

providing a future with hope

Challenger

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A Wasted Day

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

A few weeks ago I told our staff to take a day off at the ministry's expense. The rules were simple: get alone with God—just you and your Bible. No other books were to be taken, no walk-mans, no PDA's, . . . nothing. I told the staff to find a park, a room—any place free of distractions—and simply “be” with God.

I took my day recently. I found some woods, parked my car, and systematically read several chapters of the Bible. I then took a walk and started to pray. I asked the Lord to draw me closer to Him. I asked Him to speak to me. I began meditating on some of the passages I had read.

Things were going according to plan. Nothing, however, seemed to be happening—at least nothing that I could tell. I wasn't getting any unique insights out of the Scriptures. I didn't feel any inner stirrings relative to present or future situations. I can't say I experienced any special sense of His presence. Nothing.

I grew impatient and started to get uptight. My mind began to wander. It didn't help mat-

ters any by my constantly looking at my watch.

I just hate wasting time. I can't stand the thought of letting a few hours slip by with nothing to show for it—let alone a whole day! I am a purpose-driven, results-oriented kind of guy. I was here to accomplish something.

“I came to ‘do devotions,’ to say my prayers, to read my verses, to go through my religious stations.”

And that's where I think I got it all wrong. I came to *work*. I came to “do devotions,” to say my prayers, to read my verses, to go through my religious stations. I came to get

direction and solutions and sermon ideas. I came to make something happen. And I was determined to use my time as efficiently and constructively as possible.

I didn't come to do nothing. (After all, what functional value could there be in *nothing*? And how would I justify doing *nothing* to my Board?) But it was into "nothing" that I was lead (or driven?).

Whether it was out of exhaustion, frustration, boredom, or the Holy Spirit I don't know (I tend to think it was a combination of all of the above), but I just stopped. I quit praying. I quit interceding. I quit giving thanks. I quit meditating. I basically "checked-out." I began to shuffle my feet. Then I sat down and stared.

That's when I began to see things I hadn't seen for a long time. I started hearing different sounds. I felt the gentle breeze of the wind blow upon my face. Instead of being wrapped up in results, I began to appreciate things for just "being"—from a mother swan sitting on her nest to a chipmunk searching for his nuts to a tall pine tree reaching into the sky. And I think God was in the midst of it all.

No, the world wasn't any better a place for my living that day. I didn't produce anything. I didn't solve anything. No great sermons came out of that day. All I did was "waste" some time.

I think I'll do that again.

"Instead of being wrapped up in results, I began to appreciate things for just 'being.'"

*"Be still, and know that I am God."
(Ps. 46:10)*

Testimony

Will Bates

"I come from a single- parent home. My mom did all that she could for me, but I still missed not having a father.

I was given my first drink by some relatives at the age of 9. They thought it was cute because I had kept asking for some. I smoked my first joint of marijuana when I was twelve. This began a daily habit of drinking alcohol and smoking weed.

I enlisted in the Army after high school. I was able to stay away from the drugs and alcohol. However, just 3 months before my commitment ended, a friend told me about cocaine that was being processed and sold in vials that could be smoked. I was infatuated with the idea and couldn't wait to try it. After my discharge I returned home to Detroit and had my first experience with cocaine. I liked it. Before long I was hooked.

For the next 6 years things went from bad to worse. I was frustrated and angry all the time. I left home and moved into a homeless shelter. One of the stipulations was that I had to attend weekly church services. At one of the services I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I got on my feet again but after about 6 months I started smoking cigarettes. This led me right back to crack cocaine.

I got the notion that if I got married and

started a family I would become more responsible and stop using drugs. But I found out that I was terribly mistaken. I couldn't keep away from the drugs.

I tried various rehab centers to no avail. Then my wife told me about Life Challenge, a place where I could learn how to live a drug free life through the power of Jesus and the truth of God's Word.

I entered Life Challenge in 1998. After 6 months I thought I was ready to leave, but I was wrong. It took me 4 long years to find my way back. I was too proud. I finally re-entered the program in 2002 and graduated. Still, I had not totally surrendered my life to Jesus. Cigarettes had a hold on me. I began smoking, thinking I had earned that 'right' for completing a year at Life Challenge. This opened the door once again to using drugs.

I returned to Life Challenge in 2005, broken and ready to let Jesus take complete control of my life. The daily structure of the program enabled me to focus on building a solid relationship with Christ. I trust that Jesus will finish the work He began in me. I thank God for His mercy and patience. I am also grateful for a loving Christian wife and two wonderful children who did not give up on me and believed that through Jesus Christ we can overcome."

P.S. Will graduated in March and is doing a 6-month internship in the Men's Division.

Ministry News & Notes

- **Alumni:** David, a graduate of 2000, recently wrote, "While I was in your discipleship program you inundated me with the Word of God. All the Scripture you had us memorize and hide in our heart did not come back void."
- **Student Body:** We currently have 47 men and 8 women in our 1-year residential program.
- **Golf Scramble:** Our 4th annual golf scramble is scheduled for July 14th. More details will be forth coming.
- **Church Rallies:** Nearly every week we travel to different churches presenting the power of Christ through the testimonies of changed lives. We are always looking for more opportunities to spread the good news whether in a church setting, school or business format. If you can assist us in this area, please call Debbie @ 313.531.0111.

Thanks to all of you who stand in the gap with us.

Together for souls,

Jeff