

## How It All Began

### *Desire Kindled*

There has never been any doubt that Galen Oakes is passionate about the Lord. Perhaps his passion for the Lord was sparked as a young child. At the time his grandfather, who loved the Lord with unmatched fervor, lived with Galen's family and he remembers waking up very early in the morning only to find his grandfather already awake and reading his Bible in the kitchen. Up he would climb into his grandfather's lap where he was loved and instructed in God's word. His grandfather also introduced him to conversations with the Almighty as he regularly invited Galen to join him in prayer.

### *Ignited in Salvation*

The sparks of interest that were formed in his grandfather's arms were ignited at the age of eight when Galen attended an evangelistic crusade in Massillon, Ohio. The speaker shared the plan of salvation and when the invitation to receive Christ was given, Galen responded by standing to his feet, walking past his four siblings and two parents and making his way through the stadium to the altar. It was at that altar that Galen asked Jesus to become his Savior.

### *Called to Service*

At age sixteen, the burning embers of desire to serve the Lord were stirred within Galen and he responded to another invitation ~ this time he wanted his Savior to also become the *Lord* of his daily life. From that time on, Galen began to develop a meaningful personal walk with Christ through daily Bible reading and prayer as well as seeking spiritual insight from church elders, preachers, youth leaders, and nationally known Christian leaders.

His passion now in full blaze, Galen focused on giving his life to serve the Lord. He seized every opportunity he saw to learn all he could about God, so when he was invited to attend a large Christian Youth Conference the summer between his junior and senior year of high school, he agreed with no hesitation. It was at that youth conference that he met a girl, Malinda Steward, who had traveled from her home in Cincinnati and would later become his wife.

Having an incessant desire to learn and grow more spiritually, Galen fanned his fire for Jesus by transferring from the large public school in his hometown to a much smaller Christian school for his senior year of high school. Those who remember him from high school would site his zeal for God's Word, his passion for right, and his drive to serve the Lord.

After high school, Galen's longing to serve the Lord continued to grow and he decided to attend a small Christian college where he could be better equipped for service. In the midst of studying, he was very active in ministering to underprivileged families and used his singing and

## How It All Began

dramatic abilities to share the gospel in a variety of ways from church services to rescue missions to inner city street corners.

Galen married Malinda July 7, 1984, and upon graduation from college in 1985, Galen received his ordination papers and a BA degree in theology. Since that time, he has served as Associate Pastor at two churches.

### *Area of Ministry Revealed*

Galen and Malinda share a dedicated, strong, and loving relationship. As a result, the Lord developed a passion in Galen's heart to help other Christians build up the relationships within their homes. He began writing and performing scripts that encourage couples to have Christ-centered marriages and homes. He then began planning special events for married couples. Soon, Galen's home church saw his unique abilities and specifically created the staff position of Family Life Director to enable Galen to use his gifts in the Lord's service. Galen joyfully accepted the position.

### *Marriage Adventures and Family Affairs Created*

Immediately, Galen put his creativity to work and soon developed events designed to enable couples to get away together for the specific purpose of nurturing their relationship. These events use the mediums of drama and humor in a three-act play to approach challenging situations that all married couples face. Following each act, Galen and Malinda provide applicable scriptural guidance, which, in turn, is followed by private discussion time for the couples. Galen also saw that similar programming could benefit the entire family unit. Titles were given to each event and two categories were developed: *Marriage Adventures* and *Family Affairs*. *Marriage Adventures* typically feature Galen and Malinda as the actors and *Family Affairs* feature the entire Oakes family (Galen, Malinda, Joy, and Nolan.) Each drama has a different theme but all emphasize finding the unique value of each family member and building each other up.

### *Evangelistic "Elvis" Concert Experience*

As Director of Family Life, Galen also plans an annual Valentine Banquet. One year, a fun tribute to the love songs of the ages emerged. He asked several couples to sing and the people he asked decided to have fun by dressing up to look like the artist who originally sang the song. Galen noticed that no one was singing an Elvis song and, in fun, said that he would do it and Malinda made him a simple party costume in which to perform. Afterwards, the people in attendance told him that he sang more like Elvis than any impersonator they had ever heard - which prompted an invitation to perform at the church Talent Night as Elvis. Galen was not interested but finally agreed to sing as Elvis again on one condition - that his performance have

## How It All Began

a deeper meaning than just a fun portrayal of a famous man. Galen chose a familiar Elvis song, “Are You Lonesome Tonight”, and rewrote the lyrics to represent a dramatic testimony from the lips of one who had everything the world could offer but nevertheless needed to submit to Jesus to find contentment. Portraying the person of Elvis through costume and voice imitation, Galen sang the rewritten song “Do You Know Him Tonight” as if Elvis was telling a story. He told how he grew up going to church but as he got popular he was pushed into the spotlight and God darkened in the shadows. He encouraged others not to let God disappear in the shadows but to embrace Him before He brings down the curtain of their life. As it turned out, Christians in the audience felt that the drama was so powerful that they encouraged Galen to perform an hour-long concert using the person of Elvis to present one’s need of Christ to the audience. Galen was very resistant but agreed to pray about it. The Lord began waking Galen up in the middle of the night with new lyrics to Elvis’ songs that he barely knew. After many nights of this, Galen began to realize that he had enough material to perform an hour-long drama. He told the Christians who had encouraged him in this endeavor to invite everyone they knew in need of the Lord because he was only going to do this concert one time. There was standing room only in the house that night and it was obvious that the Lord had further plans. Through what he thought would be a one-time performance, an evangelistic “Elvis” concert was born. To Galen’s surprise, several who attended that original performance were guests from other churches who invited him to perform the concert at their church.

### *Amazing Grace Land Ministries Formed*

Amazing Grace Land Ministries was born out of necessity from all the requests to bring the *Elvis Concert Experience* coupled with the requests to bring the *Marriage Adventures* and *Family Affairs* to other churches. With no advertising, this ministry has continued to grow. Galen now shares the gospel as “Elvis” in various cities on a regular basis and the Oakes family performs *Marriage Adventures* and *Family Affairs* in a variety of venues.

The enthusiastic encouragement from fellow Christians in attendance at these productions and regular reports of hearts turned toward the Lord keep the Oakes family motivated to continue this unique ministry.