



▶ GROWTH AND WOMEN'S
MINISTRY...2



▶ WHEN THE STORMS OF LIFE
RAGE...4



▶ WHO NEEDS THE WHOLE
BODY...5

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Connection SDMI

ROOTED & GROWING

ENCOURAGING GROWTH

by Rev. Larry R. Morris

After a long drought, a Colorado peach farmer looked over his dying orchard, shook his head and said, "There is nothing quite as demoralizing as seeing our trees. when there was so much potential, dying. There will be no growth or fruit this year." I have to agree. What a waste.

Farmers are not the only ones who experience the heartache of loss. I have comforted Sunday School teachers, pastors, and parents who have seen their friends, neighbors, and family members turn from a new and growing faith in Christ to rejection of the church. In the shock of such loss, the question often arises, "What could we have done differently?"

While we cannot make another's faith secure, there are some time-proven practices for helping those who come to Christ grow up in Christ. Let's look at three – prayer, presence, and encouragement.

Be constant in prayer. Praying for someone you are discipling not only helps them; it also helps you. In times of prayer, God opens your eyes to needs and opportunities you may not otherwise see. Make prayer foundational to your life.

Be consistent in presence. One of the greatest promises Jesus made to His disciples is found in Matthew 28:20: "I am with you always." While we cannot make the same promise, we can intentionally and regularly "check in" with those we are discipling. Our regular involvement in their lives will give us opportunity to listen to their concerns and provide Godly council and guidance.

Be abundant in encouragement. Change, even positive change, is stressful. Do not pass up an opportunity to help your disciple see present struggles in the light of ultimate victory. Remember, God inhabits the praises of his people (Ps. 22:3). Be a person of praise.

It was the great evangelist Billy Graham who said to Christian disciplers, "Decision is five percent; following up the decision is the 95 percent." How are you doing with the 95 percent?

This issue of *Connection* is about spiritual growth. The question is how you, as a ministry leader, can help those who have started out well in the faith grow and mature in it. This issue will point to a number of resources that will help you do just that. Let's keep growing!

Larry Morris is the SDMI USA/Canada Regional Coordinator.



Unplugged? by Rev. John Comstock



Who has time to meditate in a digital age which has increased the velocity of information racing toward us? Our smartphones tell us when we have a new text, tease us to look at our Facebook newsfeed, chirp at us when we have a new email, and scream at us when someone actually does the unthinkable by calling us to talk. Information is flowing at speeds we have never experienced before in history. This makes it difficult for us to focus and pay attention. In fact, many experts in the field of neuroscience would suggest technology is re-wiring the way we process, think, pay attention, and remember.

Put simply, meditation is a matter of focused attention. In other words, meditation is “paying attention to what you are paying attention to.” Have you ever gone through your morning routine only to stop and ask yourself, “Did I brush my teeth?” When we habitually go through the motions of getting ready, we may find we aren’t really “paying attention to what we are paying attention to.”

Growing “like a tree planted by streams of water” because we are “meditating” on Scripture requires focused attention. The question is, how do we help people do this?

This is what the goTandem custom mobile app does. This mobile app identifies key areas of struggle and then systematically sends daily, short verses of Scripture with reflection questions. Best of all, it allows users to reflect by taking notes about the Scripture in the app.

This mobile app enters into the busy spaces, where people actually are, to help them redirect thoughts and “pay attention” to Scripture. On the information superhighway, we need signs along the way to make sure we are going in the right direction. If your church is interested in getting a customized app to help people grow, just email John Comstock at jcomstock@nazarene.org.

John Comstock is the SDMI USA/Canada Coordinator of Continuing Lay Training (CLT).

Growth and Women’s Ministries by Dr. Linda G. Hardin



GROWTH is the mission statement for Women’s Ministries. It encapsulates our purpose and goals.

G—gathering women. Something unique happens when women gather. Networking. Sharing experiences. Realizing someone has “been there, done that” for the place I find myself. All this and more occurs when women gather.

R—resourcing opportunities. Similar to networking, Women’s Ministries provides a connecting point to the other ministries and service opportunities in a local congregation. Other times sharing life experiences can point to organizations for help with specific needs. Sharing life helps everyone grow.

O—offering acceptance. I attend a church in Corpus Christi, Texas, due to Mary Jane. She welcomed me the first Sunday I attended. She made sure I had a bulletin and the newsletter. When I returned the next Sunday, she invited me to sit with her. I felt welcomed and accepted. Women’s Ministries can be a welcoming place in your congregation.

I chose to address the next three together since they are the foundation of Women’s Ministries:

W—winning others to Christ. **T**—teaching biblical truths. **H**—honoring the Spirit-filled life.

Without these three principles, we have nothing to offer that is different from any other women’s organization. The major purpose and goal of Women’s Ministries is to disciple women. We do this by sharing life experiences, learning together, and understanding who we are in Christ.

Together we experience growth as we share how we discover peace in the midst of the storm. We continue living when the pain is so deep we only survive by leaning on the everlasting arms. We learn biblical truth as we test and try God’s promises to discover their truths. We find strength in knowing God has plans to give us a future and hope. We grow by trusting God’s faithfulness.

Linda Hardin is an SDMI consultant in Women’s Ministries.



Want to Grow in Bible Knowledge?

by Dr. Woodie J. Stevens



Think about the first thing that comes to mind when someone says, “To grow spiritually you must memorize many Bible verses!” Many people respond, “But I can’t memorize. I have tried it, but I can’t.”

What if there is a simple way to easily learn hundreds of Bible verses and quote them accurately? Thousands have discovered an easy method of learning and telling Bible stories in such a way they can literally quote hundreds of Bible verses. They know the Bible, not from memory, but from the heart. The technique is “Tell THE Story,” an oral-learning methodology.

My office received this report. “When I was invited to attend ‘Tell THE Story’ training, I wasn’t really sure what to expect. What interested me was the orality factor; I was thinking about my home state and its rural areas where the illiteracy rate is high. Little did I know that ‘Tell THE Story’ is for every person, regardless of age, social status, or level of education. When I found out how to learn the Bible stories and ask questions, I experienced the living Word of God going deep into my heart; this caused a revival in my spiritual life. ‘Tell THE Story’ has changed my life and the way I learn and share the scrip-

tures. This simple method is a tool empowering people to share the Word of God with still others.”

Another person wrote, “We practice ‘Tell THE Story’ every week with our youth! It is thrilling to see how everyone becomes so engaged in discovering truth that they want more!”

In “Tell THE Story” training, participants learn simple Bible stories to share with others. They can hardly wait to go home and tell their families a Bible story and ask simple discovery questions. Others love to go home and read the story more closely, finding additional treasures from God’s Word. Young disciples like “Tell THE Story” for this simple reason: If I tell them the truth, it is my truth. But if I help them discover truth for themselves, it becomes their truth.

Helping others discover God’s truth for themselves is deeply satisfying. Learn how to hide God’s Word in your heart at www.nazarene.org/tellthestory.



Woodie Stevens is the Global SDMI Director.

It’s Going to Be a Bold Summer!

by Rev. G. Daniel Harris

Kids Reaching Kids is excited about the amazing response to the new Vacation Bible School curriculum BOLD: Be Outspoken... Live it Daily! Over 600 BOLD English and Spanish VBS kits have been shipped to churches in 46 U.S. states, seven Canadian provinces, and 13 additional countries throughout Mesoamerica, South America, Eurasia, Africa, Southeast Asia, and Australia.

One special area where BOLD will be making a major impact this summer is in the country of Guyana. For a number of years, Kids Reaching Kids has helped each of the 28 churches on the Guyana Demerara-Essequibo district to hold a Vacation Bible School. In 2016, not only will these same 28 churches be holding a BOLD VBS, but there will also be BOLD Vacation Bible Schools being held in the 15 churches of the Berbice district as well. A special thanks goes out to Antricia Persaud and Ruth Autar for their willingness to help the children of Guyana be BOLD for Jesus.

In a world that discourages Christians from speaking out about their faith, this VBS curriculum will take children on a BOLD adventure through the book of Acts, helping children to Be Outspoken about their faith in Jesus, and teaching them how to Live it Daily!

Once again, money raised through the Kids Reaching Kids Mission Offering has helped fund the creation of this curriculum, as well as helping to offer 600+ kits free of charge to these churches. The “free” kit offer has expired, but BOLD resources are still available to order; and all the electronic resources found on the website (www.boldvbs.com) are free to download and reproduce.

Dan Harris is the SDMI USA/Canada KRK Coordinator.



When the Storms of Life Rage... by Wm. Marshall Duke



Life was challenging for Thomas Obadiah Chisolm. His health was so fragile that there were periods of time when he was confined to bed, unable to work. After coming to Christ at age 27, Thomas began to find great comfort in prayer, in scriptures, and in the fact that God was faithful to be his strength in times of illness.

Lamentations 3:22-23 was one of Chisolm's favorite scriptures: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness" (KJV). In 1923, Chisolm used these words as the basis for Great Is Thy Faithfulness, a hymn that has brought hope to thousands.

Like Chisolm, many others have found comfort and consolation through prayer and scripture during seasons of their lives when things seemed to be at their worst.

Rev. Jim Page settled on Philippians 4:13 as his life-verse: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." The world of this young pastor and father was turned upside down in 1979 when his wife, Norma, was brutally murdered in the Nazarene church parsonage. The case went unsolved until 2010 when the assailant confessed; however, he went unpunished due to mental and physical health issues. Jim's "rock" was Paul's Philippians passage.

Wayne and Sharon Shands, school teachers, devoted 18 summers ministering in churches at VBS events. At age 54, Wayne began exhibiting pre-Alzheimer's issues, necessitating early retirement by age 57. Sharon bravely tried to manage his circumstances, but she finally had to turn to specialized care, where he remained until his death. Through this season, Sharon was encouraged by the number of Christian friends who were lifting her up in prayer (Exodus 17:11). Encouragement also came through lyrics like, "He gives me peace in the midst of my storm," reminding her that she shouldn't worry about anything (Philippians 4:6-7).

Lamentations 3:28-31 underscores God's faithfulness and outlines steps we should take when in peril: "When life is heavy and hard to take, go off by yourself. Enter the silence. Bow in prayer. Don't ask questions: wait for hope to appear. Don't run from trouble. Take it full-face. The 'worst' is never the worst. Why? Because the Master won't ever walk out and fail to return" (The Message).

Clearly, when the storms of life rage, we can be sure that He will faithfully stand by us.

Marshall Duke is the SDMI USA/Canada Prime Time Coordinator.

PRIME TIME MINOT

September 27-29, 2016, Minot, North Dakota
"Holiness, Heritage, and Harmony"

Join us for worship, inspiration, resourcing, and, most of all, through coming together as the body of Christ. In His body we have the greatest harmony ever possible.

Happening at the same time as Prime Time Minot (ND) Retreat is the 39th annual Norsk Høstfest, which has grown into North America's largest Scandinavian festival celebrating Scandinavian culture and heritage of the five Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Retreat activities will include participation in the Høstfest event.



Learn more and register at
primetimeusacanada.org



Who Needs the Whole Body? by Tim Truesdale

**“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’”
I Corinthians 12:21**



If you are reading this article, you are probably a leader in the church—and have been for a while. And that means you have some history with being a disciple of Jesus. As you look back on your spiritual growth, you could probably see the most progress during seasons when you were surrounded by a company of other like-minded believers. In fact, if you are like me, your best growth as a follower may be as clear as the width of rings in a tree reflect favorable growing conditions like rainfall and sunlight on a year-to-year basis.

But we all know that there is always a present danger; the complacent disciple chooses to forego the relationships that will challenge his sense of ease. The world, the flesh, and the devil ALL present convincing excuses to let oneself become isolated. Maybe you have heard one or more of these temptations: “I will spend more personal time in the Word by eliminating travel time to fellowship. Or I have gained (lost) weight and don’t have the right clothes to go to church.” Or how about this one: “I am in such a bad mood, there is no way I could possibly ‘get anything out of’ attending my accountability group (or prayer meeting).” Say it isn’t so; none of you would ever harbor such immature thoughts such as these, which have sometimes popped into my head.

As is so frequently the case, discipleship lessons are just as often “caught” as “taught.” As leaders, we are continually sending messages about our level of conviction that we need fellowship. Those who follow us would be well served by seeing our generous and consistent investment of time in relationships that challenge us to grow.

I very definitely believe that Paul spoke under inspiration of the Holy Spirit as he was penning I Corinthians 12, including verse 21. So if God’s plan is for me to exhibit healthy growth in measure according to my connection to the body of believers He has surrounded me with, then it would certainly be worth my time to check my heart, with God’s help, to confirm whether I am taking full advantage of every opportunity He is providing. Sounds like fellowship is not just a luxury, but a NEED!

The Book of James speaks about disciples who hear the Word but walk away and forget it as surely as someone who looks at their reflection in a mirror and then does nothing about what they see. That’s not us. We are men of action.

Tim Truesdale is a husband, father of four, and nationally-recognized leader of men’s ministry.

SDMI’s Strategic Marriage Initiative Adds SYMBIS Assessment to Ministry Resources!

Jesus said in Matthew 18:19-20, “go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

There is no place where discipling is more important than in our marriages.

Marriage is alive and well!
87% of young adults plan to marry.
82% expect to be married for life.
Expectations are high!

What can your church do to help young adults build strong, enduring marriages?

Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts (SYMBIS) is an excellent online assessment that can help couple prepare for lifelong love.

For more details on the Strategic Marriage Initiative, go to sdmiusacanada.org and select “Marriage & Family.”

To read more about the SYMBIS marriage assessment special offer, go to sdmiusacanada.org and click on the “SYMBIS” button.

Bridges Ministry Council Meets... by Mandy Jackson



Bridges Ministry was founded to serve as a bridge between the Nazarene church and young and single adults. The Bridges council met in April to discuss their initiatives and strategy for the 2016-17 year. Their purpose is to advocate for young and single adults in the church and provide resources as they look for ways to grow and serve. Council members are a diverse group coming together with a singular passion: supporting the next generation of the church's leadership.

With this in mind, the council created a strategy to participate in upcoming events and conferences, as well as hosting a table discussion during General Assembly 2017. Through networking and relationship building, the council hopes to provide support to young adults in ministry, as well as find ways the church can both encourage and train new leaders. As part of these initiatives, the council will be listening to young adults in the church to learn about their struggles, concerns, and recommendations. From this input, they hope to better reach their audience and continue to bridge the gap between generations within the Church of the Nazarene. To learn more, please visit <http://thebridgesministry.org>.

Mandy Jackson, an Oklahoma City-based blogger (thesebeautifulramblings.com), loves to write about life, faith, & marriage.

Top 10 Reasons to Attend a SPARK Retreat

by Rev. Leslie Hart

SPARK is a regional equipping retreat for local children's leaders. Hosted at Nazarene camp and conference centers by partnering districts, **SPARK** is far and away the best training value around. You receive six meals, two nights of lodging, a plenary session and five or six in-depth workshops...in other words, 40+ hours of quality training and interaction with other children's ministry leaders for under \$100! If you need more, here are ten great reasons why your district needs to check into **SPARK**:

10. Familiar Location Coming to a campground near you! Hosting **SPARK** at district campgrounds and conference centers during off-season makes it convenient and affordable.

9. Sensible Schedule No need to recruit any replacements or prepare extra lesson plans for subs. Whew! Running from Thursday evening to Saturday afternoon means you won't miss a Wednesday night or Sunday.

8. Affordable Investment Maximum "Bang for the Buck!" Each person leaves **SPARK** with free curriculum and resources worth more than the combined cost of travel and registration.

7. Quality Training Hear from experienced presenters who have actually "been there & done that!" God redeems the hands-on experience of regional workshop leaders who become accessible resources as they share lessons learned with others.

6. Creative Resources Resource providers will freely share new ideas, projects, and resources; and you will leave creatively equipped to minister more effectively.

5. Relaxing Retreat Take a deep breath as you step back from your everyday setting, get out of your normal routine, and get closer to God. The Christ-centered focus and relaxed schedule are designed to create space to allow God to speak to you.

4. Supportive Network Children's ministry is sometimes lonely for the adults who lead. Creative activities break down isolation, build synergy & teamwork, and remind us that we are one team!

3. Inspired Encouragement Receive uplifting inspiration from Nazarene leaders who love God and care about you and your ministry. The praise and worship will refresh your spirit and soften your heart.

2. Renewed Calling Remember who has called and equipped you, what you have been called to and why, and reaffirm your commitment to children's ministry through the communal experience of the Wesley Covenant.



1. DID I SAY FREE STUFF??? You will more than recoup the cost of your registration and travel in promotional merchandise and giveaways, all for under \$100. It really is a no-brainer!

*** DOUBLE BIG BONUS!!!*** **SPARK** truly can spark new life into your local, district, and regional children's ministries, becoming something you look forward to more and more each year. For more information on a **SPARK** near you, go to <http://equiptoengage.org/spark>.

Leslie Hart is the SDMI USA/Canada Children's Ministries Coordinator.

Starting September 4, 2016



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We are a Great Commission church (Matthew 28:19-20). As a global community of faith, we are commissioned to take the Good News of life in Jesus Christ to people everywhere and to spread the message of scriptural holiness (Christlike living) across the lands.



TEACH 2016

A national lay ministry conference offering equipping and resourcing for small groups, Sunday School, and other discipleship ministries.

August 12-13, 2016
Springdale Church of the Nazarene
Cincinnati, Ohio

Explore best practices for making Christlike disciples through...

Sunday School, Small Groups, Intergenerational Ministries, Vacation Bible School, Children's Bible Quizzing, Bible Studies, and helping friends follow Jesus more closely



Workshop Tracks
Children
NYI and Youth
Adult
CLT/Discipleship Place
Tell THE Story
Admin/Leadership
Family/Intergenerational

Register at teach2016.org.



A Growing Sense of Mission: Curious, Committed, or Called?

by Kenny Wade

Everyone is called to join the mission of God. But not everyone is called to be cross-cultural missionaries to the far reaches of the map. Acts 1:8 gives us these growing areas of missional influence beginning right where we live and extending to places we may go. The beauty of the call to be a disciple of Christ is that it begins right where we are today in our community, with our culture, and then beyond! That's what Mission Immersion 2016 is all about:



Mission Immersion invites 9-12th graders to participate in a mission training camp for those that are Curious, Committed, or Called. Some high school students may simply be curious about discerning ways to more effectively join the mission of God locally. Others may have already committed time and resources to doing just that but have ventured out in other service opportunities, like a mission trip. A few youth will know that at some level they have been called by God to join His mission in some expression of vocational living. This may range from traditional modes of mission to unique expressions of practical and creative roles in the work-a-day world.

July 6-10 students will journey with mentors as they map their mission journey: where they have been, where they are going, and how Christ is shaping them for His mission. They will participate in daily activities to explore, be equipped, and be immersed in various expressions of discipleship in Christ, Community, and Culture.

July 10-13 participants in 9-10th grade will practice joining mission in Indianapolis with a compassionate ministry center. The 11-12th graders will be transported by ROAM (RVs On A Mission) with mentors and staff to one of four Youth In Mission locations experiencing intergenerational and cross-cultural mission contexts. These may include: St. Louis, Missouri; Detroit, Michigan; Toledo, Ohio; or Turkey Creek, Kentucky.

Mission Immersion is hosted by Youth In Mission in partnership with Global Mission, NYI, and Compassionate Ministries. Please share this opportunity with your local church students, including NYI and NMI leaders.

For more information, go to www.youthinmission.org/mi2016

Kenny Wade is the Youth in Mission Coordinator.

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