CONNECTING POINT Magazine

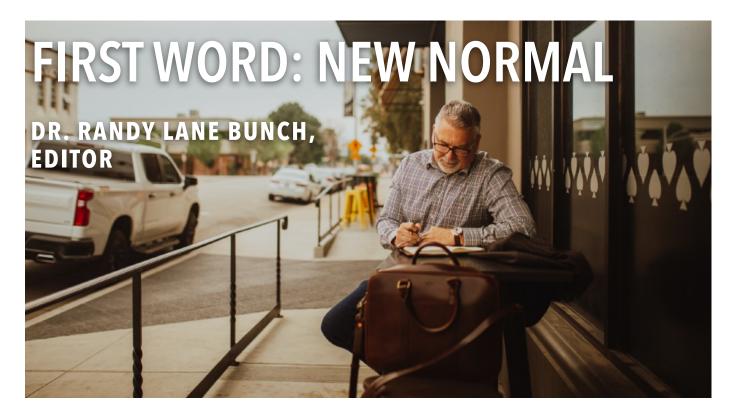


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TOGETHER

IN A TIME WHEN TECHNOLOGY WAS CREATING ITS OWN KIND OF ISOLATION, IT TOOK A VIRUS TO SHOW US THE TRUE VALUE **OF CONNECTION**



Regardless of one's political views, which major network one looks to for news, or one's judgment on the effectiveness of recent "shelter in place" policies, there's no question these are unprecedented times – at least for those of us in this generation. There is a bitter irony in the idea that what many of us thought we really needed was just a little more time on our hands to catch up with things: family, home projects, vacation time. Now, we have more than enough time (for many people anyway) but little we can do except to stay home and indulge in social media, Netflix binging, or watching the news – none of which are very healthy for already beleaguered minds.

While I would agree that it's always best to try to find the silver lining in any cloud, there are some undeniably harmful effects to all this isolation. There's a reason why it is used as a form of punishment and even torture. We are wired for connection – real human connection. Even the most stay-at-home introvert is feeling the squeeze by this time, and I have to wonder how grand the

celebrations will be when our sentence is finally commuted and we're free to leave the confines of our homes.

I have been one of many urging us all to use this time to make memories, spending time with family, reading good books, and, of course, cultivating our relationship with God, but if there is one valuable lesson we should learn from all of this, it's that we are social creatures, and we need connection to thrive and flourish. People have used the term "new normal" to describe what they believe the state of things will be when life begins to return to some sense of normalcy. Usually the term is used negatively, hinting at fears of on-going government control, but I think there could be a new normal for the better. What if we came away from this with a greater appreciation of our connections and valued the roll each of us plays in enriching the lives of others a little bit more. After all, It would be a shame to pay this high tuition and not learn some kind of lesson from it all.

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Dr. Randy Lane Bunch



Brandon Gunderson

As a father of two young boys,
Brandon is passionate about the
need to encourage and equip
Christ-followers in the area of
Christian Apologetics, using the
cornerstones of gentleness and
respect. Having earned a B.Th with
an emphasis in apologetics from
Summit Bible College just prior to
getting married, he hopes to utilize
this background to become a
Reasonable Faith Chapter Director
in his hometown of Kalispell,
Montana this year.



Dr. Randy Lane Bunch

Dr. Randy Lane Bunch is the founder of Connecting Point
Communications, a digital media ministry that utilizes all forms of media to reach a world in need of the Truth. Additionally, Dr. Randy pastors Connecting Point Church and Northeast Christian Church in Southern California. He also serves as a professor at Summit Bible College and as the California State Director for World Ministry
Fellowship. He and his wife, Maria, live in So. California.



Connecting Point Communications

Connecting Point Communications is the missions outreach arm of Connecting Point Church. The outreaches of this ministry include a television broadcast which reaches numerous nations, Skype Crusades, a YouTube Channel, a podcast, blog, and more. The goal of CPC is to make new disciples, reaching the lost with the good news of salvation while equipping saints to walk in truth and in the power of the Holy Spirit to reach their world for Christ.



A new phrase has entered our recent vernacular: social distancing. To help "flatten the curve" in the spread of the Corona Virus, we're being encouraged to keep our distance from one another. Interestingly, Americans have been getting better at this long before any lifethreatening contagion showed up. With the advent of the smart phone, our eyes have been down in our devices rather than up and aware of those around us.

We've never been more isolated from one another due to the distance technology has created. We can shop online, talk online, and even (in many cases) work online. Who needs human interaction? Well, it turns out, we all do. Now that keeping our distance is being imposed upon us by state and federal regulations, we're suddenly aware of how difficult distance can be.

On the bright side, this is a time to make memories with family, reflect on our priorities, and hopefully

learn something about genuine human connection. If we're having to pay the tuition for the lesson by our isolation and inconvenience, it would be great if we could have some take-aways from the experience.

Human connection is necessary for everyone, but it is essential for good Christianity. You can't "social distance your life away" and have any genuine impact on others. Times of private devotion and prayer do not replace the need to have a hands-on life of service. How this is to be done will be different from person to person, to be certain, and it will be guided by our time, availability, our gifts, and our opportunities, but there is no doubt that there are plenty of needs to go around.

In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus tells the story that is undoubtedly familiar to many of us. We know it as story of *The Good Samaritan*. A man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho falls among thieves. This was nothing unusual on that road in that time, and it

sets up a real-life scenario for Jesus' message. After being robbed and left half-dead on the road, the injured man is found by a priest and then a Levite. That might be comparable to a pastor and a church staff member, respectively, in our day. Both passed him by without even pausing to see the nature of the man's condition.

This would not have been lost on Jesus' audience, nor would it have been missed by the lawyer (a religious scholar) who asked the question which initiated this story, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus had affirmed the lawyer's earlier assertion that we keep the law by loving God and loving our neighbor, but the man, "wanting to justify himself," had asked the question. Instead of answering the

receive extended care, and even pays for the expenses out of his own pocket. Clearly, Jesus is rephrasing the question from, "Who is my neighbor?" to "What kind of neighbor are you?" – a relevant question for all of us, even when we're not facing a serious health crisis together.

Jesus' story also demonstrates that outward behavior is governed by inward motivations. All the religious pretense in the world cannot make up for a cold, indifferent heart. While many are feeling they can't serve God unless they stand in some kind of ecclesiastical office, others are simply like the Samaritan man, using their gifts and opportunities, doing what is needed at the time. Those who rescued victims from the terrible floods

Jesus' story also demonstrates that outward behavior is governed by inward motivations. All the religious pretense in the world cannot make up for a cold, indifferent heart. in Houston a few years back needed no special calling to do so any more than we need some kind of special calling to be gracious and show kindness to others during our current crisis.

question directly, however, Jesus instead tells the story to illustrate what a good neighbor looks like. Obviously, the priest and Levite were not good neighbors, demonstrating a callous indifference to the injured man's condition.

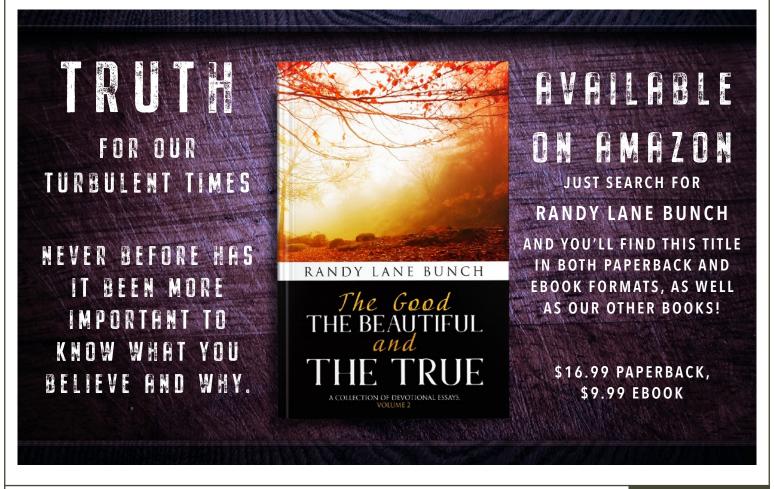
It quickly gets worse for Jesus' decidedly Jewish audience when the hero of the story turns out to be a Samaritan – someone these Jews would have considered to be a half-breed and certainly beneath them. In Jesus' story, not only does the Samaritan get involved, but he deeply invests in the recovery and welfare of the injured man. Setting aside his own business, he stops to nurse the man's injuries, carry him to an inn where he can

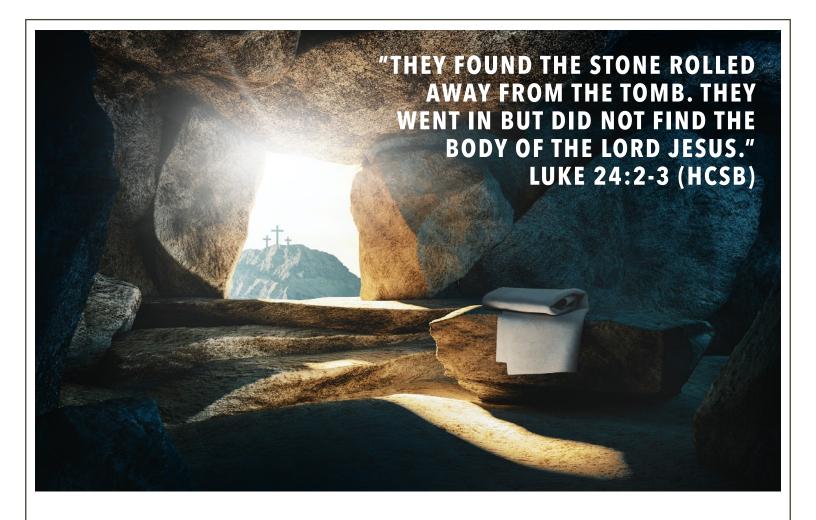
There are those in our neighborhoods right now who, like the man on the side of the road, are particularly vulnerable and need a thoughtful hand to help them. While we might be limited due to restrictions, we can still do much if it is in our heart to help. There may be an elderly couple or a widow who could use that extra package of toilet paper we were able to scramble for at our local convenience store. Someone less fortunate than ourselves may need a bag of groceries to supplement a meager dinner. I don't think we need a lot of help coming up with practical ideas. What we need are good neighbors, more concerned with helping others than how they look doing it.

In the first church I served as pastor, we had a member who was an especially good mechanic. He was a laborer who served as an usher in our church and was very faithful. One particular service he regularly rendered to me personally was the care of my car. I've never been good at anything related to auto mechanics, so to have someone so skilled oversee the care and maintenance of my car at no charge was a great blessing to me and my family. I've never forgotten how clean the engine would look under the hood when he was finished with whatever job he had performed. I could tell it was as much a blessing for him to do this for me and my family as it was for us. That was 30 years ago, and yet it was one of the first examples of neighborliness I thought of as I sat down to write this article.

Social distancing might be the proper tact for our current crisis, but that doesn't mean we have to be distant or indifferent in our hearts. It's at times like this, when our prospects may seem a little darker, that the light of Christ can shine more brightly through simple acts of compassion. Instead of wondering what the bottom line requirement is for our behavior, why don't we serve others as good neighbors, like the Samaritan in Jesus' story. Not only will it serve those of our community, but we'll discover, as my church member did all those years ago, that it really is more blessed to give than to receive.

Dr. Randy's books are sold on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Apple iBooks and by other find book sellers. You access his writings on his blog, at randylanebunch.org.





A HOPE FOR THE RESURRECTION

By Brandon Gunderson

The resurrection of Jesus is central to Christendom, and so it would be a significant disservice not to look deeper into its validity. I'm not trying to eliminate the element faith plays, but it is imperative we educate ourselves on the historical foundation of our faith. This is the cornerstone upon which we stand and everything we believe is built upon. That said, let's begin our journey.

When scholars examine historical accounts, they first look at the reliability of the timeline from which it was written. The account of Jesus in the New Testament (N.T.) was written within one lifetime of the actual events, meaning the events would've been scrutinized for accuracy by eyewitnesses and confirmed by outside references. Given our modern era of textual criticism we can

absolutely trust N.T. sources regarding the historical Jesus. With over 5,800 Greek manuscripts, the N.T. blows every other ancient work out of the water.

Armed with this knowledge, let's examine the events leading up to the death and resurrection of Jesus. We start with the Jewish cultural norms as they relate to His claims. In Jewish law it was considered heinous blasphemy to claim any measure of equality with God, and it was the duty of the Sanhedrin (Chief Priests) and the Pharisees (religious elders) to uphold the law. In Mark 8:27-30 we see Peter call Jesus the Messiah, Jesus then warns against sharing this, but He does not correct Peter's belief. He even states in Matthew 11:27 that He is the Son of God. Two other examples include passages in Luke 19 and Matthew 7 where He spoke with an unprecedented

police and brought before the Sanhedrin. Thanks to false witnesses offering contradictory stories, the Chief Priests could not find fault in Him until Jesus responded to questioning relating to His claims of Divinity found in Mark 14: 60-64:

"Again the high priest questioned Him, 'Are You the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?' 'I am,' said Jesus, 'and all of you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven."

The Jewish leaders did not have authority to execute Jesus so they turned to Pontius Pilate in hopes he would crucify Jesus. Pilate interrogated Jesus, then sent Him to King Herod for judgement but neither found fault in Him. Once again finding Himself in front of Pilate, the sizable Jewish crowd, who were ready to revolt, cried for Jesus'

crucifixion. Pilate

indulged them by

having Jesus brutally

flogged. Addressing

the religious leaders



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Jesus.

and crowd, Pilate displayed Jesus' mangled body and utilized a Jewish custom with the hope to release Jesus. Pilate presented a choice: release Jesus or the notorious murderer, Barabbas. To Pilate's surprise, the people yelled to free Barabbas and crucify

authority over the temple and the scriptural teachings. The crowds were amazed by His authority and the way He spoke from a privileged capacity that was reserved for God Himself. These are direct and implied claims that the Jewish leaders could not ignore, but they could not look past their laws and customs to seek the validity of these statements and instead began their plot to eliminate Jesus.

After Jesus had suffered horrific beatings and the painful efficiency of crucifixion, He gave up His Spirit. Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, sought and obtained permission from Pilate to bury Jesus in the tomb he had purchased outside the city, since Jesus, being considered a 'cursed' man, was barred from burial in the city.

As the religious leaders plotted to silence Jesus forever, He knew what lay ahead. Just days after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, praying in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus is taken by temple

The religious leaders feared the disciples would steal Jesus' body and asked to have Roman soldiers guard the tomb. The historical data is uncertain whether this guard of up to 50 well-trained men consisted of temple police, Roman soldiers, or even both. The seal itself was a very large stone that fit into a channel making it easy to roll the stone into place but impossible to roll out. We move forward to the resurrection morning in Matthew 28:1-6:

"After the Sabbath... Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. Suddenly... an angel of the Lord descended... and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. The [frightened] guards... became like dead men. But the angel told the women, 'Don't be afraid because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here for He has been resurrected."

The fact that two women witnessed this event is a clear sign of how important it was to have an accurate and objective record. This contradicts

Jewish cultural norms and would've been a source of embarrassment for the writer.

After coming to, finding the tomb empty and terrified by the prospect of punishment from Pilate, the guards instead reported to the chief priest. The elders then bribed the guards and promised to keep them safe if they'd claim the disciples stole the body.

Let's briefly examine the facts before moving forward:

Fact 1: Jesus' tomb was in fact empty. Jesus's body is missing. This can be historically validated; hence the refutations being developed in the first place.

Fact 2: Jesus' appearances after death. Not including the disciples, there were 500 witnesses who saw Jesus physically, and when this was recorded most of these witnesses could be interviewed to validate the documentation.

Fact 3: The origin of the disciples' belief in His

resurrection. The idea of a resurrected Messiah was a very un-Jewish belief. The disciples were all hiding from the authorities to avoid being killed. Their boldness after the alleged Resurrection just doesn't make sense if their story is untrue.

Now let's examine the most prominent skepticisms followed by my defense to each.

Argument 1: Joseph of Arimathea moved the body.



Defense: The soldiers knew if Pilate found out this had happened they would be killed. After realizing what happened and fearing for their lives, they went to the Jewish religious leaders. The most glaring error with Joseph moving the body is the fact he moved a dead body which doesn't explain the disciple's drastic behavioral transformation, the most compelling being James, brother of Jesus, converting after seeing Jesus alive after his death and of course Paul, the zealous antagonist, who became an apologist for the faith after witnessing the risen Christ.

Argument 2: The disciples faked the resurrection.

Defense: Many religious fanatics have died for what they believed to be true, just like some of the disciples did, but it's another thing altogether to die for a lie (such as proclaiming the truth of the Resurrection were it to be false). Don't forget they were terrified of dying after the crucifixion.

Last but not least,

Argument 3: Jesus wasn't really dead after the crucifixion.

Defense: This arguer has no knowledge of the efficiency of Roman crucifixion. Even though Romans did not pioneer this method they certainly perfected it. If the soldiers did not perform the crucifixion correctly, they were punished severely and even crucified themselves in some cases. Let's

not forget the beatings Jesus took prior to the actual crucifixion. Could a man endure beatings, floggings, crucifixion, be stabbed through the pericardium confirming death, then limp His way to the disciples convincing them that He was The Lord Of Life.

As we come to a close let's step away from the cerebral and allow me to appeal to your heart for a moment. The current state of affairs has created a lot of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear for many of us. Although it is perfectly natural to experience these things, these truly heartbreaking events cannot be allowed to consume us because this is not what God wants for you (or anybody, but I'm speaking specifically to Christians). It's important our salvation, though a gift, is enriched by our continual growth in Him, which serves to affirm what the Holy Spirit has already spoken within you. One easy way to do this is by being students of His Word and letting it breathe new life into you. Be encouraged that Jesus is Alive and Well. The brokenness of His body was required so His power could break through the clutches of death to bring abundance and Everlasting Life.

Let His embrace cover you, continually focus on Him, and allow the same power that brought life from death to resurrect your hope. We're all in different places in our walk with the Lord, but we all share the same Spirit, so embrace and trust God with the process He has you in. Rejoice, because He has Risen indeed!



And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?

He is not here, but is risen! Luke 24:4-6 (NKJV)



BUSINESS NOT AS USUAL

MINISTRY UPDATE

I want to be clear. This is *NOT* our feeding program. We were just one of many ministries who helped our friends in Pakistan reach their community with food and essential goods through our finances. We were supposed to be conducting the biggest Skype Crusade yet with 2,000 people in attendance in March when the unthinkable happened. The whole world was shut down.

Soon the focus shifted from preaching the gospel to demonstrating the love of God through practical outreach to meet the needs of people. It started for me when I was greeted in the morning hours by a

photo posted on Facebook by our friend in Pakistan. It was heartbreaking. It was of a mother who had drowned her three children, then hanged herself. Why had she done this? Hopelessness. With no food and no way to work with the nation's workers mandated to stay at home, she had no way to feed herself or her children.

Until this pandemic is truly over, needs like this will continue, and we will continue to be one of many ministries who give to show the love of God to the desperate and hurting. If you would like to donate, simply go to **randylanebunch.org/donate** today.





WMF is rich with history. We invite you to be part of that history and to add to the tapestry that God is weaving here through World Ministry Fellowship. You can contact us at wmf@worldministry.com or visit our website at worldministry.com.



"BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE FATHER OF MERCIES AND GOD OF ALL COMFORT, WHO COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR TRIBULATION, THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO COMFORT THOSE WHO ARE IN ANY TROUBLE, WITH THE COMFORT WITH WHICH WE OURSELVES ARE COMFORTED BY GOD." (2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4)

One of the greatest ironies of the human experience in the twenty-first century is that in the time of our greatest technological connectivity, feelings of isolation and loneliness are becoming more and more universal. In other words, we are together in our loneliness.

I have for a long time loved this passage from 2 Corinthians. It tells me that my own personal pain points can become connecting points with others who may be suffering quietly behind a façade of contentment. We are all well-schooled in wearing such masks since we learn at an early age that sharing our problems might make us too costly a friend to keep. No wonder that when someone commits suicide, even their closest friends are surprised and didn't see it coming. As a safety

for ours on the spot? Shouldn't we be willing to make a friend before attempting to make a convert?

Human interaction can be difficult at times, especially in this cultural moment where people are so easily offended, and political correctness keeps changing the rules on what is acceptable speech. It's simply easier to avoid the risk and stay in the safety of our isolation, wearing our headphones in public and keeping our noses in our devices. There are few if any public spots where Wi-Fi connections aren't available to keep us connected at a distance, free from the messy and difficult personal interactions that actually produce real and meaningful relationships. What Henry David Thoreau said, that "the mass of men

We are all well-schooled in wearing such masks since we learn at an early age that sharing our problems might make us too costly a friend to keep.

specialist, I learned that a choking person will at times actually run out of a room when they can't breathe to avoid embarrassment. Sometimes that act of self-consciousness costs them their lives. People do the same thing with their troubled thoughts and emotions. We're subtly taught not to let others see us bleed, and so we suffer in silence.

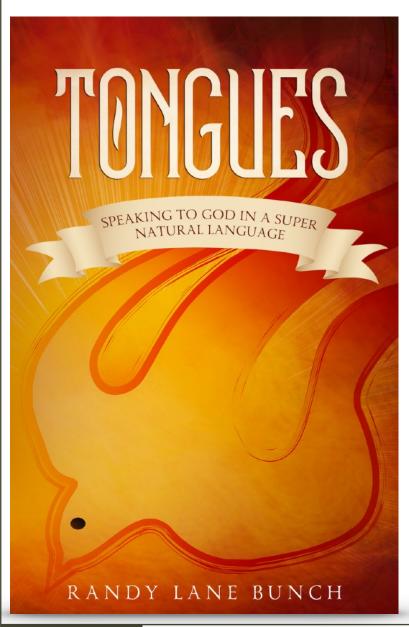
So, where can the hurting find help if we, the Church, are not on the lookout? Doesn't our assignment to be ambassadors for Christ include offering comfort to the hurting? Shouldn't we be as willing to listen as to evangelize? Is our willingness to make an investment in another human being so shallow that we can only afford to interact with them if they are willing to abandon their worldview

lead lives of quiet desperation," is surely truer today than ever, and yet, in our private sorrow we can offer a public

comfort when we share out of the riches of our own lives the lessons in overcoming that we have learned in our own desperate moments at the feet of the Master.

We must risk stepping up and speaking out. We must learn again to look people in the eye and offer a handshake. We're surprisingly out of practice. It will feel awkward, particularly in those unrehearsed occasions in which spontaneity exposes our lack of polish. That's ok, a drowning man doesn't care about the eloquence of the man who is throwing him a life preserver. It's worth the risk. You might save a life, make someone's day, or even make a friend.





CLEAR TEACHING ON A CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT

There is perhaps no subject that has suffered more abuse than speaking with other tongues, and yet it holds the promise of great spiritual blessing, both to the individual believer as well as to the body of Christ in general. Sharing from both the Word of God and his own experience, Dr. Randy Lane Bunch helps to shed scriptural light on what has been for many a confusing issue.

If you have had questions on this important Bible subject, this book will help to answer those questions and give much needed insight as to how to have God's power in your life.

To purchase your copy of *Tongues: Speaking To God In A Supernatural Language*, simple go to online to Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or Apple iBooks. (Paperback available only through Amazon). You can also find links on the website, at randylanebunch.org.

CONNECTING POINT

MEDIA RESOURCES

FROM THE BEGINNING IT HAS BEEN OUR VISION TO PROVIDE RESOURCE RICH WEBSITES AND MATERIALS THAT WILL MINISTER TO THE NEEDS OF GOD'S PEOPLE. FROM THESE SITES YOU CAN ACCESS OUR PODCAST, FIND LINKS TO OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL, AS WELL AS READ OUR BLOG, ACCESS OUR HEALING SCHOOL MATERIALS, AND MUCH, MUCH MORE. THE BEST PART? IT'S ALL FREE OF CHARGE!



The website for **Connecting Point Communications** is found at **randylanebunch.org**, and contains links to the Connecting Point Podcast, Dr. Randy's Blog, Connecting Point Magazine, and much more! This ministry website is designed to provide a rich, comprehensive media ministry experience. The resources (except for Dr. Randy's books) are free and updated regularly. Remember, Dr. Randy is available to speak at your church or ministry event. To contact him, simply email him at **info@connectinpc.org**.

Connecting Point Church is the name of the church that Dr. Randy and his wife, Maria, pastor in their home town of Taft, California. Additionally, they lead North East Christian Church on the northeast side of Bakersfield, California (nechristian.net). The church website, connectingpc.org, contains some of the content Dr. Randy's personal site has, along with directions to the church and service times. You can contact via email at info@connectingpc.org to request Dr. Randy to speak at your church or ministry event.

