

"...I will make a way in the desert, and streams in the wasteland..." Isaiah 43:19

Flavor of Summer

Our Summer Wives' Weekend was a time of inspiration and relaxation. Seven couples were challenged and inspired by the dynamic testimony of our Colfax, IA Executive Director Bob Larson and his wife Diane. The Larsons very openly shared how God has set them free; Bob from pornography; and Diane from bulimia. God has saved them, completely delivered them and restored their troubled marriage. Part of that restoration process for Diane was completing a Teen Challenge program for women. For Bob, developing a vital relationship with God as well as normal wholesome relationships with other Christian people, brought him true freedom.

Bob also shared two teaching sessions based on a class he regularly teaches our students on Real Intimacy. This class demonstrates Christianity as a face-to-face relationship with God and develops the concept of intimacy throughout scripture.

A special feature of our Summer Wives' Weekend was an outing to Big Creek Lake. God provided perfect weather for our cookout, fun, and fellowship. The couples were able to enjoy spending an hour of special time together. Their choices included motor boats, canoes, paddleboats, hydro bikes or tandem

bikes. Everyone expressed appreciation for an enjoyable time.

The weekend also included worship, small group sharing, prayer times, and lots more fun and fellowship.

On Sunday morning, we traveled as a group to Des Moines First Assembly of God.

The Women's Ministry group at Des Moines Glad Tidings Assembly of God provided gift bags for the wives as well as helped with the expenses of the weekend. Another church that helps our wives' ministry on a regular basis is First Assembly of God of Jefferson City, Missouri.

The value of a Wives' Weekend to the women can best be summarized

by quoting one of their evaluation sheets: "Each Wives' Weekend seems to have its own flavor, its own blessings, and its own message. Each one has challenged me to grow in a new or different direction. However, I also love the fellowship and the outings because it is so relaxing and enjoyable – and helpful too, to hear the other couples talk about their lives and experiences."

The dates for our Fall Wives' Weekend are October 26th-28th. Our speakers will again be the Revs. Larry and Dixie Low. After 42 years of marriage and 20 years of ministering to emotionally hurting people, the Lows have founded the Masters Touch Ministry. They will be presenting ministry from their Marital Bliss Relationship Seminar. Please RSVP by October 10th if you plan to attend. You may call me at (515) 674-9678 or (515) 988-2204 or email me at judyaubuchon@msn.com.



One couple enjoying a bicycle built-for-two

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Set Free: Jody Rhoden's Story

March 10, 2006 is a day that a pivotal shift occurred in our family. *This day*, a refining process of new beginnings was set in motion as my husband and I drove from St. Joseph, Missouri to Colfax, Iowa. *This day*, my husband became a student at Teen Challenge of the Midlands. Truthfully though, it wasn't until **March 12, 2006** that generational curses stopped and generational blessings began. You see, *this day* was the day my husband died. He turned over **complete** control to the One who created his life. He removed himself from the throne in his heart and asked Jesus to come and live in that place. In John 10:10, Jesus says, "***I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.***" To me, the most precious part of that sentence is the " , " (the comma). On March 10, 2006, my husband had life, but on March 12, 2006, he received **life more abundantly!**

Our history together dates back 15 years. We married in 1992 and had our firstborn son soon after. As a young, naïve, 18-year old wife and mother, I had lived a pretty sheltered life to this point. During our dating season, I experimented with alcohol; still to this day, I have never used any drugs. One night after work, my husband didn't come home. This really wasn't surprising to me as many nights this happened. However, days went by and there was no sign of him. Eventually, I received a collect call from a correctional facility and found out that my husband had been arrested and was awaiting trial. He was eventually convicted of a felony charge which carried a 10-year sentence. I was devastated. By the grace of God, he received a 120-day sentence to a treatment facility. After he completed this program, I hoped that was enough of a wake-up call and everything would be ok.

But the cycle continued – the honeymoon period, the excessive controlling, the abuse, the drinking, the drugs, and the co-dependency issues. Time passed and through other circumstances, he was sentenced to another 120-day treatment center. Once more, I thought things would be different when he returned. **I be-**

lieved in the "hope of change" rather than actually what was real. I saw my life as a fairy tale through rose colored glasses and believed that if I just pretended hard enough, everything would turn out. However each time my husband would return home, we honeymooned for a bit and then both returned to our old patterns of behavior. Soon, I became pregnant with our second son. Again, I hoped things would change, but once more my husbands' actions broke the conditions of his probation and this incident caused him to serve out the remainder of his original 10-year sentence.



By this time, we both decided we had been through enough and divorced. He went to a prison behind bars of steel and I went to a prison of my own. I began to attend church regularly; however, inside my heart, I was broken, hurt, and lonely. I desperately searched for love and acceptance. I knew of Jesus; I sang about Him, I even presented Him well to others, I just didn't **KNOW** Him, truly **KNOW** Him. This began a season of sexual sin in my life; I desperately wanted to find something to fill the aching hole in my heart. I tried to keep this area of my life hidden in the dark, until, one day, I was tired of living in the self-induced prison I was in. I brought this into the light with the help of a close friend. She prayed with me and I sincerely committed my life to the Lord. God, being the perfect fit to the hole in my heart, had been waiting, patiently for an invitation all along. I began to heal. This took time, patience, forgiveness, and grace, but the Lord was faithful then, and has continued to be to this day.

Soon after this, our pastor began a sermon series on "Faith." I truly wanted to live my life for Him and I realized that "*without faith it was impossible to please God*" (Hebrews 11:6). The boys and I talked about what they had faith for in their lives and they replied, "*We have faith for a dad.*" I thought to myself, "*Great, you get a dad, I get a husband*" so we prayed diligently about that. **Little did I know, God was orchestrating a miracle.** The boys' dad, my ex-husband, was soon released from prison. Seven years

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Set Free: Jody Rhoden's Story, Continued

had passed, and he was a Christian now. I have to admit, honestly, I laughed at first. I reminded God that I had previously tried this husband, and it didn't work. But, God's ways are not our ways! After receiving counsel with our pastor, we remarried in 2003. However, just because we had become Christians didn't mean the struggles would magically go away. We were Christians, but we truly hadn't died to our own selfish desires. We had accepted Jesus, but we were trying to *share the throne with Him*. We were living life before the “,” of John 10:10. Yes, we had life, but we were not living in His abundance.

In March 2006, much to our dismay, the cycle again repeated. My husband was a patient at our local hospital's mental health ward and had been placed on a suicide watch as he had wrecked his truck under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Again, we faced unknown circumstances about the outcome of our marriage. The lifestyle choices my husband made to this point, grimly reminded me of paths we had walked years prior. The remembrances of white-knuckled promises to change, of lies about where he had been for days on end, of missing items from our home taken to pawn shops, of numerous nights I peered out the window as my heart skipped a beat with the sound of any vehicle passing by, the wondering if *this* or *that* treatment center, counseling session, program or class would be “*the one*” that worked. It was during this time of brokenness that we heard about Teen Challenge of the Midlands.

On March 10, 2006 as we voluntarily entered Teen Challenge, an array of emotions attempted to overtake me. *I felt relief* that I knew where my husband was sleeping at night. *I felt grief* as I began the process of “letting go of the old.” *I felt fear* as the burden of raising our boys fell onto my shoulders. *I felt hope* as I believed this was a new chapter of our lives. *I felt freedom* as I surrendered my family to the Lord. *I felt peace* as I anticipated the “new creation” the Lord was preparing. *I felt panic* as I faced a mountain of debt well over \$13,000. Regardless of my feelings, the Lord provided for us in incredible ways during the first few weeks of Teen Challenge. One example of God's provision was that at our 2-week visit I was able to share the miracle that our \$13,000 debt had

been demolished! We praised God together and agreed that the Lord was confirming the decision we made to commit to the length of the Teen Challenge program.

Looking back, the 16-months spent at Teen Challenge were not without difficulty, but God never promised things would be easy. *HOWEVER*, He did promise that if we let Him, He would walk the journey with us and carry our burdens. During each visit, each phone conversation, each Wives Weekend, and each 7-day pass, I could see the Lord purging, transforming, and infilling our entire family. Trials continued to arise, but the difference was the way our family handled those trials. 2 Corinthians 5:17 confirms this transformation, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.*” I believe my husband's journey was as much for me as it was for him. During the time he spent at Teen Challenge, the Lord began a transforming work in my life as well. With my husband away, I had only myself to look at, as issues I previously attributed to my husband's actions didn't cease. I had to accept responsibility and then take action. Even this day, I choose to humble myself and allow the Lord to refine me.

Now that my husband has completed the program and returned home, the process of change continues. We both are walking through a rebuilding process as we begin to mesh the “new creations” the Lord has made in each of us. Sure, there are times that old feelings attempt to creep back in, but we are determined to “trust the God that lives in the other” as we walk this out, together. “*A cord of 3 strands is not easily broken*” (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Today, we choose to live abundant life as new creations to the right of the comma. Because of who He is and what He has done, our family has forever been changed...for generations and generations yet to come. As the Lord has walked us through these trials, we believe He will use them as we proclaim the Lord's favor as in Isaiah 61. We believe that, “*He has anointed us to preach good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.*” We are a blessed people, blessed to be a blessing!





900 N. League Rd.
P.O. Box 185
Colfax, IA 50054

Phone: 515.674.9678
Fax: 515.674-4463
Email: j.aubuchon@tcmid.org
Website: www.tcmid.org

Mark Your Calendars!



These are special events at Teen Challenge, and the wives of students are invited. If you have any questions, call Judy at (515) 674-9678 or (515) 988-2204.

Fall Wives' Weekend — Oct 26th-28th
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service — Dec 24th
Winter Wives' Weekend — January 25th-27th
Spring Wives' Weekend — April 25th-27th