



How to find hope in the wasteland

by Kim Pettit

With Wings Like...

Did you know that financiers have a special term for profiting from troubled or distressed companies—even those facing bankruptcy? “Vulture investing,” they call it. That’s quite a vivid word picture!

Vultures, birds of prey found in both the Old and New Worlds, have keen eyesight. They are powerful, able to tear flesh from bone with their sharp beaks. They mostly feed on carrion—dead things.

If your company is in distress, you might feel as though vultures are circling above you. Maybe you are overwhelmed by the demands of creditors, with insufficient funds to meet payroll and finance new and existing projects. Perhaps you see your company stumbling towards death, with no relief in sight and the threatening shadow of wings overhead.

Vultures have enormous wings. They are among the largest birds on earth. The hooded vulture—the smallest among 22 species worldwide—is still about as large as a crow; the cinereous vulture has a 9-foot wingspan; South American condors have up to an 11-foot wingspan.

The problems we face in publishing can loom just as large. But instead of looking at vultures, I encourage you to remember eagles.

Towards the end of the book of Deuteronomy, when Moses was preparing Joshua to lead the Israelites into the promised land, he recited a song for all to hear. It says that the Lord found his people, represented by Jacob, “in a desert land... in a barren and howling waste.” (Deut. 32:10a) There is no doubt a desert sojourn is tough. The publishers who shared their stories in this issue of *InterLit* do not deny this. They talk of fear, of tears, of challenges that seemed insurmountable.

And what did the Lord do? “He shielded [Jacob] and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions... He made him ride on the heights of the lands and fed him with fruits of the field.” (32:10b-11, 13a)

The passage continues, “[The Lord] nourished [Jacob] with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag.” (32:13b) Rocks and crags are unlikely places to find honey and oil. The markets we face might seem as barren and unlikely to yield anything good. We long to simply break even, and to hope for more seems impossible—but remember who it was

that sang these words. It was Moses. If anyone knew the power of God, if anyone could speak with authority about God’s ability to save his people and to provide for them in the wasteland, it was Moses. His audience knew this. They’d bet their lives on following him.

We are told, “When Moses finished reciting... to all Israel, he said to them, ‘Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life.’” (32:45-47a)

Why do we publish? Why go through all the effort of editing, design, production, warehousing, marketing, sales, and so on? It is because we, like Moses, want to bring “not just idle words,” but life. How can our books bring life to our readers? That’s relevant to every Christian publishing house, no matter what the bottom line is, whether it is a time of crisis or a season of success.

There is a command, a caveat in Moses’ song, that I have not yet shared. When the Lord found Jacob in the desert and carried him on eagles’ wings, it was critical that “The Lord alone led him; no foreign god was with him.” (32:12). The Lord demands our trust. In the barren places, in the howling empty wastelands, our eyes must be on him... and not on our problems.

Vultures are huge. Because of their size, and because they soar high in the sky, taking advantage of warm wind currents, sometimes people mistake vultures for eagles. It is true that they share many characteristics. Both are birds of prey with powerful beaks, large wings, and big feet, but the similarity ends there. Vultures subsist on dead things... but our Lord brings life, healing, wholeness, resurrection, and victory.

He promises: “...Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; and they will walk and not be faint.” (Is. 40:31) ❖

