

February 2010

# Monthly Musings

from Jeff Bonzelaar



## SAFE . . . and Sorry!

*“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines.*

*Sail away from the safe harbor.  
Catch the trade winds in your sails.  
Explore. Dream. Discover.”*  
(Mark Twain)

Playing it safe is not always safe. In fact, most of the time, it is dangerous.

You will never realize your God-given destiny if you do not do what is counterintuitive . . . unsafe. You have to turn your back on security and embrace uncertainty. You have to ditch safety and run toward danger. This may mean climbing a cliff (Jonathan, 1 Sam. 14), moving to a foreign country (Abraham, Gen. 12), building a boat in the middle of a desert (Gen. 6), chasing a lion (Benaiah, 2 Sam. 23), or simply giving birth to a baby (Mary, Lk. 1-2).

**“Playing it safe is not always safe. In fact, most of the time, it is dangerous.”**

“Safe or sorry” is not something Jesus said . . . let alone lived out. The cross is proof of this.

I like David’s question in 2 Sam. 5:19, “Shall I go and attack the Philistines?” Notice: he didn’t ask, “Shall I stay and wait until further notice?” No, his question was framed in the positive. He was planning on engaging in battle unless God told him otherwise.

Playing it safe—minimizing risk—is hazardous to your health. It is like trying to live in zero gravity. Now a few days of that wouldn’t be all bad (especially when it comes to getting up in the morning!). But any astronaut will tell you that living in zero gravity for any prolonged period of time will result in serious medical complications. Without resistance, muscle mass and bone density is lost; higher pulse rates and heart palpitations are experienced; and something as simple as walking from one room to another becomes a challenge after reentering the earth’s atmosphere.

*(continued on page 2)*

## Testimony

Tim Truman



“I was born and raised in Sandusky, Ohio. My father was a truck driver. His job required him to be gone for long periods of time. My half brother was 15 years older than me and I looked up to him as a sort of father figure. He was in a motorcycle gang where there were lots of

parties with girls and drugs. I thought his lifestyle was exciting. I wanted to be just like him.

My parents took me to church whenever possible hoping I would find new role models. When I was 13, I responded to an altar call and accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I remember the joy I experienced. I could not wait to see how God was going to use me in the future.

Life, however, took a different turn. When I turned 16 I got a car. Every day I would pull into the school parking lot, load up my friends, and we would spend the day cruising, drinking, and smoking pot. Deep down I knew what I was doing was wrong. I stopped going to church and dropped out of school in the 10th grade.

I started working in a furniture store and got high every day. When I was 21, I got a job with G.M. making a lot more money. I met a woman. We got married and had two daughters. I thought I had it made.

Then I was injured at work. My doctor prescribed a narcotic pain medication. I started abusing the pills. When my prescription ran out I would buy it off the street at a much higher cost.

I was able to hide the drug usage from my wife for quite some time until she walked in on me one day and saw me using. She demanded that I let her try it. At first I refused, but she was so adamant that I finally gave in. Now that both of us were hooked on opiates, I had two habits to support. Money was tight. I got into trouble with the law, and for the next 20 years I was in and out of jail or prison. I never thought my life would end up like this.

My wife died while I was serving a six-year sentence. She literally drank herself to death. I felt I was responsible because I had given in to her in the first place. My guilt was overwhelming.

Upon being released from prison, I could find no reason to live. I had not been a father to my children or a husband to my wife. I did not think I could ever make my way back. I felt so far from God. I just wanted to die so the pain would go away. I tried committing suicide by filling my car with exhaust fumes.

But God intervened. During my many years of sinning, loved ones never stopped praying. When my mother-in-law suggested I go to Life Challenge, I said ‘yes’ without hesitation.

I was accepted and entered the program in November, 2008. Restoration began. Day by day my walk with Jesus

*(continued on page 2)*

*Safe ... and Sorry (continued from page 1)*

Taking risks is risky, but taking no risk is riskier still. You deteriorate. You die.

The only way to please God, in fact, is by living by faith (Heb. 11:2, 6). And such a life entails risk. Where there is no risk, there is no need for faith. This means that you can be a good, moral person doing what is expected—reading your Bible, going to church, being a responsible spouse and parent, serving in the community—but still not be living by faith (and therefore, not pleasing God).

**“Where there is no risk, there is no need for faith.”**

I like what Pastor Erwin McManus says, “When you play it safe, you squeeze God out of the formula. If you go only where you know and do what you’re certain will succeed, you remove your need for God. . . . When you follow God, He takes you beyond your own capacities, forces you to go beyond your abilities. A part of the divine adventure is experiencing the miraculous hand of God as He intervenes in your life. . . . We all want miracles, but we try to avoid needing them.”

Of course, risk varies from person to person. What I think is a radical step of faith may be nothing more than a baby step for you and vice versa. Risk for some people may mean turning their back on an unhealthy relationship. For others, staying in a particular relationship may be the more risky move. Risk may take the form of stepping up and fighting, like David did against Goliath; or it may mean keeping quiet and waiting on God when everything in you wants to take action. Risk looks different in different situations.

**“When you play it safe, you squeeze God out of the formula. If you go only where you know and do what you’re certain will succeed, you remove your need for God.” (Erwin McManus)**

Whatever form it takes, faith in God leads to risk-taking and causes us to do things that are not normal by human standards. We gravitate toward comfort, ease, and certainty. Faith moves us in the very opposite direction, toward what is difficult, maybe even foolish. What may result in “failure” itself (e.g., John the Baptist’s truth-telling cost him his head; see Mk. 6:14 ff.).

Christian sociologist Tony Campolo once interviewed several octagarians and asked, “If you had to live your life all over again, what would you do differently?” The answer he got more often was, “Risk more.”

If you try to save your life you will regret it: you will lose it. If you run from danger, from loss, from harm and trouble, you will forfeit the joy God longs to give you. “Safe” is not how you were meant to live.

As one professor quipped, “All around you, people will be tiptoeing through life, just to arrive at death safely. But dear children, do not tiptoe. Run, hop, skip, or dance, just don’t tiptoe” (anonymous).

## ASK THE DIRECTOR

**Q: Life Challenge fosters a unique environment. What are some of the distinct cultural values of your program?**

**A:** Cleanliness.

**Q: Why do you list that first?**

**A:** It is difficult to learn in a dirty, disordered environment. Clutter is distracting; filth depressing. Founder and President of Prison Fellowship, Charles Colson, contends that he can ascertain the morale of a prison by how well the floors are maintained. I couldn’t agree more. Grounds and buildings that are properly maintained communicate care and respect. Grandma was right when she said, “Cleanliness is next to godliness!”

**Q: What is another core value of Life Challenge?**

**A:** Discipline. Success is found in doing what needs to be done even when you don’t feel like doing it. Like getting up early and being on time. Maintaining good personal hygiene. Wearing a belt and tying one’s shoes. Speaking respectfully to authorities. Not complaining or taking notes in church. Learning discipline in the small areas will spill over into discipline and self-control in the big areas.

**Q: Anything else?**

**A:** Safety. We have a “no-touch” policy which means that if a student merely touches a fellow student in an aggressive manner, he or she is dismissed. A similar rule violation involves “breaking the plane.” That is, should a student simply lean into the doorway of another student’s bedroom, he or she is subject to a 10-hour work duty. Why so severe? Students need to feel safe (they already have enough anxieties). They shouldn’t have to look over their shoulder and worry about their security and well-being (especially when it comes to their own bedroom).

*Testimony (continued from page 1)*

grew stronger. God’s Word came alive to me in the daily chapel and classes. I realized I did not have to carry the burden of guilt that I had carried for so long. Jesus died so that I could be set free. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!

I graduated in November of 2009 and am presently serving as an intern in both the Operation and Men’s Department. Praise God!”

# Graduation January 30, 2010



## Alumni Update

Joseph May, class of 2007, is employed with The NCO Group where he builds data bases. He was recently awarded his Associate of Arts degree in Mass Communications from NE Oklahoma A & M College. He is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree in international studies at Missouri Southern



State University. He is a member of a local church and has ambitions of entering the mission field upon graduation. Joe writes, "Life Challenge taught me to stay Christ-centered no matter what the circumstances."

## 2009 Financial Report

### INCOME

Individual Offerings	\$270,576	37%
Church Offerings	132,970	18.5%
Business Offerings	62,799	9%
Induction Fees	49,684	7%
Fundraisers	54,614	7.5%
Banquets	(\$30,113)	
Walk-a-thon	(\$18,115)	
Golf Scramble	(\$3,234)	
Bowl-a-thon	(\$3,152)	
Sales	81,986	11.5%
Yard/Misc (\$71,802)		
Vehicle (\$3,434)		
Christmas Tree (\$6,750)		
Work Crews	4,440	.5%
Car Wash	47,159	6.5%
Other	20,576	2.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$724,804</b>	

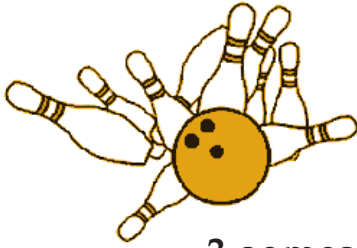
### DISBURSEMENTS

Gross Payroll	\$422,878	59%
Utilities	92,688	13%
Building (repairs/maint.)	32,127	4.5%
Insurances (liab/prop/veh)	30,751	4.5%
Property Tax	10,839	1.5%
Phone	8,074	1%
Office/Postage	8,047	1%
Promo/Enrichment	19,415	2.5%
Food	1,982	.5%
Vehicle Expense	14,906	2%
Equipment	31,016	4.5%
Missions	12,025	1.5%
Miscellaneous	31,246	4.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$715,994</b>	

### Notes:

1. Gross Payroll includes weekly salaries, retirement, housing allowance, health insurance, worker's compensation, disability, and FICA for 23 full-time and 3 part-time staff.
2. We have a total of 10 properties. This includes our main center, Grand River center, 7 homes, and 1 storage facility.
3. We operate a total of 14 vehicles. This includes 1 bus, 3 full size vans, 4 mini vans, 3 trucks, and 3 cars.
4. We serve over 200 meals per day on a yearly food budget of only \$1,982. How? Most of our food is donated.
5. We financially support a number of missionaries.
6. We receive no government aid. We do not want any restrictions on the use of the "J"-word (Jesus).
7. We have a one-time induction fee of \$700. Many are unable to pay this fee.
8. We sell donated items from our Grand River lot.
9. Work crew income is limited because of liability issues coupled with the fact that we have plenty of on-going maintenance to do on our 10 properties.
10. Weather permitting, we have a car wash on Friday afternoons and all day Saturday at our Grand River lot.
11. A total of 189 different individuals were in our program last year for some length of time. We averaged 42 men per month and 13 women per month. Net cost per student: \$1,085 monthly.

# Life Challenge 2nd Annual BOWL-A-THON



March 6, 2010

Registration @ 1:00 PM

Merri-Bowl Lanes (Livonia)

\$30.00 per person includes:

3 games, shoes, pizza, pop, door prizes and FUN!



For more info call 313. 531. 0111 or register on line @ [lifechallengesemi.org](http://lifechallengesemi.org)

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