

June 2009

Monthly Musings

from Jeff Bonzelaar



LIVING ON THE FAULT LINE

One of the biggest surprises of my life occurred several years ago. At the time, I was living alone in the Los Angeles area.

After about a year of residency, I thought I had acclimated fairly well into the culture and lifestyle of Southern California. I knew how to navigate the highway system. I knew where some of the cheap eateries and places of entertainment for always-nearly-broke graduate students like myself were. And I knew where the good book stores were (an absolute must!).

I also knew that I was living near the San Andres fault line. I had seen some of the news reports about earthquakes in years past. I had come across some of the signs in public buildings, "In Case of Earthquake . . ." I had heard the stories about the possibility of Los Angeles one day slipping off into the Pacific Ocean. I was well-informed about all these things.

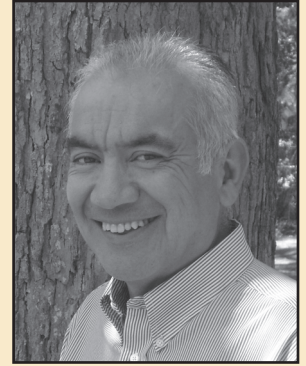
So, one night when I was abruptly awakened out of a sound sleep as the earth rumbled under me, I should not have been so surprised. ("Surprised" is an understatement. I nearly wet my pants I was so freaked out!)

As Christians, we know there is a devil and that he is on the loose warring against our soul.

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Testimony

Gene Salas



"I was born and raised in a small community in rural Michigan. My parents were hard working. They were also alcoholics. Throughout my childhood I saw drinking as a way of life.

On my 18th birthday, my friends and I got together to celebrate. We drank all night. I enjoyed the way alcohol made me feel. This began a long and hard road of alcohol abuse.

When I was 24, I got married and had two beautiful children. Life was good except for the drinking. I would make promises to quit and then be devastated when I broke my promises. I was tearing my family apart.

I ended up out of work at the age of 40 when the company with whom I was employed closed five plants in Michigan. That same year my wife filed for divorce. My life was falling apart.

I went through four in-house rehabilitation programs. On one occasion I ended up in a hospital due to alcohol poisoning. No matter what I did or how bad things got I couldn't and wouldn't stop drinking.

In 2006 things reached a head. My daughter forced me to contact Life Challenge before I did something crazy or killed myself. She had heard about the program through her in-laws and church. I agreed to try the program even though I had no intention of staying anywhere for one year. I just wanted to get everyone off my back.

When I walked through the doors I was bitter, lost, and full of guilt. I had no interest in God. I had never even opened the Bible a day in my life before I came to Life Challenge.

Sitting in Bible classes day after day changed things, however. Jesus came alive to me. I began to understand who Jesus was and what He did. I came to believe in Christ and the sacrifice He made for the forgiveness of our sins. Peace like I had never known entered my soul.

I graduated in April of 2007 full of hope and free of addiction. I was given everything I needed to live a godly life. I went back to church and got involved in a Christian recovery group. I found a job right away.

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Living on the Fault Line *(continued from page 1)*

We see everyday the havoc he creates across this planet. We have read the Scripture, “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*” (Eph. 6:12).

We know we are in a hot zone, but sometimes we forget (“Out of sight, out of mind”) and need a reminder, just as I experienced in California long ago.

“...there is more to reality than meets the eye.”

God marvelously furnished us with bodies that taste, feel, see, hear, and smell. If we are not careful, though, we can unconsciously begin to reduce reality to that which only our five senses can pick-up. In the process, we can lose touch with a whole other realm and shortchange ourselves and God’s kingdom of the complete victory He longs to give us.

I am not saying we need to look for demons under every tree, bush, and stone. All our trials and woes are not devil-related. But we must wake up to the fact there is more to reality than meets the eye. There are few things Satan loves more than to keep you and me oblivious to his presence and activity. This is one of the strengths of guerilla warfare. With no sense of alarm, we simply relax (and thus become sitting ducks).

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“Bitterness acts like a magnet for wickedness and attracts the powers of darkness.”

Alumni Update



Renee Richardson

Renee Richardson (class of 2006) is an active member of Revival Tabernacle in Highland Park and involved in a Christian ministry called Life Builders on Detroit’s eastside. She participates in weekly Bible studies, feeding of the homeless, and Bible distribution to the community. After graduating, she started her own cleaning business. Renee’s relationship with her family has been restored and her mother and sister now attend church regularly because of her witness. Renee remarks, “The Lord has opened many doors and answered so many prayers! I am so thankful to Him”.

Testimony *(continued from page 1)*

Compromises began to set in though. I started working on Sundays and missing church. I stopped reading my Bible on a daily basis. Pride got the best of me. I was (and am) weak but didn’t see it.

By God’s grace I came to my senses and called Life Challenge and asked for help once again. They took me back, and I was restored. Jesus is so faithful even when we are faithless.

I am currently working with the ministry and enjoying life in a faith community. I thank the Lord for His love and the opportunity to serve Him.”

Living on the Fault Line *(continued from page 2)*

We need to take the devil more seriously (and God as well). Peter writes, *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”* (1 Pet. 5:8). One of Jesus’ first acts in the Gospels was the casting out of an evil spirit (Mk. 1:21-26). In fact, one-fourth of the healings recorded in the Gospel of Mark alone were deliverances from demonic activity.

While these powers come against each and every one of us—unsolicited—there are certain actions on our part which open the door and give the Enemy greater access into our lives. Bitterness is one of those.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:26-27, *“In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”* The word *foothold* means “place” or “opportunity.” Paul is saying that anger or unforgiveness gives increased space or occasion for Satan to step into our lives.

The relationship between bitterness and demonic activity is found in the Lord’s Prayer as well. No sooner does Jesus pray, “Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors” than He continues, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (see Mt. 6:12-13). If we want protection from temptation and the devil, we must not harbor resentment in our soul.

Bitterness acts like a magnet for wickedness and attracts the powers of darkness.

In closing, C.S. Lewis writes, “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve their existence. The other is to believe and feel an unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors.”

May we not be ignorant of the devil and his tactics.

ASK THE DIRECTOR

Q: Why is your program 1-year in length?

A: A person does not become a drug addict or alcoholic overnight; nor does he or she become an ex-drug addict or ex-alcoholic overnight. In my 21 years of working in the field, I have met a handful (with a few fingers left over) of people who were instantly “delivered,” but such is a rarity. Getting clean or dry is only a small part of the equation. There are long-standing habits and patterns of behavior that must be broken. More, there are godly disciplines that must be worked in. This all takes time. The ancient Israelites are a case and point. While they got out of Egypt overnight, it took 40 years in the desert for Egypt to get out of them.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
(Eph. 4:32)

**Mark your calendars:
Life Challenge GOLF SCRAMBLE
June 22!**

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

Life Challenge of Southeastern Michigan

9th Annual Golf Scramble

June 22, 2009

Shot Gun Start at 9:00 am sharp!

Tanglewood Golf Course, South Lyon, MI

\$100.00 per person

*Includes pig roast lunch, 18 holes of golf,
power cart, and contribution credit.*



Pre-Register by June 15, 2009

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