



ENCOURAGER

“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)

DECEMBER 2010 ISSUE:

Losing	1 & 2
Laminin	2
U-Turns	3
Spotlight on Missions	3
New Short Stories	4

I'm Losing:

When was the last time anyone got excited about the word loss? Our society expects everyone to always be full of activity and in a perpetual state of being “gung ho”. After all, America was built upon drive and a competitive spirit. Aren't we as Christians suppose to be aggressive and passionate all the time?

But, what happens when we get the diagnosis of terminal cancer? How do we cope with the loss of a job we loved? When we've prayed for a win for our Christian team, and the arrogant competitor prevails, where's the justice in that? How fair could it be for a pitcher to lose his best arm? What dignity exists for seniors who lose their health, brain cells, sense of privacy, and even a will to live?

Losses come in many shapes and sizes and sooner or later will show up in all of our lives. For some the struggle may seem less dramatic but more chronic. We might become stressed over hair loss, experience weight issues, lose our sense of identity, or become too easily fatigued. Whatever the form of loss or intensity it may bring, we all have to grapple with losses. If you look to the New Testament guidance we'll find some incredible statements in Philippians 3:7-9. In The Message version, we find Paul describing his losses in reference to Christ.

“The very credentials these people are waving around as something special, I'm tearing up and throwing out with the trash—along with everything else I used to take credit for. And why? Because of Christ. Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him.”

It's with the hardest challenges and in the most painful seasons of our life that we can always find the amazing love and comfort of Christ. The Bible reminds us that Christ is our 24 hour prayer partner. He stands by us, advocating on our behalf before the Father. Any hurt or trial we experience in this life is only temporary. Beyond the horizon, others in heaven are cheering us on and longing for the day when they will see us whole, perfected, and lacking nothing. Perhaps you're like me? While on the one hand that picture may bring encouragement, your life still seems to have a downward pull. That's why, we must bravely confront every type of loss, no matter how big or small it may appear. If left unresolved, losses grow larger and reality becomes distorted. When, we refuse to fully experience our losses or try to hide them, increasing amounts of our time and energy become stalled or locked up.

Perhaps you've heard the cliché 'The quickest way to end a pity party is to find someone who needs your help.' The saying may be true, but most of us need a transition before we can jump up and start making things happen. Support groups exist in many larger churches to address a wide variety of life issues. Groups like AA, NA, SA, Weight Watchers, and Celebrate Recovery are all open to the public and offer a great sense of camaraderie to those who struggle in specific areas of loss. While you may not be able to find a support group for hair loss sufferers, the world wide web offers online support groups for almost any area of challenge.

Continued on Page 2



“Life is eternal, and love is immortal, and death is only a horizon; and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight.”

Rossiter Worthington-Raymond

Losing Continued:

Recognizing your own losses may seem obvious. Wrong - all of us have blind spots. Too often, it takes a tragedy to point out a loss we may be experiencing on a daily basis. Before we can grieve our losses, we have to realize they exist and begin to feel sad about them. Being trapped inside a body that no longer responds to what the mind tells it to do is a heartbreaking loss. This is true if you suffer from Parkinson’s Disease, are obese, or weighted down with major depression. Pain associated with any type of loss is personal to the individual. None of us know just how gut-wrenching a person’s loss may be. When CS Lewis’ wife, Joy, died in 1960, he described his grief as “true reflection of Hell.” In his book, ‘*A Grief Observed*’, Lewis sketches a picture of the pressure we get from society to minimize loss and lie to ourselves that it doesn’t exist.

How many times have we heard the acclaimed TV host Dr. Phil say, “You can’t fix what you won’t acknowledge?” After admitting our sense of loss to God, we have to take it to a “God with Skin on.” Often that requires that, I find someone to sit with me who will let me cry. I will need someone who can hear the expression of my hearts’ pain. If a trusted friend isn’t available help can be found in a Pastor or Counselor’s office. Remember a Counselor is a paid friend. Not only is the Counselor required by law to keep your confidence, because they are being paid by you, as a customer, you can demand and expect the quality services of an ideal friend!

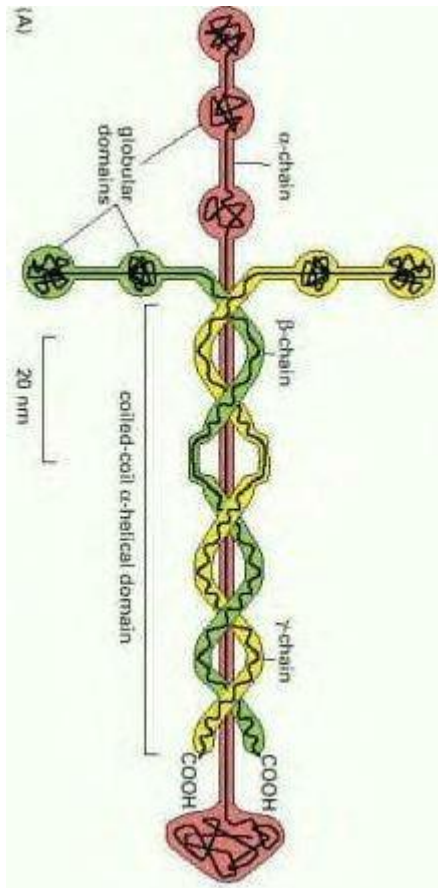
It’s been said that prayers come from only those persons who are needy. Just as in the case of Job, when everything is stripped away, God has our attention. Grief and loss forces us to slow down and process life’s experiences. The old hymn ‘Leaning on the Ever-lasting Arms,’ reminds us of the relief we can find only in the arms of Christ.

Taking responsibility for and dealing

with your loss will often require that you take these and other simple steps to secure a more successful future. Don’t let anyone rush you through grieving a loss. The time it takes will be the time it will take. For a while be content with only those friends who will patiently listen. Don’t forget about grief or support groups. These folks have gone through the same or similar struggles.

Sooner or later, no matter how great or intense we perceive our loss to be, each of us will be confronted with Mark 8:34-35. “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and the gospel will save it.” (NIV)

After our losses have healed, God’s ultimate purpose for each of our lives is something bigger than ourselves. I love the words of Kenji Miyazawa: “We must embrace pain and burn it as fuel for our journey.”



Laminin:

No, it’s not a modern religious art symbol you can buy someone for Christmas. Instead, Wikipedia describes Laminin as; “a family of proteins that are a part of the integral structural scaffolding of basement membranes in most every animal tissue.” In simple English, these cross-like protein structures are what hold us together. Without them, our skin would fall apart and we would be nothing more than a few pounds of useless flesh on a street corner.

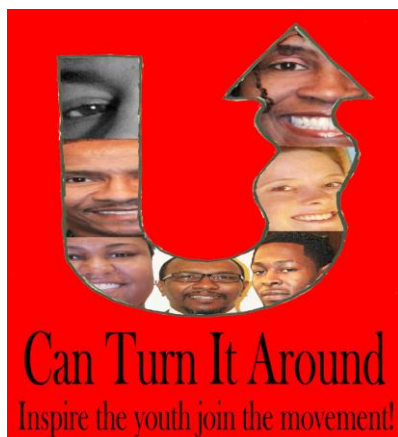
Louie Giglio first popularized this discovery in the Christian community. The Bible tells us in Colossians 1:16-17: “for through him (Christ) God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. (NLT) Isn’t Jesus amazing?

To see a short U-Tube video about Lamimin, by Louie Giglio, go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0-NPPIeeRk&feature=related>

U-TURNS

Cindy and I were taking a different route back to my parent's house in Tallahassee, when I told her to make a wrong turn. Unlike my wife, I have a pretty good sense of direction. Our grown nephew in the back seat knew I had made a mistake, but kept quiet. Within a minute or so we were turning around. Years back, I would have continued going in the wrong direction and attempted to cover my mistake. Why? Pride I guess. What makes it so hard for us to just admit we've made a mistake? That we made a wrong turn?



When you take time to ponder the u-turns all of us have needed to make, it doesn't take long to recognize what a huge waste of precious time it is continuing in the wrong direction. Ephesians 4:1-3 challenge us live a life worthy of the calling we have received. The Apostle Paul goes on to urge us to be "completely humble, gentle and patient with each other." Our immediate response should be, "How do I turn around and start moving in the right direction? Bob Smith learned this the hard way. In his blog,

<http://badguygoesgood.wordpress.com/category/god-allows-u-turns/>, Bob recounts the many poor choices he continued to make, even into his adult life. His wrong choices, in due course, led Bob's mother, Allison Bottke, to write her own popular book "*Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children*".

Bob states, "It's sometimes painful to put myself in her shoes and see my life and my choices from her perspective." Today Bob writes, "I know that the only thing that has kept me from violating my parole is the walk I walk with the lord. My mother is the second reason which comes to this point..I have a church and a great support network of powerful prayer warriors on my side." It's unfortunate that Bob didn't make his u-turn until he had been in prison for a few years, but today he and his mother are ministering to millions.



While our poor choices may not seem big enough to land us in prison, they restrain our growth and curb our effectiveness for Christ. Let's be smart and make our u-turns early.

Spot light on Missions:



Norm and Heather Edwards along with their two daughters Ashley and Savannah are Rocky Mountain District Ministers who have been Assemblies of God World Missions appointed missionaries since 1996. On the field they have given leadership to Moscow Theological Institute where Norm served as Academic Dean. They also gave leadership to extension schools across Russia. This work was followed by coordinating "Project Reach". This role consisted of directing and leading a group of missionaries and national brothers and sisters in ministry and church planting among the Least Reached Peoples of the CIS and Baltic Republics. Through study it was discovered that there are around 100 of these Least Reached People Groups in the CIS Baltics. These are people that have their own language, culture, ethnicity, and religion (most often Islamic or Buddhist) and they have between 0 (most common) to 3 percent evangelical believers in that people group. There is much work to be done and it cannot wait any longer. These people need Jesus!

For information on how you can support their ministry please contact them directly. e-mail address; norm.edwards@agmd.org Home phone; 512 244 6569 Office phone; 417 379 2092 Skype Address; edwards4 AGWM account # 250716

Note: The information above is written by the Edwards and taken from the Assemblies of God Missionary Directory.

New Short Stories:

PROVIDENCE HOUSE SHORT STORIES:

1. **NOTION:** Bill and Helen Jameson restored an old home in the western Virginia town of Providence, that had fallen into disrepair. In spite of their hard work, the beautifully restored Country Inn had failed to attract vacationers, seeking an elegant Bed and Breakfast. After the Jameson's had conceded to allow two elderly ladies to operate the Inn as a boarding house, Helen is presented with an offer she cannot refuse. Bill fears Helen's hair-brained NOTION will destroy the restful and serene home town he grew up in. Will Providence House and the tiny community of Providence ever be the same again?
2. **GASP:** Jamie Forrester's life was changed forever when her father left the day after her sixteenth birthday. Now fifteen years later at death's door, Ted Forrester has pleaded for his only child to meet him at the Providence House. Jamie had spent months rebuffing his barrage of letters, but now crammed full of resentment, she had had enough. The time has come to extract something from Ted Forrester for her years of misery and pain. Will the father she encounters make her GASP and take a second look?
3. **DONE:** Randy is only five years old, but he knows his mother is dying. A year and a half ago, his father was injured in a car accident and went to be with Jesus. When Randy's Aunt Izzy shows up at the Providence House, he knows it's just a matter of time. Right away Izzy's boyfriend, Steve becomes Randy's devotee. Izzy, on the other hand, is career minded. She can't wait to get her sister's funeral over with so she can return to her designer job in New York City. Will Randy be destined for foster-care, living out his childhood in a boarding house run by a couple of old ladies, or find a new home with Izzy and Steve?
4. **DAYMARES:** Marine Jake Langdon was wounded by a mortar attack in Iraq, but the invisible wounds have not yet begun to heal. Returning home, for this Marine meant learning to embrace a different kind of life. Humiliated by the unexpected actions of his family and former congregation, Jake was reassigned as an associate pastor position at the First Community Church of Providence. Senior Pastor, Joseph Fenburg, and his secretary Betty Butterfield have done all they can to help Langdon get acclimated. Will his DAYMARES overwhelm the Marine's ability to adjust to civilian life?
5. **REFUGE:** Pastor Joseph brought twelve year-old, Katie and her mother, Vivian Hollingsworth to the Providence House for shelter from their abuser. Inn Mangers, Lois Pruitt and Edna Phillips agree to provide a safe haven for Katie while her mother continues working as a vehicle escort driver. When Dr. Hollingsworth shows up at Providence House looking for his daughter, the two elderly spinsters begin to question Vivian's credibility. Will Katie remain mute or embrace the protection of her surroundings, as Lois and Edna attempt to unravel the truth behind the tug-of-war her parents are having with her emotions?

NOTE: These five stories have been attached to this Encourager newsletter email. These and future stories will be posted to my new website (currently still under construction) at:

TonyGulledge.com