

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

Marriages That Go the Distance

Our Teen Challenge Summer Wives' Weekend was a great time of inspiration and relaxation for the eight couples who attended. Five were current couples, and joining them were three couples who have completed or graduated. These couples enjoy coming back to Wives' Weekends to have a part in blessing and encouraging the current married students and their wives. In doing so, they are blessed and encouraged as well. One of these wives said this on her Wives' Weekend Evaluation, "All the encouragement, support, quiet, relaxation that this place embodies blesses me every time we are here!"

Everyone enjoyed the ministry of speakers Jeff and Lynn Arp. Jeff is the Admissions Coordinator for Teen Challenge of the Midlands, and Lynn is a nurse at Iowa Orthopedics. "Marriages That Go the Distance" was the theme of their teaching sessions. Jeff gave us some helpful insights on "What Makes an Effective Marriage," including a high commitment to making the marriage work, effective communication, spiritual vitality, dissolving conflict, sexual intimacy, having a servant's heart, and both mates growing together. Under the topic of "Top Ten Marriage Killers," Jeff discussed physical exhaustion, financial conflict, selfishness, immaturity, pride, pettiness, spiritual disobedience, inability to enjoy life, unrealistic expectations, and lack of intimacy.

Mike and Carrie Stout were guests at our Wives' Weekend. Mike helps Jeff as a volunteer at the Intake Center. Mike and Carrie shared about the challenges their marriage has faced since Mike lost his vision 3 years ago due to complications of diabetes. They were a welcome addition to our group!



Jeff and Lynn Arp

One highlight of the weekend was the Candle Light Communion Service and live worship. We appreciated the worship band members Dallas Bagley, Jason and Lynn Lucy, and Jennifer Klingensmith for sharing their time and talent with us. God's presence was evident as the couples worshipped together and came forward to receive prayer ministry and communion. Several of the wives expressed that this was a healing time for them.

Another highlight was our afternoon outing to Big Creek Lake. We were all so thankful for beautiful weather. One of the wives expressed that one of the most helpful parts of the weekend for her was "spending time with my husband, and trying to work together as a team on the paddleboat." The couples enjoyed our great picnic meal and the outdoor games and fellowship.

New Life Assembly of God in Manchester, Iowa, again provided gift bags for our wives. For the past three summers Pastor and Mrs. Merlin Farrand and their church family have gathered items for our gift bags. Shane and Kathy, a returning couple, brought gift baskets put together by a group of women from Rising Sun Church of Christ in Pleasant Hill. We appreciate these groups, and all those who support Teen Challenge Wives Ministry.

Sunday morning, we attended Glad Tidings Assembly of God, and enjoyed a wonderful time of worship with the church family. Pastor Bill Wenig's message, "Inner Peace," provided an appropriate conclusion to our weekend. God will give us His peace as we surrender to Him in complete trust. He desires to not only give us His peace, but also make us peacemakers - both important ingredients to a marriage that lasts.

Our Fall Wives' Weekend will be October 22-24, and our speakers will be Norm and Kathy Wenig. Norm has been a minister for several years, and he and Kathy have traveled to churches all over Iowa presenting Marriage Enrichment Seminars. They attend Glad Tidings Assembly of God in Des Moines where Norm is available for marriage and family counseling. Please RSVP by Oct. 4 if you plan to attend. You may call me at (515) 674-9678, or (515) 988-2204, or email me at judyaubuchon@msn.com.

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Wives Ministry Survey

I love my job as Wives Ministry Coordinator for Teen Challenge of the Midlands. It is exciting to see God transform lives and bring restoration to individuals, couples and families. It is my privilege to contact the wives of our married students and express our concern for them and their children, as well as their husbands. I enjoy seeing the growth that takes place in the lives of these women as they take the Teen Challenge journey along with their husbands. I also enjoy staying in touch with them after their husbands complete the program.

I recently contacted a number of these women and asked for their input in this article. I believe they have some valuable insights to share with our current and future TC wives.

The first question I asked was, "What advice would you give to the wife of a new married student?" Kaylynn's advice is, "Use the Wives Ministry. Don't be afraid to contact Judy. Get to know the other wives. You are not alone. Only other wives truly understand your situation. Pray! Allow others to help you. Set your pride aside, and accept the help that your family, friends and church will offer you. You bless others when you allow them to bless you. You will have the opportunity to pay it forward in the future!" Jennifer's advice is, "Don't just get through this, take everything you can from the experience! God has a lot to do in and through you as well!" Often a new student's wife tells me her family or friends are encouraging her to divorce her husband. Paula's advice in these situations is, "That marriage is a covenant with God. Keep your focus on that, and not what other people might be telling you in regards to your marriage."

Jen has this advice for new wives: "In the beginning of the TC journey there is nothing but faith to go on...embrace it even if it seems futile or silly. I would strongly advise that when contact does begin, to only speak in positives, (this may be hard for some of the wives) and not of troubles or stressors. Our men want to fix things by nature, and many of them take responsibility for owning our happiness, when it's not theirs. So if

we are spending the precious few moments on the phone, or during a visit complaining or sharing our worries, it may take its toll on him, and he may convince himself he can't stay because he feels responsible for 'fixing' your anguish. When he partakes in the TC program, he IS fixing things – it just isn't the most obvious or typical approach. And when you think you can't take it, call Judy. This is the time to learn to lean on others who understand the struggle." Sheila's advice is to use "tough love" when he says he "is all better now," and wants to come home early. Tracy encourages the wives to, "focus your energies on how God wants you to change in this new life you both are experiencing."



Pastor Ed and Judy Aubuchon with Shane and Kathy

The second question I asked was, "What would you do differently if you were beginning today as a new TC student's wife?" Both Sheila and Jennifer indicated they would have prayed more for their husbands. Paula said, "I would try to have better communication with Judy, and some of the other wives." Tracy indicated this was a hard question for her because, "I think my emotions were very raw at this time, and I needed to express myself – including any anger, guilt or whatever. I think

what I would do differently is perhaps not be so hard on myself for any, and all emotions I felt at the time. God taught me something through each of them."

What would Jen do differently? "I would be more open to the process and rules. I was only seeing about 5 feet in front of me...I needed to be lifting my head up, and looking farther into the distance...AND looking up to God. During the first Wives' Weekend I attended, I wanted all that time to be with Geoff and was put off, and a little upset when we had sessions apart. I was wrong for thinking that way, and had no clue how beneficial the time with women just like me would be. All these women are my sisters and they understand me in a way NO ONE on the outside can ever understand. I have made lifelong friends and would not be where I am spiritually if it were not for the fellowship of these other wives. I still talk to them today. We all still have struggles, but we can lean on each other and lift each other up

Wives Ministry Survey, con't.

in prayer. I love these women, and I now hold a special place for all who are at, and are to come to TC."

As far as what Kaylynne would do differently, she said, "I wouldn't worry so much about my husband, or how he felt, or react to things I needed to say. I would have trusted God to do the work He was going to do in our lives and our marriage, and not try to pave the way, or make it easier; which doesn't work anyway, by the way.

The third question I asked the women was, "What was your greatest challenge when your husband was a student?" Paula indicated that her greatest challenge was, "Not having our daughter's Daddy at her public functions, and people asking where her Daddy was." Jennifer answered, "Not being able to talk to him daily.

He is my best friend; it was lonely." Kaylynne responded, "Missing the physical presence of my partner. Having to handle EVERYTHING! Listening to the lessons God was teaching me about myself, when I wanted to blame all our problems on my husband. Overcoming my pride by allowing others to transparently see our problems, and accept the help we needed." Jen answered, "Juggling my job, kids, bills, running a household, preparing for TC visits, and cleaning up details of the mess he left behind when he went to TC." Sheila and Tracy indicated that financial problems was their greatest challenge.

Another question I asked was, "What was the greatest thing God did for you personally while your husband was a student?" Most of their answers involved trusting in God and drawing closer to Him. Paula responded, "Trust in God and don't be so dependant on my husband. I learned that God is with me every step. My HOPE is in Christ Jesus, not the circumstances in

life." Kaylynne stated, "He taught me to trust. I never wanted to give God the reigns to my life; I wanted to hold onto issues. I had no choice but to trust God to see us through Shawn's time at TC. Time and time again, He proved Himself worthy!" Jennifer expressed it this way: "He taught me that He is faithful, and He showed me in tangible ways how much He loved me. The financial stress we endured while Chris was at Teen Challenge was, as it turns out, a blessing. God was able to teach me complete dependence on Him for all things!"



Group Shot from Wives' Weekend, October, 2009

Concerning the greatest thing God did for her while her husband was at TC, Tracy said, "God allowed me to discover some issues of my own that I had not faced, but needed to deal with." Jen expressed herself this way: "He brought me into fellowship with the female staff at TC, and other women. I went from a believing and lukewarm Christian, to being catapulted into God's Bubble...and I cannot get out (I do not want to). I have gone so far I can never go back...my eyes are opened to things like never before. I have literally experienced Jesus' warm embrace, and cannot be convinced there is any other way than Him. I was an ember when Geoff started TC, and I am now an inferno for Christ. I cannot learn enough, or get enough of the Word of God...Praise the Lord!" Sheila praised God because, "He helped me get through half of my college career."

I want to thank Jen, Jennifer, Kaylynne, Paula, Tracy, and Sheila for responding to my request. I appreciate the candor with which they answered the questions. I know that their desire is to encourage and offer hope to current and future wives of Teen Challenge students.



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Mark Your Calendars!



These are special events at Teen Challenge, and the wives of students are invited. Please call ahead for information and reservations
(515) 674-3713 or (515) 988-2204

Valley Bank Teen Challenge Golf Marathon --- Sept. 20th
(Wives are invited only if they raise funds for Teen Challenge and golf. The goal is \$1,500 per golfer. Contact Judy for details.)
Fall Wives' Weekend --- October 22 – 24
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service --- December 24th
Winter Wives' Weekend --- January 21– 23, 2011