



What a great privilege it is to serve our Lord and Saviour in Christian Service Brigade. But these are difficult times, and yet the Lord's Calling is stronger now than ever. There is so much to do and so little time to do it. But as I look back at this year, I wonder what I've accomplished... what our CSB's supporters have accomplished through me.

As I write this, I can see the small piles on my desk of work-in-progress. Under a letter from the CSB Head Office is my to-do list. I dare not look at it for fear that it will knock me off of this effort. There is a pile of Stockade Modules that I worked on, doing major edits on the new one for PHOTOGRAPHY/*The Image of God*, and a major revision of three others: FLIGHT/*Faith*; CARS & TRUCKS/*Responsibility*; and HIKING/*Obedience*. I love working on these manuals, but they aren't "the main thing", are they?

In 2003 at a CSB staff conference, someone said, "Ya gotta keep the main thing the main thing." That has stuck with me and has grown louder as today's distractions shout for attention. So, what is the main thing for CSB?

In 1968, we declared that "Christian Service Brigade is the men of the local church reaching out to the boys in their community to win and train them for Jesus Christ." This hasn't changed, yet today the message seems to fall on deaf ears. But not always.

This year began with an emphasis on God's mission in Calgary. Christ said, "Follow Me" and as I sought His direction, He clearly wanted one thing done in Calgary – send *Imagine* booklets to certain pastors. It was easily accomplished. But two weeks later, there were new marching orders. Have a rally in Calgary while I was there for Missions Fest Alberta. No problem. A week later... advertise the rally. Okay. Then invite CSB partners to pray for this. Then invite the Calgary CSB alumni and supporters to attend. All of a sudden, we had a big campaign going in Calgary and all I did was follow one instruction at a time. Do you know the story of *Stone Soup*? Yes, we were making a rich stew from just one small stone. How did that happen?

Well by March 7th, we had a room full of chairs and only three people registered. We had flown our president Steve Grove in for the day and God was about to test our faith. At 7:15 that evening, every chair was full, and the hosts had to sit at the back. It was a blessed time of sharing. Out of it came three churches eager to join CSB. Summer came, and Kathie and I were in Alberta for holidays, and serving at CSB's Camp Teepee Pole. We visited one of the churches and talked to the key people at the other two. We even stopped in at a fourth church that wanted to restart their ministry to boys. It was very encouraging, but that's where the situation is today. Huge potential and patiently waiting for the Lord to complete what He began a year ago. His work; His timing.

In the Edmonton area, specifically in the town of Devon, God has been working in a different way. One of the most effective

Stockades in the west found it had several boys attending from Calmar, 15 minutes down the highway. It turned out that a Calmar dad was also the pastor of the Baptist church and he saw CSB as a gateway to getting men involved in the local church. Well, long story short, the Devon Chief Ranger and the Calmar pastor planted a "daughter" Brigade unit in Calmar. Now they are eyeing a church in another nearby community, helping them to see that encouraging a man to build a boy through Brigade, also builds the man to serve in his church and community. This has been a hallmark of Brigade for generations. Good things are happening in Alberta.

In BC, things are different. We did see an increase in people enquiring about where they can send their boys to a CSB group. But not one single church in all of BC asked about starting a Brigade unit this year. Now, I can testify to what a Brigade unit can do for a church; and it's not just for its boys, but for its men and families, too. I've seen it, and it starts in Tree Climbers with boys and their dads. Something needs to change here in my home province. There are walls going up around too many churches – the big ones don't need the smaller ones; they are completely self-sufficient. And the smaller ones don't want any exposure that may draw a member away from their shrinking numbers. This may be the future of the Church in Canada: everyone building their own tiny kingdoms; no one looking to build the Church – the Body of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God.

I'm also seeing this problem in CSB's efforts of "building Godly men of today" through our Iron Sharpens Iron Men's Conferences and the CSB Men's Network. Not only are men disengaging from their churches, churches are now dropping their ministries to men and their men's groups. The Church is in trouble. Men want to serve, even in Brigade, but their churches are saying, "We don't want that."

So, we have some work to do. I am looking for advice. How do we get the message out? Emails and phone calls are not effective in beginning a conversation. In-person appointments and walk-ups are discouraged. So, how do we get noticed? How do we let people know about the great things that CSB can do for a church? Does the Church even trust CSB; does the Church trust any parachurch ministry? Maybe not. If you have a comment or advice of any kind, I would be glad to receive it. This is God's ministry.

More than anything, please be praying for CSB. No amount of good advice or wise-spending is going to replace God's influence on His Work. CSB is His ministry. He knows where we should place our efforts – pray that we know them, as well. Pray that He will equip us with the right people to do the job. And, that we will have the courage to do it. Please pray for Kathie and me as we try to serve Him. (*Our contact details are on the back of this card.*)

Now, if you are looking for a place to make a donation, there are two local CSB projects that may be of interest: 1) promoting CSB in BC; and 2) promoting CSB in Alberta. We have seen excellent returns on these investments, not only in keeping CSB visible, but in connecting us to like-minded ministries and to our media partners. CSB is highly regarded by the staff of many Christian ministries. CSB Canada is also raising funds for our Battalion update. Our new Adventure Trails was just published, and now Steve is working on Frontier Trails. These are excellent resources for the young man involved in CSB's Achievement Program.

God bless. May we be Bright and Keen for Christ.