

October 2009

# Monthly Musings

from Jeff Bonzelaar



## Green Man

A few weeks ago I got a call from a graduate who lives out-of-state. Anthony informed me that a pastor-friend of mine was the guest speaker at his church that Sunday morning. Anthony attends a large church.

I have a confession. As soon as I hung up the phone, instead of rejoicing in my pastor-friend's success, I fought jealousy. "Why don't I ever get those kinds of invitations?"

A few days later, I was on my buddy's blog. I was catching up on the latest events of his life—where he had been and what he had been doing. Jealousy reared its ugly head again.

But there is more. I serve as an advisor for a couple of ministries and was recently reviewing budgets and employee wages. "Green Man" entered the scene once again.

I'm not proud of this. I know that I have it better than probably 99% of the people on the planet. Yet discontentment can rise up in a flash: "I wish I lived there. He has a nice position. I wouldn't mind driving that." And on it goes.

While I do not want to project my issues onto you, I know I am not alone.

Do you know what the first sin was? It was not murder. Nor was it sexual immorality. Not idolatry. Not blasphemy or lying or stealing or gossip. It was *discontentment*. Adam and Eve were not content. They were not satisfied. They wanted more.

If contentment was not easy in paradise, how much more difficult in a radically fallen world.

God knows this. He also knows the devastation discontentment will bring to our lives. That is why the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment is so explicit: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house . . . your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Ex. 20:17).

(continued on page 2)

## Testimony

George Davis



I was born in 1956 into a family of 6 children. We moved a lot depending on where my father found work. By the time we settled in Colorado in 1969, we had moved more than twenty-five times.

My father was a very angry man. When he was home it was chaos. I lived in fear. He would usually leave for a day or two after one of his episodes. Once he left for two years.

My mother was a praying woman, and that is what held our family together. No matter where we lived, my mom made sure we were in church.

When I was 13 I tried my first drink. I liked what alcohol did for me. My fears left me. I felt strong and in control.

After graduation, I married my high school sweetheart, and we had three children. All the while I continued to drink. I was involved at church and even went to Bible school. I thought that if I did good things, God would overlook my sinful life.

The turning point came when I got injured on the job. Medication was prescribed for the pain. Mixing the pills with my drinking led to my downfall. My wife divorced me after 28 years of broken promises. This was a wake-up call for me. I checked into a thirty-day treatment program and managed to get my life back on track.

My wife and I remarried. The drinking, however, caught up with me again. I tried to talk with friends and family about my problem, but they did not know how to help me. Looking back, I now understand why I always reverted to creating chaos: It was the life I knew as a child.

In September of 2008, my daughter-in-law approached me about going to Life Challenge. I didn't want to at first. In the mean time, my wife started divorce proceedings again but said that if I went to Life Challenge she would stop the divorce. I begrudgingly agreed to enter in order to save my marriage.

The program was bitter sweet. I loved being reconnected to Jesus. Through the Bible classes and chapels, I came to realize how foolish I had been to think that I could work my way to heaven. I learned that it is only through the blood of Christ that I can be washed clean of my sins.

(continued on page 2)

## Green Man (continued from page 1)

Discontentment can even result from lusting for good and spiritual things. Simon the Sorcerer is case in point. He heard the good news that Philip preached and the Bible says he “believed and was baptized”

**“You cannot know Christ’s power until you face your own weakness.”**

(Acts 8:13). But it was not enough for Simon to have his sins washed, to belong to a new community, to have heaven as his hope. No, Simon wanted power—spiritual power—“so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit” (v. 19). Good request. Bad motive. Simon was ego-driven (sounds like a few of us preachers).

Finding contentment was a struggle for even the Apostle Paul. He writes in the book of Philippians while in prison and awaiting possible death, “I have *learned* the secret of being content in any and every  
*(continued on page 3)*



Every month, we have rally teams traveling to area churches singing and giving testimony to the life-changing power of Jesus.



If you would like to schedule a service for 2010, please call our main office @ 313.531.0111.

## Alumni Update



Martin Hall, class of '97, writes, “God has done amazing things in my life. He has given me a godly wife to whom I have been married 10 years. We have 2 beautiful daughters, ages 8 and 6, whom we homeschool. I have a good career in advertising. In addition, I have attended Bible College and have been part of a recent church plant in Royal Oak. We host a small group Bible study in our home once a week. Hallelujah!”

### Testimony (continued from page 1)

At 52 years of age, Life Challenge was a struggle. It was hard to submit to authority. I had been ‘in charge’ for so long. But Jesus had mercy on me. He enabled me to humble myself. He has become my Savior and Lord. He has proven that He will never leave me or forsake me!

*PS George graduated from the program in August 2009 and is currently doing a 6-month internship in our Operations Department.*

### 2009 FINANCIAL UPDATE (1/1/09—9/30/09)

Budget: \$523,350  
Income: \$484,973  
Deficit: (\$38,377)

## Green Man (continued from page 2)

situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want” (4:12). Paul had to “learn” contentment (implying process, time, and effort). Contentment was not something that came naturally or automatically.

So what was the secret of Paul’s contentment? Paul puts it like this, “I can do everything through him who gives me the strength” (Phil. 4:10-13). Paul was not saying that he could do anything he set his mind to. The “everything” he writes about refers to the various circumstances in which he found himself. What Paul had discovered was that Christ’s resurrection power

**“Paul had to ‘learn’ contentment (implying process, time, and effort). Contentment was not something that came naturally or automatically.”**

enabled him to cope with both the good times and the bad. Whatever his lot, he could be content.

This is incredible.

But this contentment was not and *is not* without a price. It comes at the expense of self-reduction, the discovery of one’s own inadequacy and inability. *You cannot know Christ’s power until you face your own weakness.* That’s painful . . . wonderfully painful!

We want to see miracles, but the context for miracles is problems. The same is true when it comes to discovering Christ’s sufficiency. We must be brought to heightened places of our own insufficiency. Only then can we experience Christ’s power. *“That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Cor. 12:10). Paul realized new dimensions of Christ’s strength in his own weakness. Thus his boasting.

### CONCLUSION

The bad news is that we will fight discontentment and envy all our lives: “Death and Destruction are never satisfied, and neither are the eyes of man” (Prov. 27:20). The good news is that through intimacy with Christ, we can find rest and peace. We all have “drug stores” of our own making (e.g., food, movies, sports, face book, work, shopping, etc.). These are only diversions; the problem remains. In fact, it gets worse. So let the discontentment you experience drive you to Christ rather than some temporary fix.

\*\*\*\*\*

*“But godliness with contentment is great gain. . . .  
But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.”*  
(1 Tim. 6:6, 8)

## ASK THE DIRECTOR

**Q:** How important is self-image in the recovery process?

**A:** How we see ourselves certainly impacts how we behave. People with positive self-regard act in more healthy, constructive ways. The opposite is true as well.

Self-acceptance, however, is not the central issue. What is most important is that people learn to regard God above all things. Our purpose at Life Challenge is to help men and women develop “God-esteem”—to help our students see the infinite value and worth of God so that they would come to love, fear, trust, and rejoice in God and, in the final analysis, submit their lives to Him.

Pastor and author John Piper writes, “We were made to know and treasure the glory of God above all things; and when we trade that treasure for images, everything is disordered. *The sun of God’s glory was made to shine at the center of the solar system of our soul. When it does, all the planets of our life are held in their proper orbit.* But when the sun is displaced, everything flies apart. The healing of the soul begins by restoring the glory of God to its flaming, all-attracting place at the center” (italics mine).

### MINISTRY NEEDS

- Main Center Hot Water Boiler (\$3,914 replacement cost)
- Leaf Rakes
- Copy Paper
- Bleach

Thank you for your partnership with us in providing the only hope this world has –  
**the gospel of Jesus Christ.**



# Fall Fund-Raising Banquets

Great Food, Music, & Testimonies

When: Friday, October 23 & Friday, November 6

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Cost: \$15.00 per person

Where: 17667 Pierson, Detroit, MI 48219

(Love offering taken)

Call for reservations 313.531.0111



*Address Service Requested*

of Southeastern Michigan

Challenge

**LIFE**

17667 Pierson  
Detroit, MI 48219

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Detroit, MI  
Permit No. 3389