

providing a future with hope

Challenger

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SOMETHING GOD CAN'T DO

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

Why is it that whenever Lori leaves me in charge of the kids, disaster strikes? Either one of the boys will break something, spill something, get hurt, or . . . *get lost*? (Yes, you read that right. Just please don't call Social Services on me yet! Read on.)

Some years ago we were on vacation and stopped at a WalMart when two of the boys and I parted company with Lori to browse around in the sporting goods department. I became "temporarily" preoccupied with a long-coveted item when I looked up to discover one of my boys missing.

I looked around the aisle, and there was no sign of Jordan. I went over a few more aisles and was met with the same result. I began to call out his name. I continued walking past aisles but now more briskly. Still, no Jordan. Panic started to set in. I took off running.

I bumped into Lori. We notified store security. The

doors were locked and an all-out search was made.

Thankfully, after what seemed like hours but was only minutes later we saw a carefree Jordan riding happily up and down the aisles on a little bike with training wheels and one of his brothers chasing after him.

"God can't let go. He loves too much."

Needless to say, after recovering our precious child and smothering him with hugs and kisses, I almost lost my precious life. Again, thankfully, Lori is a forgiving

wife, and she received me back into fellowship.

As I reflect back on that episode, the near terror I felt when I became aware of Jordan's absence is reawakened. In that moment all I could think about was, "Is my son okay? Did someone take him? Did he leave the building? Where is he?" All my life-goals suddenly coalesced into one single objective—find my boy at any cost.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden and fled from His presence, God had one concern on His heart—finding His lost children. Genesis 3:8-9 records: "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'"

At the heart of God is a longing for fellowship with His missing ones. Page after page of Scripture records God's stubborn, relentless pursuing of those who have

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you are not following."***

left His care. He tracks down the insubordinate Hagar in a desert (Gen. 16:7 ff.), the murderer Moses in a wilderness (Ex. 3:1 ff.), the adulterer David in a palace (2 Sam. 12:1 ff.), the prejudiced Jonah in a whale, and so on.

This divine chase climaxes when God puts on flesh and comes to earth to hang on a tree for our reconciliation. The Apostle Paul comments, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

What do we learn from all of this? God can't let go. He loves too much. He can't sit still when some of His

children are missing from His table. As one author concludes, "God's problem is not that God is not able to do certain things. God's problem is that God loves." Because He loves, He cannot rest until all His loved ones who have strayed are found.

IN CLOSING

God is "on the hunt." Jesus said in John 10:16, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. *I must bring them also.*" He is under compulsion to find His lost sheep. He will not rest until He has found them.

And He will bar no expense to find them. The cross is testimony to that fact. Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard put it like this, "When it is a question of a sinner He does not merely stand still, open arms and say, 'Come hither.' . . . He does not stand and wait. (Rather), He goes forth to seek, as the shepherd sought the lost sheep, as the woman sought the lost coin. He goes—yet no, He has gone, but infinitely farther than any shepherd or any woman, He went, in sooth, the infinitely long way from being God to becoming man, and that way He went in search of sinners."

God calls us to join Him in His search for the missing ones. The charge Jesus made to His first disciples remains to this day: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." The implication is that if you are not fishing, you are not following. I am personally convicted. If we are not fishing and actively engaged in seeking and saving the lost, we must ask ourselves if we are truly following Jesus.



*"Though I am free and belong to no man,
I make myself a slave to everyone,
to win as many as possible. . . .
I have become all things to all men
so that by all possible means I might save some.
I do all this for the sake of the gospel."
(1 Cor. 10:19, 22-23)*

Testimony

Greg Paul

“I started using drugs in junior high. I became hostile to any sort of discipline. I would act out in class and skip school on a regular basis. When my parents tried to correct me I would react with rage and violence.

I was put into counseling and inpatient psychiatric hospitals. I would turn away from the cigarettes, drugs, and drinking for a short time but always ended up going back to my old ways.

By the time I was seventeen I had five felony charges against me. I was given the option to go into residential treatment and spent nine months in drug rehab.

I did well for two years. However, an important relationship I had with a female ended, and I fell into a deep depression. I bought a gun and contemplated suicide.

I caught another case. Facing the possibility of a prison sentence, I checked myself into rehab in the hope of avoiding jail time.

While in treatment a man gave me a Bible and told me about Jesus Christ. I always believed in God but never Jesus. I began to read my Bible and one night prayed, ‘God, if Jesus is your Son let me know. If He isn’t then don’t let me be deceived.’ A few days later I was reading the book of John and Jesus was revealed to me.

Three months after my conversion my parents were in a terrible motorcycle accident. My mother suffered a severe brain injury. My brother committed suicide. I couldn’t cope.

I turned from my church and the new friendships I

had developed and fell back into the life from which I had been delivered. The strong-hold of addiction was worse than before.

A friend of my parents gave them information about Life Challenge. They both agreed that this would be the best thing for me, and for once I did not rebel against them. I was ready to be taught and guided.

Through the daily Bible classes, morning chapel, choir, and even my work in the kitchen, God showed me my weaknesses and taught me how to rely on Him instead of myself.

I am serving a six-month internship in the Men’s Division and growing in obedience to the cross of Jesus Christ. I am so thankful to everyone who helped me and stuck by me. Glory and honor be to God who never gave up on me even when I turned my back on Him!”

Thought you might like to know:

- We have 10 properties to maintain including our main center
- We have 14 operating vehicles in our fleet
- We offer GED classes to students without a high school diploma
- We have street and nursing home teams that minister regularly
- We have been involved in community clean-up
- Our men participate in an area softball league during the summer
- We offer a weekly graduate fellowship on Friday nights



Your prayer and financial support enables us to reach the lost with the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Thanks!

Together for souls,

Jeff