

TOOLS

Resourcing Advocates of Men's Ministries

Church of the Nazarene

In it For the Long Haul

BY HOLLAND LEWIS, YAKIMA, WASHINGTON

As a teenager my oldest brother, John had experienced a close relationship with Christ, only to drift into his own chosen path later in life. Now after cancer, divorce, stroke and alcoholism, John met a pastor in a “shooting class” he teaches.

“I’ll be in your church next Sunday,” was John’s promise. He arrived at the given address to find two churches side by side.



Holland Lewis

Wouldn’t you know it, John got in the wrong church. But he stayed for the service, which really spoke to him. Something happened when the pastor of this independent church referenced several churches in his message including the Church of the Nazarene—the only church John had ever connected with forty years earlier.

At the end of the service,

because of the “Nazarene” reference, John had the courage to go down the aisle (of the wrong church) and introduce himself to the pastor. Now let me pick up John’s words to me as we talked on the phone: “When I met the preacher, I told him about dad (our father was a long time pastor and district superintendent in the Nazarene Church), and you, and what you are doing.” As he talked John became very emotional.

I was enjoying this conversation to no end. Here is my tough, policeman, judo expert, gun-slinging brother who is now emotional about his new connection with a pastor. The last time I saw such “emotion” was fifty-five years ago, as he walked out of a teen prayer meeting with a tear-stained face. My own heart overflowed. I wasn’t weeping. I was laughing quietly as I listened to him.

My heart was full of joy. “Is it happening, finally happening, our family prayers are now being answered late in life for my dear brother,” were my thoughts. What a celebration!

Ten days later, his son, my nephew, called on my cell phone asking: “Are you sitting down?”

I said: “Yes, I usually am when I’m driving.” I knew what he was getting ready to tell me.

“Holland, you won’t believe this, dad has been in church three Sundays in a row.”

“And how long has it been since you witnessed that, Wes?” I asked.

“It’s was forty years ago when I was five years old.” Oh my, can you begin to imagine our celebration?

And in still more recent days I designed an opportunity to see for myself. I arranged to make the long trek to Kentucky to visit John. He promised me if I came he would take me to Church on Sunday morning.

“I’ll pick you up at 9:15 in the morning in front of the lodge,” were his parting words Saturday night. I

was ready and climbed in the front seat of his vehicle, and off we went to a small church in Caneyville, Kentucky. The singing was good, the preaching fine. At the end, we were served communion, and John was ready! Imagine, taking communion with a brother I have prayed for through scores of years! My heart was happy! I celebrated my brother’s new hope in Christ!

Rest assured, I believe in family evangelism as a top priority, even when the “long haul” is needed to get the job done.

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DAD'S FINAL CHANCE

My dad had a massive heart attack at his home in Reno. He was in a coma and the doctor who had cared for him for many years gave me absolutely no hope he'd recover. "There's just been too much damage over the years," he said. "We'll keep him alive as long as we can."

I jumped on a plane and got to the hospital about midnight. No matter how many TV shows or movies you watch, there's still something heart-wrenching about seeing your father hooked up to machines helping him breathe and eat. I prayed like I never had before. I asked my wife to enlist the prayers of everyone we knew to do the same. I didn't know if God had reached him in some way before his heart quit working, but I wanted one more chance to find out.

For a week I stayed at his house, going through old photographs and letters he had stashed away. Dad remained in a coma, but he hung on. I'd visit twice a day, put my hand



on his heart and pray, read Scripture out loud, and talk to him about the Lord. The doctors told me comas can last a long time, and they didn't know how much longer he could hang on. My family needed me back home, so I made the tough choice to return. I arranged an early afternoon flight back to Seattle. In what I knew would be my last visit, I arrived and went through my same routine.

Suddenly, he opened his eyes!



I was ecstatic! Though he couldn't talk through all of the tubes, he blinked his eyes, one for yes and two for no. We "conversed" for about 15 minutes, with me filling him in on what had happened.

"Dad, has the Lord been talking to you in there?" I said while gripping his hand.

One blink.

I quickly paraphrased the story Jesus told about the group of laborers who were hired early in the day, another group were hired at noon, and another just one hour before quitting time. They all received the same pay.

"Pop, God is not so petty as to shut you out just because you've lived 55 years away from Him. We've talked about all of this before. You know I've staked my life on the fact that Jesus Christ was crucified for my sins, then rose again to prove He was really God."

One blink.

"Dad, I'm going to say a prayer. If it really reflects what you want—and you don't have to pray this to please me—then you say it in your heart, okay?"

One blink.

For 13 years, I had been laying a foundation in my dad's life. The relationship was strong, he'd heard all of the facts, and God had been gracious enough to give him one more chance.

"Dad, did you mean that prayer?"

One blink.

"Do you have any doubts you're going to heaven?"

Two blinks.

For the next two hours the tears came easily. Down the hospital corridor, in the cab, at the terminal, and looking out the airplane window at the hospital below.

Goodbye, Dad. I'll meet you on the first tee when I get to heaven.

I was told he went back into a coma later that afternoon. He died five days later.

by Greg Johnson

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Proverbs by Topic

Proverbs is filled with insight to issues your teenager faces:

Alcohol and drugs

Proverbs 20:1; 21:17; 23:20-21, 29-35

Anger and rage

Proverbs 14:17; 15:18; 19:19; 22:24-25

Conceit and vanity

Proverbs 6:2; 25:27; 26:12; 27:2; 28:11

Envy and jealousy

Proverbs 14:30; 23:17; 24:1; 27:4

Fear and apprehension

Proverbs 1:33; 3:25-26; 29:25

Foolishness and unwise choices

Proverbs 1:7; 10:8; 12:15-16; 14:8-9

Friendship and closeness

Proverbs 3:27-28; 12:26; 17:9, 17; 18:24

God's wisdom

Proverbs 1:7; 2:6-9; 9:10; 22:17-19

Laziness and slothfulness

Proverbs 6:6-11; 10:4, 26; 12:24, 27

Life and growth

Proverbs 3:18, 21-22; 4:23; 8:34-36

Love and affection

Proverbs 3:3-4; 9:8; 10:12; 14:22; 15:17

Marriage and relationships

Proverbs 5:15-19; 12:4; 14:1; 18:22

Pride and self love

Proverbs 3:34; 11:2; 13:10; 16:5, 18-19

Sexual sin

Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:1-23; 6:20-35

Sin and self idolry

Proverbs 16:6; 20:9; 24:11-12; 28:9, 13

Speech that is bad

Proverbs 6:16-19; 11:9, 12-13; 12:18

Speech that is good

Proverbs 14:14, 21, 32; 12:25; 15:1, 23

Synonymous:

LOVE AND SUBMIT

In the context of interpersonal relationships the two little words,

love and submit, are for all practical purposes synonymous.

Surely that is the underlying assumption of Paul's message, and it turns out to be a very succinct statement of the essence of the gospel: to love is to submit, and to submit is to love. How do we know that God loves us?

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

1 John 3:16

Dad & Daughter

A daughter learns about the opposite sex from her father. She decides what she ought to expect from men largely by how dad acts toward her mother. After this, the relationship between daughter and dad is the second greatest determinant toward how she feels about men. For example, if she senses from dad, "I always wanted a boy," then she's going to act accordingly.

One father commented, "I was running at the local high school track and looked up and saw my wife walking toward me from our house across the street. Her hair caught the summer breeze. I thought, how blessed I was to have her as my wife. But I was shocked when she got closer and I saw it was not my wife but my tall, lovely 12-year-old daughter. When she walked up I told her how proud I was of her."

Daughters who have the spontaneous and authentic love of the first important male in their lives will grow to expect this respect from other men. Thus dad and mom's monogamous, life-time, growing, maturing Christian marriage has profound generational implications.



Couples usually look at how they answer two questions as the final analysis before they decide to move in together: "Do we love each other?" and, "Are we going to get married someday anyway?"

As long as they answer yes to both questions, they feel that living together will be a

strong plus in building their relationship. They conclude their desire to be married someday, along with their love for each other, are reasons enough to live together. Surely this, in part, explains why today more than 50 percent of couples live together before marriage.

That was certainly the case with Ryan and Amy. They wanted to be sure. Today they are sure—sure they will never marry. While Amy was living with Ryan, she met Ryan's friend and slept with him.

"Depressed," "hurt," "grieving" these are just a few words that describe how

Ryan feels today. With how things turned out, Ryan is glad he never married Amy. But now he wishes he had never lived with her either.

"Bad start. Bad ending. You can't expect it to be much different than that," he said. "At this point, in my next relationship I'd definitely do things different than I did this time. I'd rather not go through anything like this again. It hurts too much."

Ryan and Amy had been told, "Live together to find out if you're compatible." Theoretically, it sounded like a good idea. And they did find out what they wanted to know, but they had not been warned about the painful consequences in the real world.

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by David Gudel,
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Did You Know?

You can download this periodical free from the denominational web site? All you need is Acrobat Reader, free from www.adobe.com.

There is a companion periodical called *TOOLS*, also available from the denominational web site? This publication focuses on Men's Ministries and related issues. <http://www.nazarene.org>

Click on "Family" and follow the prompts for both publications.

What Are Your Rights?

One of the biggest culprits of our culture is the lie that we have a fundamental right to be happy. According to the Gospel of Jesus Christ here are your rights.

You have the right to die to your self-directed will.

You have the right to surrender your life completely to God.

You have the right to lose your life so that you can actually find it.

You have the right to bear in your body the marks of Christ.

You have the right to suffer in the name of Jesus. These are your rights, according to the Gospel.

—Jeren Rowell—

Love is Kind—it Forgets

by Audrey Williamson

When our John was just a little fellow, he needed discipline for some unremembered offense. And after I had administered the same, I prayed with him, which he always maintained was more devastating than the punishment. He lay on his bed sobbing and sniffing.

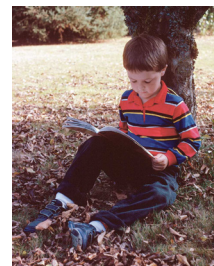
Finally it got to me. I said, "O, John, straighten up. It's all over. I've forgiven you and God forgives you and He says He forgets, so why don't you forget?"

John sat up on his bed wide-eyed. "Do you mean when God forgives, He forgets?"

"Why, yes," I assured him. "He says He puts our sins as far as the east is from the west and remembers them no more against us forever."

"Well," was John's studied reply as he climbed off the bed and started back to his play, "I wish you was more like God," he muttered as he went off. "You just keep bringing it up and bringing it up."

Love forgets. Love is kind.



The Ultimate Success of Christian Community

God created us with a gnawing hunger to enjoy community with Him, and so it would make sense that ultimate success would be for us to have that hunger satisfied. The real measuring gauge asks the following questions:

- Does your life have a richness of meaning and purpose?
- Do you feel loved and accepted by God?
- Is your relationship with Him real and thriving and fulfilling and growing?
- Are you experiencing the adventure of living a life of faith?
- Is your sense of community with your wife, children, and friends becoming deeper and more authentic over time?

In other words, is your soul being satisfied?

—Lee Strobel—

On Being a Great Parent

Being great parents isn't about being perfect. It's being honest and real. Karen and Dan have four children. Despite the tremendous responsibilities involved in caring for four youngsters, they are, for the most part, excellent parents.

Do they ever yell at their kids? Yes.

Are they ever exasperated? Yes.

Do they ever feel inadequate? Yes.

Do the kids ever misbehave? Yes.

Do Karen and Dan ever make mistakes in the way they parent their children? Yes.

How can they be great parents when they have so many flaws? The answer is simple. Their high ranking as parents has nothing to do with being perfect, but it has everything to do with love. Their children feel loved, valued, and safe. They have a mother, but equally important they have a dad. Neither are absentee parents.

—Patricia Rushford—

Determine where the line is; then stay a safe distance behind it.

Each of us has blind spots, weaknesses, and deeply entrenched habits that can sabotage our best intentions. Moral failure is rarely the result of a blowout; almost always it's the result of a slow leak.

If something is not clearly spelled out in Scripture, pray about it and seek the counsel of several wise friends. Once you've decided where the line is, walk 10 yards back and make that your line!

Always leave yourself a margin. Don't see how close you can get to the line without going over. That's like a scuba diver seeing how little air he can leave in his tank and still get to the surface. Only a fool would do something like that.

—Gary Oliver—

NINE CHARACTERISTICS OF ADDICTION

Men with an addiction (especially sexual addiction) may show some or all of these signs:

1. Denial: The faulty belief that the addiction is not a problem and can be stopped at any time.

2. Stress Release: Uses sex to cover pain or ease stress; experiences high levels of anxiety when the addiction is not indulged.

3. Isolation: The addiction becomes a substitute for meaningful relationships.

4. Dishonesty: Covers up the addiction with lies.

5. Financial Problems: Cost of the addictive lifestyle may result in lost sales, job loss, or money needed for family and bills.

6. Rage: Guilt and a judgmental attitude may be focused on others through anger and rage, blaming others instead of assuming responsibility.

7. Preoccupation: Short attention span and preoccupation with sexual thoughts, and even considered "spacey." In a crowd, the addict may be looking for a sexual contact. The addiction becomes the most important thing, resulting in a distortion of time and purpose.

8. Degenerative Sexual Addiction: It becomes worse over time.

9. Shame: The faulty belief that "I am a mistake" instead of "I made a mistake." *New Man* magazine

God will not force a man to revere him, but He will make it impossible for him to be happy unless he does. —Patrick Morley—

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