



August 2006

A Reminder From My 9-Year-Old

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

The other evening Lori and I were taking a walk through the neighborhood with our two youngest boys. We were pushing Jonathon in his stroller, and Jordan was riding his bike.

We stopped at the playground for a few minutes and then resumed our walk. Jordan got about 150 yards ahead of us and suddenly jumped off his bike and darted behind a nearby garbage dumpster.

Lori didn't understand what Jordan was up to. I did.

Jordan was beckoning me to a game of hide-and-seek. He wanted his father to chase him and embrace him. He wanted touch.

Most kids love hide-and-seek. The challenge of outwitting the "seeker" and eluding his radar is exciting. But hiding isn't the highlight of the game. Nobody wants to remain hidden and left alone indefinitely. Being found is what makes the game fun (at least when dad is "It!").

All of us, like Jordan, want to be touched. Some-

times this desire is expressed openly and respectfully; at other times in more subtle, inappropriate ways. However the communication, we desperately yearn for the solitary state of our soul to be invaded by Another. We need the isolating walls our sin has created to be torn down so that we can encounter the Divine Kiss.

"God Himself is a community. . . and as creatures made in His image we share this communal property."

Interestingly, the first word in the original language of the Song of Songs (Solomon) is "Kiss me!" The Beloved makes a bold, passionate appeal for touch. Eugene Peterson comments, "This person does not want to talk about theology, does

not want to gossip about love, does not want to get on a committee to do something for God. There is no time for cultural ‘platonic’ conversation.” This person wants intimacy at the deepest level and will accept nothing less.

Ministry—whether professional or everyday-run-of-the-mill-rubbing-shoulders-with-others—is about nurturing intimacy, helping others develop relationship Christ and His body.

Life *IS* relationship. The enemy of meaning is separateness. God Himself is a community (“Let us make man in our image”), and as creatures made in His image we share this communal property.

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I am finally starting to understand that the emptiness and boredom and anxiety and loneliness that I have tried to relieve by marrying and having kids, by working hard, by investing myself in humanitarian efforts, by reading books, by exercising—add infinitum—is really a longing for deep, abiding soul-connection with God. Maggie Ross puts it like this: “We try to fill up that ghastly hole in the pit of our stomachs that is really in our souls. We try to fill it with food, with power, with sex. . . . We begin to realize that this hunger will never be satisfied, not in this (manner). It is the hunger for the Face of God.”

When we fail to grasp this, we waste our time and energy by trying to save or fix situations that God may be calling us to abandon for the sake of experiencing deeper fellowship with Him. We fight to keep our jobs or health or retirement or reputation or even our marriages believing these things will give us the happiness we seek. Christian psychologist Larry Crabb writes, “We think about solving the problems more than about finding God in the midst of them. . . . We don’t realize that (our trials and struggles) do not primarily represent problems to be solved, but are rather *opportunities for spiritual companionship.*”

I’m thankful for Jordan’s reminder. To be touched is our most basic, fundamental need. Even more, I’m thankful for a Savior who died in my place to break the barrier so that you and I could be received into God’s family and enjoy His everlasting touch.



For Further Thought:

- “The root of all nonmedical human struggle is . . . a disconnection from God that creates a disconnection from oneself and from others.” (Larry Crabb)

Testimony

David Derouselle

“I was born in Lafayette, Louisiana in 1960. From as far back as I can remember my father abused my mother physically and emotionally. My mother eventually divorced my father and took me and my sisters to live with her.

I went to a Catholic school for the first nine years of school. I was taught about God, but

never felt any closeness to Him. I knew nothing of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

At fifteen years of age I began to drink alcohol with my cousins. Marijuana came next. Soon I was skipping school to get high. My mother could no longer handle me. When I was sixteen she sent me to live with my grandparents hoping that a change of location and schools would straighten me up.

While I was living with my grandparents I received news that my father had died in a car accident. I became depressed and started doing more drugs to escape the pain of losing my father.

I tried reaching out to God, but He seemed so far away. I finally told myself that there was no God and covered up my problems with drugs and work.

In the summer of 1980 I was working in an oil field in Texas. There was an explosion and I was burned over 55 percent of my body. The doctors were not sure if I was going to live.

That was the lowest point of my life. My mother prayed for me and told me about Jesus. She said that if I would put my faith in Jesus He would be my comfort in time of pain. Instead of giving my life to Jesus I turned to the morphine and anti-depressants and became addicted. This led to many rehabilitation centers over the next twenty years. I would stay clean for a short time but then return to the drugs. I was bound.

I thought maybe family would change my life and make me happy. I met a woman, and we had children. I was still miserable though. It didn't take long before I lost my family, my job, and my house.

One day a friend told me that his son had just

graduated from Life Challenge and how it had changed his life. That's all I needed to hear. I applied and entered the program in August of 2003.

I listened daily to the teachers and chapel speakers. I completed my assignments and was never a discipline problem. I thought this was enough. When I graduated in 2004 I felt confident I could make it on my own. I soon discovered that I was completely wrong.

I returned to Life Challenge broken and hopeless. I knew I had to fully surrender my life to God and rely on Jesus as my strength and my guide. This time when I listened something came alive inside me. Jesus showed me that everything I learned at Life Challenge would not help me unless I put Him first. By His grace I have done that. My desire now is to become a godly husband and father who continues to seek the Lord first in all things.”

P.S. David completed a 6-month re-entry program as well as a 6-month internship. He presently serves on staff in the Men's Division.

HELP WANTED

Our women's center is in need of a staff person. We are looking for a female who has a heart for ministering to hurting women. Call Sheila for more information (313.531.0111).



Thanks for helping us “build bridges.” To date, we have 54 men and 9 women in our program that we are helping find connection with God.

Together for His glory,

Jeff