

## *A Personal Note from Rusty Leonard*

I was very grateful for the positive light in which ABC's 20/20 portrayed our work at MinistryWatch.com and me personally on its March 23, 2007 broadcast. The show is normally viewed by over 8 million people and we are thankful that so many have now become aware of our ministry's efforts to help donors to Christian ministries give wisely and effectively so that more of the Lord's work can be accomplished. The positive response to the 20/20 segment has been overwhelming.

On the other hand, it is the nature of the media to focus on the negative aspect of news stories, in this case, 20/20 also highlighted a number of shallow, self-serving televangelists who preach what is known as the "prosperity gospel". Apparently, negative information like this is what most of us desire to see. And we agree that their activities need to be exposed so that Christians can make wiser decisions about the ministries they support. We were concerned, however, that an unbalanced approach might cause some to mistakenly believe that all Christian ministries are as suspect as those highlighted on 20/20. We are appreciative 20/20 did include a comment from me noting that the worthy ministries far outnumber the unworthy. They also highlighted our webpage which includes both Donor Alerts on the unworthy ministries and "Shining Lights" reports on those ministries that we feel are especially worthy of donor support. We truly hope that all viewers of the program will recognize that the bad are the exception, not the rule, and that donors will use the information on our MinistryWatch.com website to make both more and better giving decisions.

One aspect of my interview with 20/20 that was unfortunately edited out of the final program were my numerous references to my wife, Carol. She has been an integral part of the MinistryWatch.com story and I am very thankful that the Lord has both united us as husband and wife and called us together to this ministry. Indeed, it was Carol who felt led to bring to my attention Ezekiel 33: 1-6 that really called us to do this work. This came at a crucial time during a period when I was ready to walk away from our early efforts to bring some accountability to ministries that we personally supported. While it was my face on the television screen, Carol deserves at least an equal share of any honor resulting from the notoriety which may result from this event.

Of course, it also goes without saying that there are numerous employees over the years who have made our vision for MinistryWatch.com become a reality so that thousands could be blessed daily. The ministry's first president, Mark Long, as well as the brains behind the database and website, Simon Loo, deserve special credit. My long time assistant, Sharon Swaringen and MinistryWatch.com's Director of Research, Rod Pitzer, have also played critical roles in the ministry's success.

Finally, the 20/20 interview cast me in a very favorable light, which makes me uncomfortable. While I do believe what the Lord called us to do, and what we have actually done with the ministry, is a positive development, it is the Lord who should receive any glory from these efforts. We are simply His servants and it is a pleasure and joy to serve Him and His kingdom in this somewhat unusual manner. Moreover, I am more than aware of my own sinfulness and worry that viewers of 20/20 might mistakenly have a less than complete impression of who I actually am. I am simply a sinner saved by the grace of my Lord Jesus. Our good deeds that 20/20 put up in lights are only part of the story. While my sins might not be anything similar to those of the preachers highlighted on the program, in the end I am just as much a sinner as they. With the Lord's help and blessing, we have often been able to overcome our sinful nature and thus MinistryWatch.com was brought to fruition. But if you were to interview my wife, children and co-workers, you would begin to get an understanding of some of my shortcomings. And if ABC could have videotaped my thoughts over any given 24 hour period, then they have may be able to collect material that would highlight less than perfect attitudes! Suffice it to say that the sanctification of Rusty

Leonard is an ongoing, indeed lifelong, process and I feel more comfortable knowing that viewers of 20/20 understand this fact.

In His service,

Rusty Leonard