

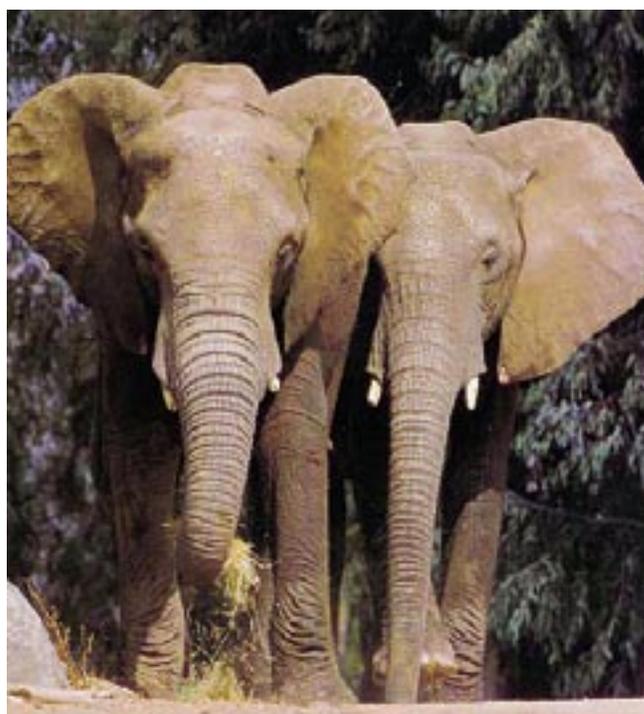


ThinkOne: DOCTRINE

*Royal Rangers:
70 nations,
Six regions,
One doctrinal identity
—We are
Full Gospel/Pentecostal*



*by Douglas Marsh, Director
Royal Rangers International*



A great religious leader was teaching his followers in the jungles of India. Devotees from around the world came to hear his teaching. He taught that what most people considered reality was only an illusion. During one of his discourses, his lecture was stampeded by a herd of wild elephants. He and his followers immediately climbed trees to protect themselves from certain destruction. As they regained composure and returned to their circle, one doubting disciple asked his religious master why, if the elephants were only illusions and not real, the religious leader joined the rest of the group in the trees. The religious leader answered, “What elephants?”

Biblical truth is not merely to be confessed, but lived and taught. James says, “Don’t fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear!” (1:22, The Message). It brings such fulfillment when we allow the Word to define our actions and our leadership.

I can still hear the words of one Royal Rangers leader on this topic. “Doctrine!?!” he exclaimed. “Students don’t join Royal Rangers because they want to learn sound church doctrine. They become members because they see the promise of fun and friends.”

Up to this point I was in full agreement with this person. It is true that young people become Royal Rangers because of its adventurous lifestyle, not because they researched our doctrine first. What this leader said next, though, surprised me. He concluded, “It does not matter what our doctrine is. Let the local church implementing the ministry decide that.” I then proceeded to explain my views.

If young people join Rangers for fun and friends, why devote an entire article to the subject of doctrine? Because what we believe, live, and teach as members of this worldwide ministry matters.

Our doctrines define Royal Rangers in at least four ways. They define our (1) identity, (2) source, (3) outposts, and (4) legacy.

Doctrine Defines Our IDENTITY

Royal Rangers is a full gospel/Pentecostal ministry! It is who we are. Johnnie Barnes, the founder of Royal Rangers, was a Methodist minister when he personally experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It so changed his life and leadership that he designed Royal Rangers to be a ministry defined by the Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Today our course is unchanged—we lead a Bible-believing, Pentecostal ministry.

In every generation the church is tested to determine if it will allow the secular world to define it. Today’s societies tolerate every lifestyle and choice. Like a termite, compromise with the world is eating away the church’s moral authority. Increasingly we talk of godliness, but we do not experience its power in our lives. Sadly, many times our doctrine is not relational; it is believed but not lived out in an expression of love for God.

The church described in the book of Acts faced its generational test, similar to ours, but did not let an immoral society dislodge its firm identity. The church was devoted to preaching the Word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, the message was spread throughout the entire known world.

The lesson for us today is that our ministry identity must likewise remain unchanged—we are Christ-centered, Bible-based, and Holy Spirit-empowered. We proclaim both the truth of the Word *and* the power of the Spirit. If we only teach the truth, we become legalistic. If we only teach the Spirit, we become libertarians given to excess. We are to minister the Word in the power of the Spirit. Royal Rangers is a global, full gospel/Pentecostal ministry with life changing power.

Doctrine Defines Our SOURCE

I have yet to run into a leader who is afraid of the full gospel label on Royal Rangers. It is the word *Pentecostal* that some fear. They explain, “While I am personally Pentecostal, many churches will not establish Royal Rangers if we identify ourselves as a Pentecostal ministry!”

Their concerns revolve around potential ministry growth—which we all know is important. The number of churches that adopt Royal Rangers, however, does *not* limit our growth. Expansion is limited only by our evangelistic efforts. Just take a look at the Full Gospel Forum in Stuttgart, Germany. That *one* church has Royal Rangers groups in over 14 locations around the city and numbers well over 1,000 Rangers. Their strategy is biblical—it is based on evangelism.

Don't misunderstand. We want to establish Royal Rangers in every Pentecostal and charismatic church possible, and additionally in any non-Pentecostal, evangelical church willing to associate with Royal Rangers. But we lack integrity if we hide who we are and what we teach. We cannot expect God's blessing if we downplay who we are for the benefit of increase. God's formula for growth is *evangelism* and *discipleship*, and it works every time it is tried.

What is more, this attitude betrays a hesitancy to depend on God's power. If the baptism in the Holy Spirit confers additional power for ministry, the logical question is, "How *much* additional power is gained?" A *dramatic amount* is the answer!

Pentecostal scholar Dr. Gordon Anderson documents, "Pentecostals have been dramatically more successful in planting and growing churches than those who have rejected the Pentecostal understanding of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The following statistics are drawn from the development of Pentecostal missions in the 20th century. In Chile, the Methodists grew to approximately 5,000 members, while the Pentecostals grew to 2,371,000. In Brazil, the Baptists grew to 1,050,000, while the Pentecostals grew to over 21 million. Worldwide, the Christian and Missionary Alliance grew to 1.9 million, while the Assemblies of God surpassed 50 million." Pentecostal ministry growth is not slightly larger than non-Pentecostal; it is dramatically so!

A word of caution is in order: Pentecostals are not spiritually superior. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not the only experience of importance in the life of the believer. Of equal importance for life and godliness are justification, Bible reading and application, prayer, fasting, fellowship, water baptism, sanctification, sacrifice, suffering, and service. Pentecostals, too, must individually develop the fruit of the Spirit, explore the gifts of the Spirit, and unconditionally love each other and the world. However, by experiencing the baptism in the Holy Spirit the Pentecostal receives additional power, gifts, miracles, passion, and emotion for ministry. But we must be emphatic—Pentecostals do not believe that *all* power and gifting for ministry occur after the baptism in the Holy Spirit. But we believe the Bible teaches (and history substantiates) that God has an additional dimension of His grace and power for those who receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The bottom line is, *God* is our source for ministry growth. His Word instructs us to reach the lost and to do so in His power, not our own. He is our source. Let us humbly, obediently, and completely depend on Him.

Doctrine Defines Our OUTPOSTS

Even Pentecostals have different beliefs regarding when one is baptized in the Holy Spirit and the evidence of that. Statistically, the vast majority of Pentecostals hold to the traditional belief that the

purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is for empowerment for service and that the initial physical evidence is speaking in tongues. Non-Pentecostal Evangelicals usually teach that the Holy Spirit is received by faith at salvation and there is no subsequent baptism. Charismatics maintain that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience that follows justification, but that tongues, while usually accompanying the experience, are not necessarily the initial evidence—any of the gifts may be the evidence. Moreover, they emphasize tongues as a prayer language and to some degree de-emphasize it as empowerment for service. The newer Third Wave groups believe in tongues, believe it can provide additional power, but are vague as to whether the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a specific experience. These are just some of the views among Pentecostals.

These differences, however, do not present a challenge to Royal Rangers. Our motive is not to debate these distinctions, but rather to underscore the fact that we all depend on the work of the Holy Spirit. We also understand that the Holy Spirit is not the only doctrine or discipline we teach. In fact, it is one of many (as mentioned earlier)—justification, sanctification, Bible reading, prayer, fasting, the church and its mission, water baptism, suffering, service, *and* the Holy Spirit. We do not teach all these *except* the Holy Spirit; we teach them all, *including* the Spirit. We simply agree not to make these disparate views regarding the baptism in the Holy Spirit an issue.

This understanding defines our outposts because it determines the development of ministry curriculum designed both for evangelism and discipleship. The curriculum presents the full gospel, including the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, our methods and ministry at national and international camps will reflect our Pentecostal foundation. We will focus our events to reach the lost and to encourage the students to seek *everything* God has for them, *including* the baptism in the Holy Spirit. If our constituents understand our full-gospel orientation beforehand, conflict is avoided.

One of the awesome things I have witnessed over the past 20 years developing Royal Rangers in Latin America and around the world, is how this position has allowed Royal Rangers to bridge the gap between many different churches, including non-Pentecostals. Evangelicals and Pentecostals agree on most doctrine. And, increasingly, more evangelicals are experiencing the baptism in the Holy Spirit. These congregations eagerly want to use Royal Rangers to reach their communities. They know we are a Pentecostal ministry and are open to experience what they will as they use our curriculum and attend our camps. *We welcome them!*

Our curriculum dictates how we train our leaders, what we do at our camps, and that shapes what takes place in our outpost meetings. As you can tell, our doctrine has a huge influence upon our outposts.

Doctrine Defines Our LEGACY

It goes without saying that our doctrine impacts the future, our ministry legacy. As national leaders we are responsible to see that Royal Rangers grows inside our nation. But of equal importance are the trails we blaze for those who will follow—these trails point the way for future generations. Every current and future national leader should be vigilant to position Royal Rangers as a cutting-edge evangelistic and Spirit-empowered ministry. The human tendency, except we provide decisive leadership, is to drift away from our foundational purposes—to forget who we are, to revise or ignore our Pentecostal history, or to rely on ourselves rather than our divine growth source.

We are all familiar with the YMCA, the Young Men's Christian Association. George Williams started the movement in London in 1844. He described himself growing up as a "careless, thoughtless, godless, swearing young fellow," but eventually became a devout Christian. When he started the YMCA he was a 23-year-old draper who wanted to provide the young men of London an environment where they would not be tempted into the rampant sin of the city.

"The Y," as it is also known, was without question a Bible-based, evangelistic ministry. It quickly grew around the world. Lay evangelists like Dwight L. Moody and John Mott were part of the organization, which began to send missionaries around the world to accelerate its expansion and evangelism.

But let us move quickly from its roots to where the YMCA is today, 162 years later. While it still accomplishes many noble things, few of its individual clubs fulfill the intentions of its founder. Many are community fitness centers or youth hostels, but have little or no evangelistic impact.

National Commanders Recognition Program (NCRP)

In the coming year, RRI will begin a program to recognize National Commanders annually for their leadership and dedication to the Ranger ministry in the form of a new award for their uniform. Part of the criteria for earning the NCRP award will be timely annual reporting to the Regional Coordinator's office and evidence of personal and ministerial growth. The award will be given in the form of a medal (and/or ribbon) plus a certificate and the award criteria will be standardized for all nations. National Commanders will have the opportunity to earn NCRP recognition each year, through a number pin that can be added to the award to reflect the number of times earned. The RRI Council decided to implement the new program in 2006 and National Commanders will first be recognized in early 2007. The complete criteria and conditions for earning the NCRP award will be announced at upcoming regional meetings and in future additions of the RRI 360° newsletter. It will also be posted on the RRI website.

Why did this happen? Leaders through the years forgot about their identity, their Source, their history, their future.

As leaders we cannot afford to dilute our identity as a full gospel/Pentecostal ministry. If we minimize who we are thinking it will encourage growth, we deceive ourselves and do so at our own peril.

What will our Royal Rangers story be when we are 162 years old? You and I are literally deciding that today by our doctrines and by how we practice them in our own lives. History is full of ministries that, like museums, showcase their doctrines and Christian roots, which were once held sacred but are now empty of reality and influence. Let's determine that will never be our legacy!

Peter Cartwright, a nineteenth-century circuit-riding Methodist preacher in the United States, was an uncompromising man. One Sunday morning when he was to preach, he was told that President Andrew Jackson was in the congregation, and was warned not to say anything out of line.

When Cartwright stood to preach, he tactfully said, "I understand that Andrew Jackson is here. I have been requested to guard my remarks. Ladies and Gentlemen, Andrew Jackson, just like you and me, will either spend eternity in heaven or hell depending on his choice to repent or not." He then proceeded to preach a powerful evangelistic message to which many responded.

The congregation watched carefully after the service wondering how the President would respond. President Jackson shook hands with the Pentecostal preacher and said, "Sir, if I had a regiment of men just like you, I could radically change our nation!" God has commissioned you and me to build a "regiment" of bold ministers, adults and young people to radically change our world in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is our awesome privilege!

As national leaders I urge you to know the Word from which all our doctrines come, experience them, live them, love them, teach them, and, when necessary, defend them (Ps. 119:103). Let us live and lead so that we anchor Royal Rangers on the Word of God and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the only way Royal Rangers will stay strong and healthy—if we personally recommit ourselves to them. To do anything less is to court compromise and decline.

Let's **ThinkOne: DOCTRINE**. God has established Royal Rangers in 70 nations, six regions, and *He calls us to adequately declare the always-relevant Word of truth to every Ranger-age student in the world in the power of the Holy Spirit.*



Interview with Jeff Cooper

Royal Ranger missionary
to Costa Rica

— November 2005

Introduction: Jeff Cooper serves as an Assemblies of God Royal Ranger missionary with his wife Danette and three children to the nation of Costa Rica. The following is a brief interview between RRI and Jeff about his ministry and a recent "Father and Son" camp that was held at Camp Summit.

1. What was the exact name of the camp and when and where did it take place?

I'd like to thank you for taking the time to ask how things are in Costa Rica and at Camp Summit.

Camp Summit is in a transition mode from construction to ministry. Although we still need many projects finished or built to fulfill our ultimate vision for the camp to men and boys, we are now at a point where we are seeing much hard work pay off through ministry. With that said, in the beginning of the year we planned a Dad/Lad (Padre e Hijo) camp for Nov. 18th-20th. One of our goals for this camp was to introduce Campamento La Cumbre (Camp Summit) as a place of ministry to the people of Costa Rica as well as Latin America. We soon realized that the timing was not the best due to other activities in the churches as they prepare for Christmas. Despite the fact that we did not have the full turnout we had hoped for, we decided to go ahead with the camp as planned. As we neared the deadline we realized we made the right choice regardless of the numbers because we met our goal, and God showed us that this camp was a learning experience for us all.

We had about 60 people on Saturday night for the service. They were very impressed with our council fire. We ran a thin cable overhead and pointed downhill along the side of the benches leading directly into the council fire. Then we slid a piece of pipe over the cable and taped a large rocket type firework to it and lit it when no one was expecting. It was a dark night so it looked like fire from the heavens flying into the council fire then it exploded and lit up like a bomb. The fire blazed from that point on and it was incredible!

For those of us, working behind the scenes, it was another council fire service like many before, but we often forget the impact it makes on the boys, and even Dads, who have never seen anything like it. As it turns out, no one attending this camp had ever been a part of a council fire service before. When the fire exploded

During the week of July 17-21, 2006, an estimated 7,500 boys and men from the U.S. and many foreign countries will travel to Eagle Rock, Missouri U.S.A. for this once-in-a-lifetime event. From the dawn of the early morning through the dark star-filled night, many exciting events will capture the attention of the campers, from the National Archery and National Pinewood Derby Championships, to racing on the BMX or Mountain Bike course, even climbing on the Rappelling Tower and hot air balloon rides.

Special services will be held each evening in the amphitheater that can accommodate up to 10,000 campers. The state-of-the-art stage complex houses a large, elevated projection screen at center stage to highlight the evening speaker or a special part of the service.

To sum it all up, begin making your plans to be at Camporama 2006 where you will experience great fun and fellowship and be personally challenged to a higher level of love and commitment to our Lord and Master Ranger, Jesus Christ!



FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT WWW.ROYALRANGERS.AG.ORG.



SAL Conference

(Seminario de Actualización Latinoamericano)
ORLANDO, FLORIDA
 February 20 – 25, 2006

Royal Rangers International is organizing a unique conference in Orlando, Florida (USA) to introduce program and curriculum changes to all the of the Royal Rangers national commanders and staff from Latin America and the Caribbean (RRLAC). The goal of these changes is to standardize the Royal Ranger program throughout the region, encourage greater unity and cooperation among nations using the program, and to reinforce the spiritual essence and vision of the ministry. National Commanders will receive a high quality video or DVD in Spanish to take back to their country and use to train new leaders.

If you are involved with the Royal Ranger ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean, then you will not want to miss this important conference. Please visit www.ERLAC.com for further information.



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with light, every single Ranger and father stood on top of the benches and began jumping and shouting with excitement. Just seeing their enthusiasm made the entire event worthwhile! The presence of the Holy Spirit was evident as we started the praise and worship service after this "blaze from heaven."

2. How many people attended and what was the makeup of the attendees? (Church folks? non-Christians? were they local people or was it an international event?, etc.) Did any men or boys receive Christ? In your opinion was the camp a success?



Mike Wright was our speaker for the event and he is a US missionary in Colombia. He is from my home district, Alabama, and is extremely supportive of the RR ministry wherever he goes. He and I talked about the camp earlier in the year and we wanted to target Costa Rican churches that do not have Royal Rangers, but we believe could really benefit from the program. We sent invitations to about eight churches and six responded. Out of the 60 or so people there Saturday night it was about evenly divided between fathers and sons. We had several pastor, 3 local missionaries (2 of which had their sons with them) and a visiting El Salvadoreño missionary also attended with his son. We also had some youth from surrounding churches. All of the attendees were already Christians.

We want to build a strong foundation for the new program here in Costa Rica so we really focused on the Holy Spirit and the importance of being Spirit filled. We had a total of 7 men and boys receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We also have information that 5 of the participating churches want to begin using the Royal Ranger program. Several people have even contacted me about the possibilities helping the Ranger ministry on a national level. I feel the camp was a huge success.

3. How long was the camp and what were the scheduled activities? What happened during the camp? Were there any special stories or testimonies?

The camp began on Friday night, November 18th, and concluded on Sunday morning after breakfast and a devotion. On Saturday, we taught a rope craft class during the day and had games set up all around, but the idea of the camp was not to keep them too busy with activities. Rather, we wanted to give the fathers time to spend with their sons in a special outdoor environment. Although we had a lot of rain, it did not stop the boys from creating a new activity that wasn't on the agenda: a "Mud War!" We had several dads, pastors and missionaries (including me and our special guest speaker Mike Wright) attacked by "the mud people" (see photo). Those macho dads and pastors were running and screaming like babies trying to get away from the mud people, but nobody could escape them. They were too young and too fast for us! I am still sore from all the running and fun we had trying to get away.

4. Did you attend the camp with your son? What were your impressions? What were his impressions?

I took my 2 sons, Zachary who is 12 and Lucas who is 5. As missionary kids, they know that I have to spend much of my time working behind the scenes, so they both were a tremendous help to me around the camp. Zachary helped make the torches for the walk down to the council fire. He also worked all day Saturday helping organize the council fire service for that night. He has been in Royal Rangers since he was 7 years old and he knows how much work goes into an event. He loves to be a part of the junior staff and the "behind the scenes" work, as all boys do.

During the Friday night service, Mike had us lay hands on our sons and ask God to fill them with the Holy Spirit. As I did, I felt a special peace from God. I knew that God was moving in lives of my sons and that He was bringing us closer together as a family. Zachary and Lucas both told me they loved the father/son camp and want us to plan another one.

5. Will you hold this camp again in the future? Is it an annual event?

Absolutely! The people who attended will probably "force" me to have this camp again, but we will plan it for a different date when even more boys and men can enjoy their time together. I feel that because of this camp, although it is small beginning, we have a good support base and spiritual foundation to build on for another father/son camp in 2006.

6. Any other comments you may have (about your missions work, Ranger work, challenges, life in a foreign country etc....)

I thank God for the opportunity He has given me as part of a program that changes the lives of boys around the world. I love to see fathers and sons united in an outdoor environment. I can't imagine trying to reach them by any other means than beneath the moon and stars, around the flames of a campfire with the sounds of God's creation echoing through the surrounding jungle. God has truly blessed my family and me. Although there are many challenges that I face ministering at Camp Summit, I have decided to face them with optimism and look for the good in every situation. Just like the boys at the camp did not let the rain stop their fun, I don't want to let any problems or challenges overpower the many good things that God is doing in the lives of men and boys at Camp Summit.

Jeff & Danette Cooper — Missionaries to Costa Rica

Royal Rangers International / Camp Summit Website: coopersforchrist.com

www.RoyalRangersInternational.com

Stay connected to what is happening around the world by visiting the RRI website. The site is your one source for program information, reports, and details on upcoming global events. Be sure to read RRI 360°, the official newsletter for Royal Rangers leaders around the world, which is archived on the site. You can also read current news, like the progress of the program in Bulgaria, or the exciting Bundescamp that took place in Germany this summer (the world's largest gathering of Royal Rangers!).