

providing a future with hope

Challenges

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Missing the Point

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

Does the name Amelia Bedelia ring a bell? She comes from the world of children's literature. She is the nice, but not-so-helpful house-maid of Mr. and Mrs. Rogers.

Try as she might, she has the uncanny ability of missing the point every time. When told to dress the turkey, she clothes the Thanksgiving bird in a cute blouse and skirt. When told to put the lights out, she unscrews the light bulbs from their sockets and strings them on the outside clothes-line. When told to draw the drapes, she gets out the crayons and sketches a picture.

Amelia Bedelia gets it wrong every time. She doesn't mean to. She has the best of intentions. She wants to be helpful. But she just can't seem to understand. She misses the point over and over again.

In Acts chapter 8, there's another person who misses the point and misses it terribly. His name is Simon. He's a magician of sorts who, along with the rest of the community, gets miraculously saved at one of Philip the Evangelist's crusades in Samaria.

Word reaches the Church of Jerusalem and they send Peter and John to investigate. The apostles end up praying for the new believers, and they marvelously receive the Holy Spirit.

Awe-struck, Simon offers Peter money and says, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit" (v. 19).

Simon wanted a special kind of power that would enable

him to impart the Holy Spirit to others. At first reading, that seems like a pretty good request. I myself could certainly stand more of God's anointing working in and through my life. I want to be a more effective minister to hurting men and women.

So where did Simon go wrong?

For starters, his motivation was all wrong. He wasn't thinking about how he could benefit others. He wanted spiritual authority to advance his own agenda. He had an ego problem. But there's more.

Simon wanted a good thing *in an extreme way*. He wanted too much of a good thing. He wanted power, which is fine, except that there was something far more important that should have been top on his list of concerns. He went for second things—not bad things—but not the *best* thing.

He missed the point.

I hear a lot of testimonies in church: A recently converted

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drug addict praises God for his sobriety and physical health. A woman thanks God for newfound freedom over anxiety and depression. A young man praises God for the power he's had to resist sexual temptation. Another person speaks of severed relationships being restored. Another gives glory to God for financial prosperity. And then the testimony ends, and I say, "Is that all?"

Don't get me wrong. We should express our gratitude to God for his many blessings, BUT if we mistake the gifts of God for the God of the gifts, we miss the point of the gospel.

Don't misunderstand: Wanting and having a good marriage, good friendships, good health, a good income, a good ministry, . . . less stress and more peace, less emptiness and more fulfillment, is perfectly legitimate. Don't think yourself unspiritual because you pray for such things and hurt when they are taken away. We all want to feel good. This is how God designed you and me. But when these desires become the ruling passion of our heart, we miss out on God's greatest gift—Himself. Abraham wanted his son Isaac to live, but he wanted to know God more.

The main point of the gospel is not *recovery* but **RELATIONSHIP**. It's not relief but **RECONCILIATION**. It's not *self-control* but **SAVING COMMUNION**.

Jesus Christ died on the cross so that we might be forgiven of our sins and have access to God. Jesus offers us a righteousness we could not earn ourselves so that we might enjoy fellowship with the Creator of the universe. That's the good news!

A question I've often been asked as Director of Life Challenge is "What is your success rate?" In other words, "How well does your program *work*?"

I hate that question. Let me explain.

The point of the program is NOT helping someone get his life to "work" but helping him get his life to "worship." Asking "How well does the program work?" is like asking an artist, "Does your painting *work*?" or like asking a poet, "Does your poem *work*?" or like asking a musician, "Does your piece *work*?" Paintings, poems, and musical pieces are not meant to "work." They are meant to capture splendor and

loveliness and release in the one who partakes of them a spirit of wonder and worship.

We see things too much as engineers and not as artists. We're focused on what is useful and what produces results more than on what is beautiful and lovely. And the effect is that we reduce Christianity to a program, a system, . . . a life-management course.

Yuck! I want a life that worships! That sings! That dances!

If Simon only knew when he voiced, "Give me this power" that there was so much more to be had!



*"One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple."*

—Testimony—

Jamie Hardaway

I grew up in a loving family in a very small town in Indiana. The only dark spot in my childhood was my parents' divorce, which happened when I was 3 or 4 years old.

When I was growing up, my siblings and I attended the Mormon Church with my mother where my grandfather was the bishop. However, at 10 years of age, I decided I wanted nothing to do with religion and closed my heart to God altogether.

I was an A student throughout school. However, as I got into high school, I began to do certain things that were in direct contrast to who my parents thought I was. It was during that time that some friends turned me on to smoking pot. By my senior year, it had become a daily habit. I still did well with my grades so nobody suspected what was going on.

After high school I was accepted into the pre med undergraduate program at Indiana University. When I arrived on campus I began hanging out with a crowd who had access to even harder drugs than I had done in high school. Through books and movies I had developed a fascination with heroin. When my new friends let it be known they had access to heroin I was all too willing to take part.

I developed a habit that began costing me \$150 a day and I had to shoot up before going to class or I would be too sick

2004 Fiscal Report: General Operating Expenses

The following information dates from January 1, 2004 through December 31, 2004.

Income:

• Individual Offerings	\$ 255,134	35.1%
• Church Offerings	\$ 120,763	16.6%
• Businesses/Organ.	\$ 87,835	12.0%
• Walk-a-thon	\$ 19,080	2.6%
• Entrance Fees (\$500)	\$ 48,493	6.7%
• Banquets	\$ 24,444	3.4%
• Yard/Tree/Misc. Sales	\$ 78,510	10.8%
• Vehicle Sales	\$ 16,744	2.3%
• Work Crews	\$ 2,545	0.3%
• Car Washes	\$ 54,487	7.5%
• Other	<u>\$ 19,601</u>	<u>2.7%</u>
TOTAL	\$ 727,636¹	100%

Disbursements:

• Gross Payroll*	\$ 451,578	57.4%
• Employee Enrichment	\$ 12,043	1.5%
• Utilities (9 Properties)	\$ 75,214	9.6%
• Property Insurance	\$ 19,931	2.5%
• Property Taxes	\$ 14,409	1.8%
• Repairs/Maintenance	\$ 33,625	4.3%
• Equipment	\$ 19,767	2.5%
• Vehicle Expense	\$ 35,366	4.5%
• Office Exp/Postage	\$ 10,179	1.3%
• Telephone	\$ 8,111	1.0%
• Food	\$ 12,124	1.5%
• Missions	\$ 13,325	1.7%
• Miscellaneous	\$ 45,441	5.8%
• Promotional	<u>\$ 36,293</u>	<u>4.6%</u>
TOTAL	\$ 787,406²	100%

Note:

¹This figure does not include the additional \$111,134 that was donated for the purchase of our new ladies home which was acquired for \$125,000.

²This includes weekly salaries, retirement, housing allowance, health insurance, workers' compensation, disability and FICA for 23 employees.

to attend. One day I went to class too high to function and passed out during a heart catheterization.

Still trying to manage my drug habit and stay in school, I took some time off intermittently to go to various treatment facilities. These were usually 30, 60 or 90 day programs but I never completed any of them. My parents kept pressuring me to stay in a program, but school was more important to me. My plan, though, was failing. I would get clean for a couple of days and then go back to school only to fall right back into the drugs. In spite of everything I remained at the top of my class.

The day came when I had used up all of my allowable absences and withdrew from school rather than be kicked out. Then I disappeared for about a year—living on the streets and hanging out with drug dealers—stealing to support my habit. Eventually I ended up in jail on theft charges.

When my parents found out I was in jail they hired an attorney, who turned out to be a Christian. He made me attend church as part of the agreement for taking my case. When he found out I was still using drugs, he had me put back in jail until there was an opening at Life Challenge.

I arrived at Life Challenge September 19, 2003. I used heroin right up until the time I went in. The next day, we all attended church and at the end of the service, I responded to the altar call. I realized I needed Someone to intervene. I turned my life over to Jesus and accepted him as my savior. I knew my troubles weren't over but I had a sense of hope.

While at Life Challenge I learned that I'm not in control of my life—that I need to trust the Lord and put my life in His hands. I learned that I can't trust my own will and desires. I thank God that He is so faithful. ☺

Ministry Note:

- 29 men and women completed the one-year program last year.
- 8 men and women completed the 6-month internship program.

Due to some major unexpected contingencies, we fell short of our budget last year. Thankfully, we had a strong December and January and we are current with all the bills.

Gratefully His,

Jeff