

ENCOURAGER Issue



“He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, He brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.” 2 Cor. 1:4 (The Message)

Living in the Shadows

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I pulled my back pack blower from the bend, and placed it on the trailer to crank. A noise from behind startled me. It was coming from behind. It was 6:30 am and it was still pitch black. The sunrises had been coming later than normal. I know. You’re wondering, what kind of lawn work I was doing in the dark? It was an office building, and I was getting ready to blow off the parking lot. This was a marginally lit parking lot.

Just then I could hear a couple of guys talking as they walked up behind me. I drew back and almost jumped out of my skin. No, I wasn’t attacked or beaten. These young guys weren’t out to assault anybody. They were just on their way to high school around the corner. Was I shaken? Scared? Startled? All of the above! At first as they came closer, I knew what was going on and I wasn’t anxious anymore.

A few minutes later, I was blowing off the still darkened parking lot, with headset radio playing, focused on something else all together. I turned, looked up and saw a tall man shrouded in the shadows staring at me as he stood next to the property fence. Once this creepy looking dude noticed that I had seen him, he snuck back

around the corner. It was then that I remembered the plant nursery next door. They hired mentally challenged people to care for and water their plants. I had put things into perspective, so my panic dissipated.

Now that my mother (who I’m sure is reading this newsletter) is half scared out of her mind, I have to tell you that I don’t normally work in the dark. However, from time to time, in spite of our best precautions we all come face to face with unexpected dangers.

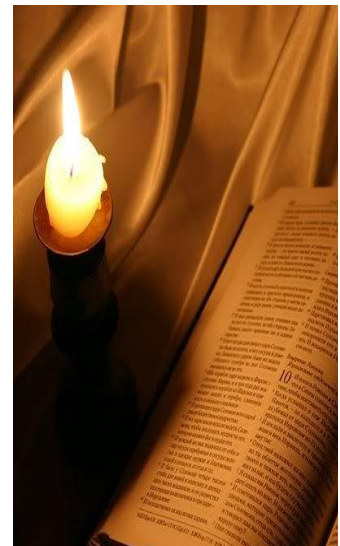
King David faced a number of dangers. He killed lions to protect his sheep. As a boy David chose to whirl a stone at a Giant and became the national hero. He fought invading armies and conquered nations. Throughout his life we see David being hunted even by his own son. Yet in several Psalms, David declared that when he was afraid he would not fear but trust in God.

So often the unseen scares us. Is it any wonder that in the Gospel of John that we first see Jesus coming to us as the light of the world? I love those verses John 1:4,5 (NIV). “In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”

Jesus came to give us new life and flood our darkness with His pure and perfecting light! Is that encouraging or what?

By the time, I had finished blowing off the empty parking lot the Sun had risen. It brought into full view everything that moments before had been hidden in shadows. That’s what light does. It illumines.

So often we become fearful because of a lack of understanding. Psalm 119:105 reminds us that God’s Word lights our direction. Each day we all make several choices of what we will do and where we will go. The Bible can help clarify and give us perspective on those decisions. Throughout Psalm 119, we find David meditating on God’s word, precepts, and promises all day long, and even on his bed at night.





Living In The Shadows Cont. ' d

Like the two guys creeping up behind me, it is often the things we don't see that frighten us most. Sometimes we don't see these scary things, because they are out of our field of vision (by accident or on purpose.) Often we refuse to confront memories from our past denying their impact upon our present and future. Memories can represent unsettled places in our brain, that need further processing. There are so many things scientists are still learning about how we order and store perceptions, feelings, and accounts of the past. Time and again we can become stubborn and refuse to look back, fearing it might become too painful or be irrelevant to the present. Think about it. Even if I had never turned to see the two creepy guys walking up behind me; at some point they would still have come around in front of me, just as they did. It's the same with painful or fear based memories.

We can bury them so deep that they are out of sight but sooner or later they resurface.

I don't recommend that we dwell in the past too long, but I do think having the courage to face the past helps propel us forward to the challenges which lay ahead. I've found such security and comfort in taking my past hurts and memories to Jesus for healing. In Him we find illumination. In John 12:35,36 (NIV) we find Jesus warning them, "Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light."

Back in my parents' church, we use to sing the old hymn by, Thomas Chisholm "Great is Thy Faithfulness." There is a phrase in the first stanza that reads, "There is

no shadow of turning with thee." Light doesn't cast shadows. In James 1:17, we are reminded of this great promise: "Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow." (NLT) There is safety and security in Christ. Embrace His light!



Coming

Next Month:

For quite some time now, I have been dreaming of the day when I could finally have my own website. Last month, my good friend George Andrew purchased my domain name and has become the webmaster of my new website. Beginning next month you will be able to check out my new website by simply typing in:

www.tonygulledge.com

The website will include:

- * *The current newsletter and a new archive.*
- * *Access to my new blog Ricocheting Reflections*
- * *Links to my favorite websites.*
- * *Updates on my upcoming Christian Novel & Short Stories.*



BY Jim Daly

I'm always looking for that great book to both peak my interest and encourage me. The new book "Stronger," by Jim Daly surpassed my expectations.

Jim Daly became president of Focus on the Family in 2005, and can be heard each day on the radio broadcast. He has a riveting personal testimony that I will leave for you to discover as you read the book.

STRONGER imparts practical wisdom gained through Jim's own experiences of pain and

transformation. He couples his testimony with other engaging true-life stories that will challenge and strengthen your faith.

Don't pass up this opportunity to exchange Unbreakable Strength for Brokenness.

The book is heavily endorsed by many of today's top Christian readers. Get it today at any major book retailer or on line. Enjoy!

Reaching The Netherlands

Steve and Julie Kramer are Assemblies of God missionaries to the Netherlands. They have just returned from sabbatical after completing their first three year assignment. Now that they have returned, the couple and their daughter continue working in the area of university ministries and church planting.



Steve is a walking miracle. After being born 2-and-half months premature and being diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy and being told he would never walk, God began to work. At age 12, God called Steve to the Netherlands.

We have a passion and a call to reach the university students in the Netherlands. In 3 years of ministry, we have developed Chi Alpha university ministry in the cities of Leiden and Groningen. In addition, we have also planted a church called "The Community" in Groningen.

We are excited to continue our ministry of reaching university students in the NL as well as helping with church planting efforts.



If you would like to contribute to our work you can make a donation at :

Steve and Julie Kramer
c/o Assemblies of God World Missions
1445 N. Boonville Ave.,
Springfield, MO. 65802

Acct. #292329



Ricocheting Reflections

Last month I developed a new blog called Ricocheting Reflections which can be found at:

<http://ricochetingreflections.blogspot.com/>

(Beginning soon, I'll have a direct link for this blog through the new website.)

Three new posts are now available:

Packed and Ready to Go –

This reflection centers on memories I had growing up when we were visiting my Grandmother's house. Although I always enjoyed the visit, we kids often had the bags packed and placed by the door, long before the grownups began to mosey toward the car. As Christians, I liken this to the stance many of us take toward going to heaven. Take a trip with me down memory lane and be challenged to make the most of the time we have left here.

Waiting For Daybreak –

In this meditation I recount the recent loss of a 15 year old young man in our community that died of an overdose. Track with me as I explore the importance of holding on when you find yourself in a dark place.

Did I Stutter?

Did God stutter when He poured forth his wisdom and direction for our lives? Did He misspeak when He laid down the Ten Commandments or gave us the Sermon on the Mount? God has spoken but do we hear Him?

Purposeful Prayer



Jim never thought of himself as depressed until his Missions Director called him in for a meeting. He and Dana had been on the mission field for a year now, and their results had been less than promising. Jim assumed since he had taken Spanish in college and his wife taught English as a second language part time at the local high school, things would have gone better.

At first a core group of leaders surrounded Jim and Dana and tried to teach them nuances of their culture. Little by little these people began to pull away, as the couple failed to make quick transitions. Dana



began to withdraw. She had nothing in common with the women in her village. Soon the children were frustrated with being made fun of and rejected. In time the missionary couple were given a new location, but could find few things to appreciate.

Jim missed his wife's laughter and the way his wife use to dish out compliments. He could sense a huge wall of resentment between them. The unity they



once enjoyed had eroded into hysteria and confusion. He tried again and again to express his frustration to a small group of tribal leaders. They could not identify. Jim knew these men saw him as weak and unable to solve problems even in his own home.

In less than a year, Jim and Dana returned home hoping things could return to normal. A close friend or a good counselor could have given them the support and accountability they needed. Instead, their sense of personal failure increased as they had to confront their financial contributors. When they were unable to immediately find jobs, insignificance set in,

because of the sluggish economy. Their dream of becoming missionaries deteriorated into a nightmare in course of one short year.

Jim and Dana needed true supporters who not only gave finically, but emotionally and relationally too. Today email and Skype allow friends back home to provide encouraging prayers and spiritual support. Locally, Dana and Jim needed others in the body of Christ who could be "God with Skin on."

As you meet and learn of missionaries going to a foreign field, know that they are not only representatives for God but for us as well. They need your earnest and specific prayers. Remember the adjustments they face with extreme culture shock, interpersonal issues, marital friction, anger and depression. Don't forget their children's similar needs. Pray purposefully!