

Dear Supporters,

As the year comes to a close, I think the best way to sum up 2015 is to say it has been a year of playing catch up. I commented in last year's letter that we had been running on a "better late than never" attitude, and I'm afraid that has had to be our motto again this year. Thus, let me just start by thanking everyone for their patience! I pray we haven't lost anything out of the pipeline, and if you have submitted questions, put in resource orders, etc. and have had to wait for things a lot longer than expected, I want everyone to know we aren't just dropping things. However, we are trying to get the most pressing things out first, which means keeping *Shaqah* as on time as we can, then getting resource orders out; and things such as answering question submissions has fallen far behind. For all this I apologize!

Again this year, I want to thank everyone for your prayers for me personally! I am doing better than last year but health is still a factor in getting everything done. I've always believed God has His timing, and we will wait upon Him to renew our strength! Now, before I make everyone think there was nothing positive to talk about this year, I want to stop and make it clear the backlog has a lot to do with the simple growth of this ministry. We are very grateful for the opportunity to serve, but with growth simply comes the need to handle the capacity. This comes into play on all levels of an organization, and the all around need to improve how this ministry operates has been a big part of the work this past year. This means there are a lot of items that are strictly internal workings of the organization, the details of which I will not bore you with. However, all this takes time, and I want to thank those who have spent time doing this stressful work!

Turning to items truly more positive, I'll start with the website. I talked last year about there being a lot on the website that was so close to going live it was only a technicality we couldn't claim it as being completed in 2014. While I would like to report all that and so much more was accomplished, I have a bad habit of always setting my expectations a little too high. That being said, we thank God we were able to complete the work that was in process. Along with other things, the site now has a great navigational tool in a much needed footer with many links directly to our main pages. It also now has floating buttons to take you directly to the bottom of the page or back to the top, in order to easily use all the navigation. We have improved the forms for subscribing to *Shaqah*, and there has been a lot of improvements which give people information on how to help this ministry financially and otherwise! In truth, there are quite a few things which are not really visible on the website, but were much needed updates to what makes a website work. Some may see this work as unnecessary for us to do ourselves since there are so many companies, and people, willing to run websites. However, aside from the money this would cost, there are other factors. The biggest of these is that we don't find it important that our site just stay up to date so that it remains accessible across our ever evolving technological world, we also attempt to keep it as straightforward and basic as we can so as not to make it hard on those who access our site using older systems. I believe the work of walking this line continues to be crucial and has paid off in allowing us to stay connected and available to many people around the world!

Talking about things expanding, I am pleased to say again this year that the number of *Shaqahs* going out has continued to grow, and we have made some small but important improvements to *Shaqah's* format! Also, the number of calendars needing to be produced has risen dramatically, once again, and like last year it has already exceeded our expectations. Because of all this there became the necessity to do something about our ability to print. Though it seems to me like just a couple years have passed since our last new printer was purchased, it has been a while; and like the machine it replaced, the poor thing was never built to produce the volume we demanded of it. Needless to say, it's coming to the end of its life, and this brings us to the big item of the year!

Living Springs has now taken on the commitment of purchasing a printing machine of much

higher quality and capacity than we have ever had. It has always been this ministry's practice to never purchase anything that we did not have the cash on hand to purchase. One big reason for this is that I have refused to see any of our funds go to pay interest, and unless God specifically instructs, we also never purchase something with the belief the money will simply come along. This is one of the reasons you don't hear this ministry begging for money we just must have in order to meet our month end, year end, etc. goals. Keeping this ministry going by working within whatever capacity we have, instead of just using whatever means there are available to obtain more, is why this small ministry has survived while many others who went forward with the thought, "If it doesn't work out we'll simply shut it all down." have been forced to do exactly that! However, the deal we were eventually able to work out for this new machine has avoided all these major issues and given us a chance to improve what we do for as long as it is in God's will to provide for it. This means we are making payments on the new machine, but it is not through a loan that includes interest. Nor are we buying a very old used machine because that is all we could afford. Instead, we were blessed with the opportunity to buy a machine, paying for it over time, and at a price that essentially recognizes the machine will be as old as it will be by the time it is payed off. In other words, we are buying a much newer machine now for the price such a machine would be worth if it was already about five years older, and we also get to be the ones who use it for those five years!

For those of you who get *Shaqah* regularly you should already see the improvement of having this machine as you look at the November/December issue, and we think this will be a blessing as all our materials, such as the calendar and booklets can be adjusted to produce them on this machine. I should also point out that not only does this machine print and print faster, it can fold and staple *Shaqah*, which up till now has all been done manually. Its higher print quality will allow us to do a few things we haven't done before as well as some things which we have previously had to outsource. All this will save valuable time, and we believe this will be a great blessing to everything this ministry does. Certainly it will help our ability to better handle the increasing demand as this ministry grows! While I just pointed out this ministry is not in the habit of begging for money, I will take this opportunity to say that anyone who feels led to help us with the purchase of this machine is certainly welcome to do so, and your gifts are always greatly appreciated!

On that note, I must say I feel compelled to discuss in this year's letter the fact there is a lot made these days about organizations releasing financial information so people can see where their donations are going, and I want to take a moment to speak to those who may wonder why Living Springs does not specifically seem to do this. To begin with, there are far too few hands to do the work this ministry does, and even writing this year-end letter obviously takes time away from writing teaching materials. That being said, even if we did take the time to release a pie chart or the like to show where all the donations go, it would only serve to show the separation of technical numbers. Living Springs' financial position is very simple! This ministry works out of an office trailer that sits on donated space, and we would desire to have more raw square footage long before any fancy facade. Members of this organization do the internal work of the organization, and none of this ministries' finances go to personally benefit its members. Even if you happen to see someone wearing a Living Springs Institute t-shirt or the like, just know they paid for it out of their own pocket. While it would be great if this ministry was able to, at the very least, provide a living income so I could focus all my time on just the work of The Lord, you should know Living Springs has never payed a single person a salary of any kind.

Now, I want it to be perfectly clear, I do not say any of this for the sake of making us sound all high and righteous, especially compared to other organizations that do things differently. I'm also not saying this as a roundabout way of trying to guilt people into donating to this ministry. It just seems to me there is growing pressure in this world to tell people what kind of organization they should put their money into, and this rhetoric often only serves to direct people to give to those organizations that have the funds to lay out fancy charts and graphs and/or show pictures and videos of them working in poor countries around the world. In my years of experience working with nonprofit organizations, I find that

the ability to do such things, more times than not goes hand in hand with organizations also spending very large parts of their budgets on just attempting to raise even more money. I understand the argument for why many organizations do this, and it is often why they are large organizations. In any case, the bottom line for Living Springs is, all the money given to this organization goes straight into doing the work. The only breakdown is between money that is necessary to spend in order to have an organization, and money that goes directly into the materials we produce. Since utilities, such as a phone and the purchase price of a machine like the one I discussed above, along with having everyday office supplies are all nothing but the bear necessities for even producing and distributing the actual materials, it could be said Living Springs has no real “overhead” at all!

Teaching is what I do, so let me just sum up what I'm saying here by giving some simple advise. Speaking as just an individual, if you're really concerned about your money going to a true “good cause,” I would suggest people not forget the organizations who focus so much on accomplishing their mission they don't tend to have or take time and funds pleading for money. If you want to feel good about where your money goes, take the time to find such organizations instead of them having to reach out to you. Support those organizations you already know operate in this manner. Help good organizations stay focused on their mission and not fundraising. Of course, speaking as a minister, I would also instruct that we each follow what the Bible tells us. Don't give because you want recognition but because it is the right thing to do before our God Who can see the intent of your heart, and the best way to choose when and to whom to give is to continually seek The Lord on such matters, then respond to His leading! You'd be surprised how many people have trouble with the respond part.

Only God truly understands why my heart was compelled to put all this so prominently in this year's letter as it is unusual for me to even talk about such issues. Perhaps it has to do with my age and more so my health and the clear understanding of how short our time to work for The Lord is in this world. However, with that, I believe it is time to bring another year-end letter to its end. In closing, I would simply like to say that Living Springs will continue to do everything we can to provide as much Biblical teaching materials as we can, free of charge, and to anyone who desires it. That is simply what we are called to do! It is our prayer that each of you will continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as we live through these times where it is becoming more obvious by the day that God is the only thing worth holding onto in this world. Thus, I encourage you to hold on to Him with all you're might, allow Him to grow your personal walk with Him, and follow Him in all things so your life can find true meaning in service to Him no matter in what capacity that might be! Thank you once again for all your support in prayer and gifts to this ministry, for they mean the world to us, and may we all have a year filled with God's great presence throughout whatever may lie ahead. Shalom!

Sincerely,



Philip E. Busby
Executive Director
Living Springs
2015