Christ as well as humanity's importance in God's beloved and valued family. Miraculously, the local government of Taney County, Missouri, approved an unprecedented variance for *Images* benefit, removing the normal setback and height requirements of the local building code to allow the construction of this engineering wonder. The local community was so excited and anticipated the opportunity to host this monumental project so greatly that they allowed *Images* to exceed the normal zoning height requirements by 100 feet! In thanks, *Images* wishes to provide inspirational aid to the local community as a nondenominational supporter of Jesus Christ by providing a venue for weddings, family events and for rotational use by local congregations as a conference and meeting center.

*Images* wants to assure that every visitor experiences the power of God's love in addition to grace and mercy as a result of the free gift of salvation. With that in mind, *Images*, being a nonprofit organization not motivated by personal gain, seeks to follow in Jesus footsteps by gifting to all visitors its entertainment free of charge. We feel that regardless of the economic times, God's message should be free, but that more may avail themselves of it when times are "tight". When children drive by with their parents and ask to go to *Images*, we don't want the parents to say no because of the cost.

We feel that people will come for the above reasons, but leave knowing that God is relevant in today's world. And what's more, after experiencing God in a safe, nurturing, and first class venue, we know people will walk away saying "Wow! You have got to see this. It's perfect!"

### **Where is *Images at the Cross* now?**

So much has already been accomplished to make this dream a reality:

We have the land in a fantastic location - value \$1.5 million - Done!

We have a nonprofit Missouri Corporation Charter - value \$10,000 - Done!

We have 501(c)3 IRS charitable nonprofit status - value \$50,000 - Done!

We have zoning approval (a miracle in itself) for a 20 story cross and multimedia center - value \$100,000 - Done!

We have one year invested into a three year project with a goal of having the cross on the mountain in 2 years - Done!

We have the website designed and operational - Done!

We have a unique logo and brochures designed and printed - Done!

We have our fund raising organization in place - Done!

Currently, we conservatively estimate an investment of \$2 million to date - Done!

We are extremely pleased to have the Branson community's support and the enthusiastic buzz surrounding the project - Done!

### **Where is *Images at the Cross* Going and How Do We Get There?**

Short term efforts to achieve the long term Organizational Goals include:

Prayer. Daily and Continuous Prayer for each other and *Images*. As we stand up for Christ, the men and women involved in *Images* realize that we will be targeted by the Enemy.

Building and maintaining momentum in a fundraising drive to private donors that will eventually transform into a self sustaining public fundraising drive to build facilities, provide for entertainment development and annually endow the organization.

Establishing a commitment by Christian minded leaders to serve in a Board of Directors

providing oversight and a Board of Advisors providing guidance to an Executive Director. The Executive Director will manage the administration and staff of *Images* as well as the facility construction, entertainment development and public relations within the local community.

Raising a lead gift to create engineering designs, to prepare necessary construction studies, and to develop the site for construction (including the purchase of an adjacent tract of land to the site), while also providing startup capital to sustain fundraising efforts.

*Images* needs to raise a total of \$50 million with \$30 million to design and build this monumental multimedia experience and \$20 million to continuously fund its annual expenses into the future so that it may remain a relevant compass pointing to God.

### **A Call to Action**

The need is significant, real, and universal -- to provide the unchurched with an appealing choice for their time through a non-threatening entertainment venue and thereby plant the seeds to help them not only in their daily live but also in their eternal one. Through education and entertainment, *Images* can reach the unchurched, inspire them, and even equip them with ideas that would allow them to better their lives and those around them. Most importantly, this is the type of eternal legacy that our generation can leave behind so that one hundred years from now, our names might not be known but Jesus Christ's name will be.

Branson has enthusiastically approved the venue and stands ready to host the project and locally support it. A good high value, high traffic and easy access location has already been donated in a geographically central entertainment community that *Images* can draw upon for support. A proven professional fundraising team is in place and ready to proceed.

All that is required is someone to take the next step, to provide a lead gift to help fund the vision and move it forward to the next level. Someone to be a hero in a time of real economic and personal fear and help plug the leaks in a sinking boat supporting the families of America and eventually the world. Someone that hears the multitude cries of the lost and refuses to stand silent and idle in the demoralizing statistics. Someone willing to sacrifice of themselves along with us in caring for our family, God's children, as we try to save as many drowning souls as we can. Please be the hero, be the one to reach out to them. Please take up the tools of the carpenter as did Jesus, and help *Images at the Cross* build a brighter future. Please help...

[www.imagesatthecross.org](http://www.imagesatthecross.org)