



The God of All Comfort

By Blake Coffee

I have seen II Corinthians 1:4 illustrated many times, particularly in my continuing experience with support group ministries. But I may have never seen it as vivid as with Becky’s Hope Ministries on my recent trip to Cluj, Romania.

In the mountains of Transylvania, about 15 kilometers west of the gypsy town of Huedin, lies a beautiful mountain valley. Tucked away about half way up the mountain on the south side of the valley is a Christian conference center which, once or twice a year, becomes a place of retreat and rejuvenation for a growing group of moms who know more than most of us about *the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our troubles*.

These moms are special, because most of them have been blessed with a special needs child. Some of them have already given some of the most productive years of their lives for these dear children. The rest of them will almost certainly do so before their time on this earth is over. With God’s help, Becky’s Hope Ministry finds these moms and brings them together at this retreat center (free of charge) for rest, comfort, equipping and Spiritual feeding.

My privilege on these four beautiful Spring days in March was to join God in His ministry of comfort to approximately 40 of these moms and handful of pastors who all serve as small group leaders to the hundreds of others who will come in the Summer retreat. I went to teach about relationships, particularly with other Christians. But as usual, I quickly became the student.

Watching these moms struggle with Spiritual concepts of reconciliation and restoration, I saw (again) that these Biblical truths have just as much meaning in the painful lives of these dear sacrificial moms as in any other lives in any other circumstances. I saw these dear friends reading the stories from God’s Word, weeping over the truths they found, and finding healing from some of their deep-seated wounds—even wounds inflicted by other Christians and by churches. I saw God’s Word find application in the lives of people with whom I truly have only one thing in common: the Spirit of God. I felt my own faith taking root all the more deeply as I

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Cont.

Christian Unity Ministries:

...exists to assist and equip Christian organizations to experience Biblical unity.

...accomplishes its mission through training events, conflict intervention, and publications to churches and Christian organizations across all evangelical denominational lines, with the objective of moving brothers and sisters in Christ toward Biblical interpersonal relationships with one another.

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watched these moms in small groups hugging each other and crying together over God's Word.

My responsibility in Romania was to teach. But my privilege was meeting the Spirit of God in the hearts of my new Romanian sisters and brothers and seeing a beautiful example of Christ through their servant lives. My lesson was that God's truths know no cultural boundaries, nor are they limited in any way by painful circumstances. In fact, maybe they are enriched by painful circumstances.

That, at least, is how I saw it.



The Shirt Off Her Back

By Dr. Ann Farris

If a man needs your coat....

Working in Romania, on behalf of Becky's Hope and at the invitation of my dear friend, Lidia Oprean, was another excursion into the nature of the human spirit, an affirmation of our having been made in the image of God.

I have often wondered how that worked exactly, our being made in the image of God: so many people, so much variety, so many different appearances, a Babel of languages and laughter.

What I currently know to be true was confirmed in Romania. The common thread that runs throughout the human race and connects us to God and to each other is a divine spirit, desiring to love and to be loved. Nowhere was that truth more apparent to me than in Romania.

Ours (Blake Coffee's and mine) was an opportunity to support Lidia and to further the ministry of Becky's Hope, named in honor of Lidia's daughter and in honor of their hope for the future of all children with special needs. The event orchestrated by Lidia included approximately 50 parents of special needs children and pastors, leaders in the effort to meet the needs of special children and to do so on the wings of Christianity. The event was hosted in a retreat setting in the hills of Romania, nestled among an abundance of God's work, evidenced through nature.

For four days we taught, learned, sang, prayed, discussed, laughed, and cried, studying together the work of Blake's heart, "Trusting God's People Again." We put ourselves in the places

of Moses, Peter, Nehemiah, Jacob, Shadrach and friends, and Paul and identified life lessons for ourselves and for Becky's Hope ministries. This was preparatory work—for living a well-lived life; for the July 22, 2007 retreat scheduled for moms and siblings of special needs children; and for me.

In Romania I saw this divine connection, the desire to love and to be loved, on every street corner and in every home. It looked like being hugged by a bear of a man as I stepped out of the Bucharest airport; that stranger-no-more is the production manager of the Romania Christian television station. This divine connection looked like being comfortably hosted in the homes of strangers, angels unaware. It looked like strangers giving me precious gifts, precious because they could not afford to give them, their widow's mite. It looked like one of Romania's religions and political icons kissing my hand. And, finally, it looked like the coat and cloak that Jesus talked about in Matthew 5:40.



One morning while greeting our class members, I complimented a new friend on her suit, her Sunday best outfit, most likely her only Sunday best outfit.

It was a lovely mauve color, outlined in lace, made of a really soft fabric. The next morning, she entered our room wearing more casual clothes, having folded her beautiful suit over her arm. She extended that arm, and her love, to me, wanting to give me her suit as a present. Because I had admired it, she wanted to present it to me. It was both her coat and her cloak.

The human spirit, the spark that connects, the desire to love and to be loved, is alive and well in Romania, among a generous people who live in a country that honors God.

The shirt off her back....

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Trusting God's People...Again

A Pathway to Healing and Re-engaging in Ministry
A NEW BOOK

by Blake Coffee with Debbie Taylor Williams
to be released Fall, 2007

"When will we, the church, stop shooting our wounded?" asks author and attorney, Blake Coffee. "Depending on whose statistics you believe, it seems that anywhere from 15% to 40% of Christian believers today have felt betrayed or wounded by the church at some point. Many of them are spiritually incapacitated and just sitting on the sidelines. What if we found a way to bring them healing and to reinvest them in kingdom work? What might happen in this world if 15%-40% of the global body of Christ became actively engaged again in ministry?"

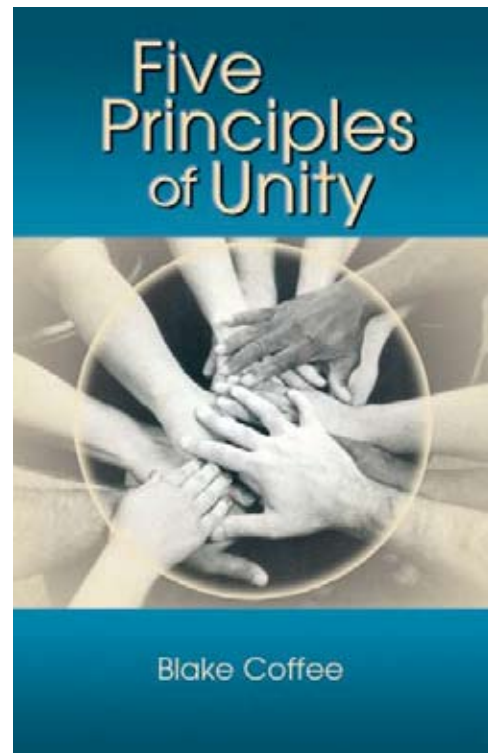
Blake Coffee and Debbie Taylor Williams are uniquely qualified to write this book, having counseled with thousands of individuals in hundreds of churches around the world through their respective ministries. They understand the feelings of betrayal associated with being hurt by the church, and have found three critical touchstones of healing through God's Word: **Reconciliation, Recommitment and Re-engaging.**

Trusting God's People Again is a healing journey through the true stories and lessons of scripture and the fictional story of Mavis, an average church member who innocently agrees to take on an assignment in her church and ends up being the subject of a slander campaign and a volatile church split.

If you have been hurt by the church, this healing journey is for you.

Every pastor, Christian counselor, and church or denominational leader will want copies of this book on hand.

The Third Edition is hot off the press!



What readers have said:

"It has changed my life. It will change the life of the Body of Believers where you worship!"

"When I first read Five Principles of Unity, all I could think was 'This is NOT what I've been taught growing up in the church my whole life!' That is why I think this ministry is so important. If those of us who grew up in the church don't understand these Biblical principles, what about the seekers who have never darkened the doors of the church?"

"This study has been an important blessing to my life. I have had many occasions to use the Principles of Unity in talking to individuals-in both their personal situations and in their church difficulties."



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How Your Church Can Partner With Christian Unity Ministries

God is at work, restoring health and unity to His church. Christian Unity Ministries has joined that work, bringing His message of Biblical interpersonal relationships and Christian community to local congregations. We do this through a multi-piece training program aimed at various aspects of church life.

God has begun to call churches to partner with us in this effort—churches who not only are intentional about their own health, but who also feel a responsibility for contributing to the health of other local congregations.

Would you pray, and seek to know whether YOUR church is called to be a partnering church with Christian Unity Ministries?

For more information, contact us at:

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BECOMING A PARTNERING CHURCH WITH CHRISTIAN UNITY MINISTRIES

*Our **Partnering churches** are intentional about preserving the unity of the Spirit in their own congregation and receive all of our training at significantly reduced costs. They partner with us in each of the following ways:*

- *Regular monthly financial support in any amount;*
- *Being proactive about sharing testimony with other churches' leadership about this ministry;*
- *Sending their pastor or other designated representative to the Unity Ministries Annual Conference in San Antonio.*

*Join us in equipping God's people for unity. **Be a part of what God is doing!***