

PASTOR JOE

# A LIVING EXAMPLE

# *of the power of* GOD

Joe Cameneti's story is an example of man's effort to resist change. But in a stronger sense it is an example of the power of God to effect change in man. And Cameneti's acceptance of that power to change is evident in the fervor with which he shares his faith at the church flourishing under his guidance northeast of Warren.

Joseph A. Cameneti — "Pastor Joe" to those who congregate in the sanctuary of Believers' Christian Fellowship, who read the books he's published and who watch his weekly television program — says his goal is to get God into people's homes. And that right there is evidence of the remarkable change that's taken place in the life of this man who once referred to evangelists as "Jesus freaks."

Pastor Joe's background is unconventional in every aspect: from the time he took to the field as a football player for Warren's John F. Kennedy High School and, later, after a career-ending injury finishing up at Howland High School, Cameneti saw his future outlined in the business arena. True to plan, shortly after his high school graduation he and his brother partnered to open the Steel Valley Barbell Club in Boardman.

"I remember a man who came to the club — he paid me extra to

train him, three times a week — and he began to witness," Cameneti recalls. "He would tell me that Jesus loved me, and I would respond by calling him a 'Jesus freak!'"





Then one day, after several months had passed, he called me up and asked me to watch a Christian TV program. At the end of that program, they invited watchers to pray with them to accept Christ as their savior. And I got on my knees and prayed.” From that moment, Cameneti declares, “I saw life through a different set of glasses. Something changed on the inside of me!”

It was, of course, foreordained that he would decline an uncle’s offer to further his business career in favor of attending RHEMA Bible Training Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma. But he told himself that “I would never come back to Warren, and I would never be a pastor.”

They say that man makes plans and God laughs. Today, “Pastor Joe” and his wife, Pastor Gina, whom he met at the Bible school, oversee a sprawling complex of sanctuary, offices, meeting rooms, activity areas, and day care center. The Believers’ Christian Fellowship facility began life as an elementary school and since its acquisition in 1987 has undergone several transformations, expansions and remodeling projects — and there are more to come. “I think I’m where God wants me,” Cameneti says now. The same is true of his immediate family, who have all — parents and brothers alike — become a part of his dream. His brother James Jr. is the church’s Business Manager, in charge of facilities and finances; brother Michael is pastoring a church in Canton, Ohio, and Tony is pioneering a Bible School in Australia. Several husband-and-wife teams are among the administrative staff: “I have a great team around me,” Cameneti says.

Believers’ Christian Fellowship has a membership of 2,000 plus and growing, featuring every age group. What’s the secret to attracting membership, especially among the under-30 crowd? Many would say it’s Cameneti himself, who possesses a genuinely warm and uplifting demeanor. But he says it’s “really exciting worship.

I’m happiest when I see God  
changing them from the inside.

~ Pastor Joe



“Our songs are uplifting, we preach a practical Bible lesson. When someone comes to worship with us, they’ll know what to do to help their own life.” He’s noted that the group of adolescent churchgoers is growing, a result of young people “visiting us, then bringing their friends.”

The church has a focused ministry for every age group. Kidz4God is a center for infants through pre-kindergarten; Superkids is for kindergartners through fifth graders; JR Refuge is for youngsters in the sixth through eighth grades; Refuge is for those in grades 9 through 12, and Catalyst is for the 18 to 20-something age group. They typically do something every Saturday night after the 5 p.m. weekend service. Jubilee and Pathway of Promise are special needs ministries.

The “Pastor Joe” television program airs locally at 11 a.m. Sundays on Channel 21, WFMJ and Sundays at 9 a.m. and Tuesdays at 8 p.m. on CTNY (Catholic Television Network of Youngstown). The show can be viewed nationally on Fridays at 8:30 p.m. and Sundays at 1 a.m., both EST, on the WHT Network (Direct TV channel 321). The national show is beamed into 15 million Direct TV subscribers. The TV program can also be viewed at any time online at [pastorjoe.com](http://pastorjoe.com). *Extreme Prayer Makeover* has been out for over a year and *God’s Opinion On Today’s Hottest Sex Topics* just came off the press, with another two books planned to come out in the near future. Cameneti’s very real public outreach



began 15 years ago, when he began publishing a weekly column, "Bible Answers," in local newspapers. The outreach quickly grew to today's multifaceted ministry.

Cameneti makes it a practice not to condemn or preach negatively. "But I don't compromise," he stresses. "I want them to reason for themselves. I can't make people do anything — I'm happiest when I see God changing them from the inside. I don't think God intended anyone to be intimidated into changing and following God."

But "BCF," as the church is called, "is not just a feel-good place," its pastor says. "We deal with tough subjects, but in a really relevant way — recent projects have been about 'Clean 'n' Dirty: Living above the trash of sin,' and 'Wise Guys,' using a Mafia theme to talk about who you hang out with, what you fear and what you fill up on. My goal is to get the message across so people will understand and enjoy it."

To spread that message, he uses the most up-to-date technology, administered by an in-house production crew: DVDs, CD recordings, books and pamphlets, handout cards. His book, *Extreme Prayer Makeover*, has been called "masterful and powerful." It along with other books, CD's, DVD's and many original music CD's, such as "Heaven will Hear me Pray," are available at the television ministry's Web site, [www.pastorjoe.com](http://www.pastorjoe.com). There is also a Web site for the church, [BCFonline.com](http://BCFonline.com).

Three identical weekend services make it convenient for anyone to come to church. You can come any weekend on Saturday nights at 5 p.m. or Sundays at 9 and 10:45 a.m.. An adult Bible study is also available on Wednesday nights at 7 p.m., which is taught by associate pastors. The very popular Refuge and JR Refuge youth meetings also take place on Wednesday nights at 7 p.m.



Pastor Joe and wife, Pastor Gina




## Pastor and Author, he is now taking his message to the nations

Informational pamphlets describe the various programs, policies and offerings of BCF, and list its simple but powerful vision:

**"Connecting People with: God, People & Purpose"**

Cameneti says, "We call ourselves **The Connecting Place** and in every service I expect people to **connect with God, people and their very purpose for being alive!**" Joe Cameneti makes few demands on those who come through the doors at BCF. "It's about a relationship with Jesus, not loyalty to me or a denomination. I want them to grow spiritually, grow close to God and then join us to help reach our world, if they feel God wants them to."

Unlike many religious leaders, he does not use his pulpit to influence government or voters. "Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, all need God," he says. "I don't mix politics into God's agenda." 

For more information: [www.pastorjoe.com](http://www.pastorjoe.com) • [www.bcfonline.com](http://www.bcfonline.com) • 330.372.3333