

providing a future with hope

# Challenges

The Challenger  
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enlightening empowering equipping

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## What's Good About The Gospel? *"Thanking God for God"*

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

It is bewildering how seldom God Himself is acknowledged as the greatest gift of the gospel.

Raised in the church and employed in full-time ministry for twenty years, I have heard literally thousands of testimonies given by believers in various settings:

- "The chains of alcoholism and drug addiction have been broken."
- "My relationship with my father has been restored."
- "I no longer live under the weight of a guilty conscience."
- "I've found purpose and meaning to life."
- "I'm saved from going to hell!"
- "I love myself now. I've been delivered from a poor self-image."

Thank the Lord! We should be grateful. But if that is the central thrust of a person's testimony, I have to ask, "Is that man or woman truly saved?"

The Apostle Peter writes in his first book, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (3:18).

The gospel isn't principally about keeping people out of hell or getting them to heaven; it is not mainly about freeing us from sinful habits and negative feelings about ourselves. The gospel is about clearing the way for you and me to enjoy fellowship and intimacy with God.

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Imagine this scenario: John and Linda have been happily married for 38 years. John has been a faithful and dedicated husband. He is hard-working and self-sacrificing. He has modeled integrity. His communication skills are exceptional. He consistently treats others with love and respect.

Now wouldn't we think it strange and even offensive if Linda's pleasure in being married to John never focused on their relationship with one another? Linda could say many praiseworthy things about John ("He's a good provider, taken the family on many wonderful vacations, built a good name for us in the community, given excellent counsel from God's Word, . . .") and completely miss what is most important—the joy found in knowing and loving her husband.

The bad news is that we are sinners who deserve to be eternally cut off from the presence of God. The good news is that God has done everything necessary for sinners like you and me to be reconciled and brought in right standing with Him. Ephesians 2:13 puts it like this, "We who once were far away have been *brought near* through the blood of Christ."

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The tens of thousands of Christ-bought, gospel gifts beginning with regeneration, forgiveness of sins, justification, imputation of righteousness, and glorification—ininitely precious as they are—are not primary. God is. These things clear the way for us to know and enjoy fellowship with God.

The purpose of Life Challenge is not to simply help men and women find liberation from drugs and alcohol and other life-controlling problems. We do not exist to merely help people discover their purpose and life-direction. Helping men and

women become persons of integrity is not our chief concern. These are good but not ultimate. This program and, more importantly, the gospel is about helping men and women become righteous so that they can enjoy peace with God.

The gospel is the story of God's passionate commitment to doing everything necessary to connect us to and enthrall us with what is most excellent and wonderful—Himself. Nothing will satisfy you more than seeing and savoring the glory of God in the face of Christ.

David knew this. Having beheld God's power and glory, he stated that God's love was better than life itself (see Ps. 63:2-3). Thus his prayer, "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" (Ps. 27:4).

Thank God for the gospel. Thank God . . . for *GOD!!!*

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## Testimony

*Jeff Kujat*

"I come from a large, close-knit family that enjoyed doing things together. I got saved when I was ten and was baptized shortly thereafter.

At thirteen years of age a friend and I got caught shoplifting. My relationship with my dad became severely strained. I isolated myself in my bedroom where I would sit for hours in the dark playing video games. We stopped going to church as a family, and I slowly forgot about Jesus.

A cousin of mine moved into the apartment complex across the street, and I began hanging out with him. I

started drinking and smoking marijuana as well as dabbling in other drugs. This opened the door for sexual immorality. I racked up high credit card bills trying to find happiness in stuff and sex. It didn't work.

Thinking a change of scenery would help, I moved to Norfolk, Virginia. I fell in love with a woman I met there. Two years into the relationship we broke up. I was devastated. I went out to buy marijuana and ended up getting introduced to crack cocaine. I became a slave to the drug as well as the lifestyle. I tried everything to break its power over me but couldn't.

One day God gave me the answer I needed but didn't want. A group from Life Challenge came to my church. I heard testimonies of those freed from the bondage of sin. I felt God speaking to me, telling me that Life Challenge was the answer.

For five years I told myself that there had to be something else. I got involved in everything my church had to offer – from classes to drama, teaching Royal Rangers, and even taking a missions trip halfway around the world. I quit smoking crack but couldn't quit smoking marijuana and living a sexually impure lifestyle with my girlfriend.

I got fired from my job for smoking marijuana. At this time I was living with my sister and she told me I had to go. I tried to get another job in the hope of moving into a half-way house, but that failed too. Jesus, the "Holy Hound" from heaven, cornered me. I literally had nowhere else to run. So in July of 2006 I finally submitted and entered Life Challenge.

During my twelve months as a student, God revealed His Word to me. I used to think that God had abandoned me out of disgust and that He wanted

nothing more to do with me. But Scriptures like Joshua 1:5 (He'll never leave me nor forsake me) and Matthew 28:20 ("I am with you always") came alive to me. I now know that nothing can separate me from God's love.

Because of God's grace and never-ending love for me, I can serve my Father for eternity. The precious blood of Jesus guarantees that I will forever be loved and accepted by Him. Glory to God!"

*P.S. Jeff graduated from the program in June of 2007. He completed a six-month internship and is currently a staff member serving in our Men's Division.*



The devil's main business is not to make men and women miserable but to make God look bad, boring, and uninteresting. Keep us in your prayers as we herald the good news that God is glorious!

#### **SPECIAL NOTE:**

Finances have been lagging over the past few months. We have 80 students living in our 1-year residential program. It takes roughly \$2,300 a day to operate. We receive no federal, state, or local monies (otherwise we'd have to compromise our message). We stay afloat through people like you who believe in the power of the gospel and want to give those lost in their sin a chance to experience fullness of joy found in His presence alone. Would you consider helping us in this time of need?

Together for souls,

*Jeff*