



June 2008

SERIOUS JOY

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

I remember the speech well. He gave it every time a new student entered the program. He spoke it calmly, deliberately, and with blood earnestness. The effect was often chilling.

“God is very angry with you. You have sinned against Him and dishonored His name. You have treated Him scornfully and with great contempt, and He holds you accountable. You stand condemned before a holy God and have no excuse.

But there is good news. There is a way of escape. God loves you. He sent His Son Jesus Christ to bear the punishment you deserve on the cross. If you trust in Him, He will forgive you and welcome you into His kingdom.”

Those were the words of the late Rev. David Ytterock, former Director of Education. The speech was known as, *“The Good News and the Bad News.”*

Pastor Ytterock, as we affectionately called him, taught me something profoundly important through this

speech: God is holy, and offending Him is a serious matter. Ministry which minimizes this reality does

“God is holy, and offending Him is a serious matter. Ministry which minimizes this reality does a huge disservice to people.”

a huge disservice to people. Good news is appreciated to the degree a person understands the bad news.

Yet so often in the church, we lose sight of this fact. The wrath of God is spoken of so little. Our appeal to unbelievers is largely devoid of the “hell, fire, and

brimstone” component of the gospel. It goes something like this, “God loves you and has a plan for your life. Accept Him into your heart, and He will become your best friend.”

This approach certainly wasn’t the Apostle Paul’s. When he stood on trial before Felix the Governor, Paul lectured on “righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). Felix’s reaction fit the message: he became “afraid.” There was no skirting of the issues with Paul.

Nor was there with Jesus.

No one spoke more about hell than Jesus. John—the Apostle of *love*—isn’t far behind. It is hard not to tremble reading John’s graphic description of the damnation awaiting the unrepentant from the book of Revelation.

The Scriptures declare that “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). At Life Challenge, we prepare men and women for the day when they will face God. We tell our students about the horror and fury that awaits all those who refuse to turn from their sins. We don’t want anyone to suffer eternal loss.

But there is another reason we speak on the reality of the wrath of God. We want men and women to experience serious, substantial joy. Pastor and author John Piper writes, “without knowing it (i.e., God’s wrath)

**“Good news is appreciated
to the degree a person
understands the bad news.”**

and feeling it as we ought, our seriousness will be superficial and our *happiness will be thin*” (emphasis mine). In other words, the measure of our joy is in direct proportion to our knowledge of God’s righteous indig-

nation against sin.

So, for the sake of your joy, contemplate His wrath.

- “The *wrath of God* is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Rom. 1:18).
- “But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of *God’s wrath*, when his righteous judgment will be revealed” (Rom. 2:5).
- “What if God, choosing to show his *wrath* and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his *wrath*—prepared for destruction” (Rom. 9:22)?
- “Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for *God’s wrath*, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).
- “Like the rest, we were by nature objects of *wrath*” (Eph. 2:3).
- “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things *God’s wrath* comes on those who are disobedient” (Eph. 5:6).
- “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the *wrath of God* is coming” (Col. 3:5-6).
- “They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the *wrath of the Lamb*! For the great day of their *wrath* has come, and who can stand” (Rev. 6:16-17)?

Testimony

Miriam Workman

“I was raised in a pastor’s home where the gospel of Jesus Christ was lived and talked about every day. We were in the church whenever the doors were opened. At four years of age I asked Jesus into my heart and remember an overwhelming sense of comfort and peace.

That same year I was sexually abused by people I trusted. This continued for several more years. I was hurt and confused and did not know where to turn.

When dad took a church in a different city, I was so relieved. I was away from those people. But deep inside me, there was an uncontrollable rage. My family did not know why or how to help me. I wouldn’t let anyone know my ‘little’ secret. I went through the motions of having a relationship with God, but it was all superficial. My heart was frozen.

After completing high school, I went off to college where I went through a very difficult break-up with a man to whom I was engaged. I felt lost. I started drinking. The alcohol temporarily comforted and calmed me.

Eight years later I was smoking crack-cocaine every day and addicted to a long list of prescription drugs. I woke up sick every day and many nights did not sleep at all.

One day I overdosed and was in a coma for three days. When I finally awoke, it was Easter morning. I was scared. I had wandered so far away from God.

My father and my brother talked to me about Life Challenge. ‘One year!’ I protested. I tried bargaining

with them, but to no avail. They told me I did not have a choice and that I was not welcome at home or anyone else’s home unless I went to Life Challenge and completed the program. I needed such an ultimatum.

I entered Life Challenge in April of 2007 to appease my family, but something happened during my stay there. God used the daily chapels and Bible classes to draw me nearer to Him. I began to understand and receive God’s love for me.

God melted my heart of stone as I submitted to His authority. I started trusting Jesus and allowing Him to comfort me and give me strength as I began to grieve the loss I had suffered as a child. He never let me go. I no longer have a wall of hostility surrounding me. Life Challenge gave me the opportunity to see what an amazing God He truly is!”

P. S. Miriam graduated in April and is doing a six-month internship in the Women’s Division.

Ministry Needs:

- **Commercial Ice Machine (for our kitchen)**
- **Powerpoint Projector (for our chapel)**
- **Pasta, Rice, Dairy Products, Meat, Cooking Oil**
- **Toilet Paper, Paper Towels**
- **Copy Paper**



Rejoicing in Him who rescues us from the coming wrath,

Jeff