

September 2009

Monthly Musings

from Jeff Bonzelaar



Don't Throw it Away

We live in a throw away society.

- Every day, the average American throws away 4.4 lbs of solid trash (that computes to almost a ton of trash per person, per year).
- Americans throw away enough iron and steel every day to supply all the nation's automakers daily.
- Each year, Americans throw away 18 billion disposable diapers, 6 billion pens, 2 billion razor blades, and 220 million car tires.
- Americans constitute 5% of the world's population but generate 40% of the world's waste.
- 84% of a typical household's waste—including food scraps, yard waste, paper, cardboard, cans, and bottles—can be recycled.

One of our goals at Life Challenge is to help men and women become better stewards of their life situations and circumstances. To help them suck out of each experience—however it is packaged—all of the good. We don't want our students to "waste" any opportunity that comes their way, some of which are disguised as trouble and hardship.

This is not an easy lesson. All of us by nature are defensive and self-justifying. We take offense easily. We run from pain and act surprised (and upset) when we encounter suffering. Though most of us wouldn't admit it, we actually feel entitled to a certain standard or quality of existence.

So when these expectations are not realized—when someone looks at us the wrong way or we get a hangnail, when our job is cut or our car is stolen or our spouse files for divorce—we complain. We argue. We have a pity-party and fall into a funk.

Some of these reactions may not be altogether wrong. It is just that our perspective can be so limited. We throw away a perfectly good "gift" because it doesn't fit or we don't like the color or we can see no further use

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Testimony

Angela Pietrangeli

"I grew up the only child of a single mother. I was raised mostly by my grandparents. They showed me love by buying me things. I became very spoiled and self-centered.



When I was 12 years old I ran away from home. I was sexually assaulted by a friend's older brother. I never told anyone, but the secret I carried changed my life. I shut down emotionally.

I started fighting, stealing, and doing drugs. I was in and out of juvenile detention centers. I became promiscuous. I was looking for anything that would make me feel better about myself.

By the time I was 19 I was partying and getting high every day. I became pregnant by a man I thought cared for me. I hoped we would become a family, but after I gave birth to our daughter, he began physically abusing me. I was in the hospital numerous times because of his attacks on me.

A friend of mine talked me into trying cocaine to help me "forget about my problems for a while." At first I thought I had found the answer to all my problems. When the cocaine stopped having the effect I wanted, I tried crack. Before I knew it, crack took over my life.

I lost custody of my daughter and got kicked out of my mom's house. I stole a lot of money and was put in jail. While incarcerated, I was told about Life Challenge. I wasn't sure about a one year Bible-based program but was willing to try if it kept me from having to do serious jail time.

I entered the program on December 27, 2006. I was rebellious. I hated the structure and discipline. I did not want anyone telling me what to do. I was dismissed three times for refusing to follow the rules.

But God kept the door open, and I was allowed to return to the program each time. Gradually, I became able to face the fact that I was a sinner in desperate need of a Savior. My eyes were opened to the amazing truth about the love of Jesus and

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Don't Throw it Away (continued from page 1)

for it. The result? We forfeit growth possibilities or worse, become smaller people.

One of the keys to avoiding this “throw away” tendency is getting our feet firmly planted in the truth that God is sovereign. He is in charge, ruling every aspect of this universe. Proverbs 16:4 boldly proclaims, “The Lord works out everything for his own ends—even the wicked for a day of disaster.” No detail is beyond His jurisdiction or scope of authority.

What this means practically is that there are no accidents, coincidences, or random occurrences—only providences. Everything that crosses our path is orchestrated by an all-wise, all-loving God.

This understanding is not meant to produce in us a fatalistic attitude or cause us to be passive bystanders who feel locked in a fixed universe with no control or power of choice. No. It is meant to give us reassurance and security. Peace. Pastor Mark Batterson writes, “The greatest hazard to your spiritual health is thinking that your past is haphazard or that your future is left up to chance alone.”

“There are no accidents, coincidences, or random occurrences—only providences.”

In his book *Learned Optimism*, Martin Seligman says that all of us have what he calls an “explanatory style” to account for the experiences of our lives: “Explanatory style is the manner in which you habitually explain to yourself why events happen.”

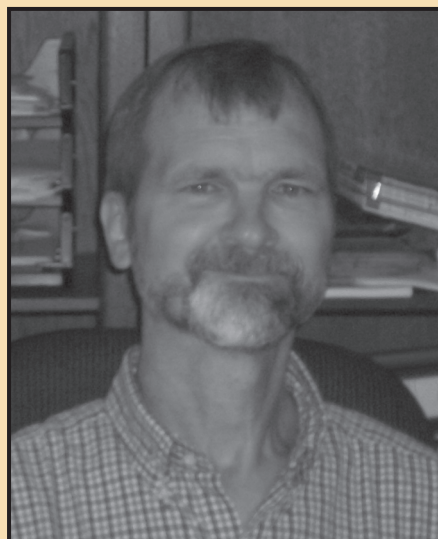
Let me illustrate. Suppose my son Joshua isn't home by curfew. I can think:

- “Something bad has happened. The car won't start. He had an accident. He is being held at gun point at the gas station.” *I become worried and anxious.*
- “He is playing a game at his friend's house and lost track of time. He misplaced his keys and is searching for them.” *I become annoyed and irritated.*
- “He is deliberately rebelling against my authority. He doesn't care about what I have to say.” *I feel angry and upset.*
- “Joshua is helping a stranded motorist alongside the road. He is tied up at the restaurant sharing his faith with the waitress (who happens to be a cute blond!). *I feel proud and blessed.*

There are endless possible explanations as to why Joshua is late. The explanation I decide to attach to the event will determine how I feel—happy, sad, indifferent, confused, etc.

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ALUMNI UPDATE



Joel Dubiel (class of 1983) has been on staff for the past 26 years. He presently serves as Business & Operations Manager, overseeing both the finances and material resources of this ministry. In this entire time period, he has taken only 1 sick day (and that was only ½ day)! “I was passing a kidney stone.” He has been married to Judy (a veterinarian) for 24 years and together they have 2 children they have homeschooled. By God's grace, Joel has never looked back!

Testimony (continued from page 1)

His forgiving work on the cross. The Bible became real to me. I was saved!

It took me 19 months to complete the program, but God was faithful the whole time, and He continues to be faithful! One year after my graduation, I am still kept by Jesus. I have a job I enjoy. I am part of a church and have become involved in prison ministry. Little by little my relationship with my family is being restored. Jesus is good!”

MINISTRY NEEDS

Commercial Gas Double Convection Oven (\$2,500 used/\$5,000 new)

Good Running Vehicles

Paper Towels, 39 Gallon Garbage Bags

Don't Throw it Away (continued from page 2)

While you and I cannot control all our *experiences*, we can control our *explanations* and interpretations of those experiences. The fact is: our explanations are much more important than our actual experiences. Dr. Seligman comments, "Your way of explaining events to yourself determines how helpless you become or how energized."

"While you and I cannot control all our experiences, we can control our explanations."

Joseph, the man who was betrayed by his own brothers and sold into slavery at the age of 17, charged with a crime he didn't commit and subsequently thrown into prison, forgotten by a man who said he would later help him, had an "explanatory style" that kept him from becoming bitter. He saw life through the grid of God's sovereignty. At the end of his life he said to those men who had robbed him of 13 precious years and caused untold heartache in his life, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good" (Genesis 50:20).

I call this "50/20" vision (taken from the reference numbers). It is this lens that will keep you and me not only optimistic but "more than conquerors."

CONCLUSION

Don't waste your cancer, your son's death, the false report going around about you, the mistake made by the bank on your visa bill. Don't run. Don't panic. Don't grumble. Relax. It is His doing. The Lord gives and the Lord takes, may His name be praised (see Job 1:21).

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"
(Is. 52:7)

2009 FINANCIAL UPDATE

(1/1/09—8/31/09)

Budget: \$465,200

Income: \$421,976

Deficit: (\$43,224)

ASK THE DIRECTOR

Q: I have heard that you are a very academically oriented program. Could you tell me more about this?

A: We believe that spiritual transformation occurs by the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:1). To that end, our students are exposed to the Word of God daily in morning chapels and Bible classes. These classes are either topical studies on pertinent subjects (guilt, lust, submission to authority, etc.) or verse-by-verse expositions of various books of the Bible (Genesis, Proverbs, Mark, the Pauline Epistles, etc.). In these classes, students are given written assignments, required to memorize several Scriptures, and tested every 4th week.

We also offer life-skills seminars and classes on such things as personal finances, parenting, job interviewing, and the like. For students who do not have their high school diploma, we offer a GED course in the afternoons.



*Cody Pelham teaching
(instructor in Ephesians and Doctrines & Practices)*

We are most grateful for the following dedicated and highly qualified teaching staff:

- Eric Barkham, M.B.A., Men's Division Administrator, Life Challenge
- Rev. Jeff Bonzelaar, M.A., Executive Director, Life Challenge
- Rev. Robin Burkhart, Ph.D., Executive Director, Ashland Theological Seminary—Detroit Center
- Rev. David Chatel, M.A.C.P., Associate Pastor, Crossroads Community Church
- Rev. Norm Frechette, B.A., Associate Pastor, Brightmoor Christian Church
- Ken Keene, B.R.E., Men's Supervisor/Director of Education, Life Challenge
- Rev. Dave Pace, Michigan District Executive Director for Teen Challenge
- Cody Pelham, M.A., Associate Pastor, Northville Christian
- John Richardson, B.A., Business Entrepreneur
- Rev. Adam Simnowitz, B.A., Home Missionary to Muslims
- Steve Swaggerty, B.A., Businessman

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

Life Challenge 2009
Giant Steps Walk-A-Thon
Food Fun Fellowship
Jog-it



Rollerblade-it

When: Saturday, September 26th, registration and pledges @ 9:30 am.

Where: Kensington Metro Park

(Possum Hollow Parking Lot, Look for **Giant Steps** signs), in Milford off Rt. 96 W.

****Safety head gear required for bikes and rollerblades****

****Raise \$25 or more and get a free tee shirt****

Get your pledges now!

Prizes awarded!

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