

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

A Relationship Building Weekend

An important part of the Teen Challenge ministry to our married students and their wives are the quarterly Wives' Weekends. These retreats are designed to instill hope, to teach, encourage and inspire. It's our hope that the marriages of our students and their wives are not only healed and restored, but they also grow and flourish. Wives' Weekends are vital times of relationship building. We pray that each person's relationship with God, their spouse, and their new friends will be strengthened each time they attend.

Our recent Summer Wives' Weekend was a wonderful time of God's blessing. Eight couples greatly enjoyed the ministry of our speakers Jeff and Lynn Arp. Jeff is the Director of Admissions for Teen Challenge of the Midlands, and Lynn is a nurse for Iowa Orthopedics. Married 26 years, they have two adult children, and have been in full time ministry since 1987.

The theme of Jeff and Lynn's teaching was "Relationships: Past, Present and Future." They taught about overcoming the past, serving God in the present, and going forward into the future. Personal experiences were woven into their teaching. In the first session, Jeff spoke about how the home we grew up in affects our relationship with God. He talked about the search for a father's love, how to be at peace with our Heavenly Father, and the importance of making peace with our past. In the second session, "Serving God in the Present," the couples were in separate sessions. Jeff spoke to the men about God's mandate for them being "spiritual leadership." Lynn spoke to the women on the subject of "Rocky Relationships with God," and letting go of past hurts. The third session was about moving forward into the future. Jeff stated

that "the restoration of the family is the key factor in the restoration of the Church and society." He warned about the devastation caused by having a contentious spirit, and urged us to pursue God and maturity in Him.



Lynn Arp teaching at our Summer Wives' Weekend.

One of the highlights of the weekend was a great service on Friday evening with worship and communion. The anointed ministry of Pastor Jeff and the worship team from Bethany New Life Christian Fellowship, provided a wonderful atmosphere for couples to receive prayer ministry and communion.

Another highlight of the weekend was an outing to Yellow Banks Park. After hot, humid weather and a rainy morning, clear sunny skies greeted us as we arrived at the park. The pretty wooded area, our large open shelter, and a refreshing breeze provided a great atmosphere for fun, fellowship, and a great meal together. The couples had plenty of time to take walks, play games, or just relax and visit.

On Sunday we traveled to Christian Life Assembly. We enjoyed a great time of worship and Pastor Warren Hunsberger's message on the subject of "Living Passionately" for God. When we live the life God created us to live, we will live a fulfilling life.

Our Fall Wives' Weekend is October 28 – 30. Our speakers will be our own staff members, Pastor Larry and Dixie Low. They will be doing counseling sessions, as well as teaching. The Lows have done several Wives' Weekends for us, and have been well received by our couples. Please RSVP by October 10 if you plan to attend. You may call me at (515) 988-2204, or email me at judyaubuchon@msn.com.

Hope in Christ

A year ago, I wrote my testimony because my husband had completed Teen Challenge. This year, I have the pleasure of writing to you because he graduated in June. A bit of our history: Shawn and I met when we were young. We had a whirlwind romance. We met in August and were married by the following March. I remember Shawn asking me one evening if I had accepted Christ as my personal Savior. I had grown up attending church, so I said yes. At the time, I didn't understand what that question truly meant.

Of course I knew he drank, but he was just 21 and I figured it was "normal." When he drank, he would drink a lot, but then he would go in stretches when he wouldn't drink at all. It seemed he was either addicted to God, or addicted to alcohol. It depended upon the day.

When we had been married a little over four years, I became pregnant with our first daughter. Shortly after I found out, Shawn was arrested for DUI. He had gone out for a couple of beers after work. Supposedly, a colleague jealous of Shawn's success at work, called ahead to have police watch for his truck. I wasn't happy about the DUI, and I was worried about his drinking, but I was newly pregnant and didn't know what to do.

Shawn's drinking slowed for awhile, but I'm sure he was also hiding it. When I was 8 months pregnant, Shawn didn't come home from work one night. I was frantic and angry. Where was he? Was he safe? What if I went into labor? It turns out he had been arrested again for DUI. This was even worse, since it was so close to the last arrest.

I was devastated. My parents encouraged me to kick Shawn out. I had a good job and insurance, and they would help me. His parents were begging me to stay. It was a dark time in our marriage. I did stay, and our daughter was born 3 weeks later. Dur-

ing most of my maternity leave, Shawn attended an out patient treatment. The night he finished, I remember telling him, "Do NOT put me through that again."

The next few years were a roller coaster. We bought a home, and had another child. Shawn continued to drink, and graduated from beer to whiskey in Diet Coke. It was easier to hide. We fought about his drinking. I thought it was a problem; he did not. He was again arrested for DUI in 2002. That time, he spent 3 weeks in jail. He began his time two weeks after I buried my father. We lied to some of our family and most of our friends by saying he was in Chicago for work.

Where was God in our lives at this time? Good question. We attended church and Bible studies. The days of Shawn not drinking when he was focusing on his relationship with Christ were over. He drank all the time. Outwardly, we looked like a typical family. I remember praying often for God to "fix" Shawn. Notice I was praying about Shawn, not my relationship with Christ, or the work that needed to be done in me. I was angry with God for not answering my prayers, and I questioned His authority, power, and love.

Our lives changed December 28, 2008 when Shawn was arrested for yet another DUI. This time, his mother, our two daughters and I witnessed the arrest. It happened right in front of our house. There was no hiding it this time! Shawn lost his job because he was arrested while driving a company vehicle. I feared we would lose our home.

Shawn's mentor and friend came to meet with us on New Year's Eve. He had volunteered at Teen Challenge and told Shawn about it. We discussed TC as an option. Ultimately, it became the only option for me. Shawn must commit to TC, or I was done with our marriage. I believed no 30-day

Hope in Christ, con't.

treatment program would rid Shawn of the demon that raged within him. In February, 2009 Shawn entered Teen Challenge. The next 12 months were difficult and life-changing for our entire family. While the Lord worked on my husband, He was also working on me. I learned I was depending on Shawn, and not the Lord. I looked to my husband for my self-worth and security. I did not trust God to provide for me in any way. I didn't believe He heard my prayers or that He even cared about me, much less loved me. Through prayer, Bible study, and sermons, the Lord gently broke down the barriers of my heart. He used our church, friends, and family to show me His love and provision. The blessings showered upon our family during Shawn's time at Teen Challenge were simply amazing!



The Christenson family at Shawn's Teen Challenge Graduation, June, 2011.

I would love to tell you that life after Teen Challenge is "happily ever after." In the book of John, Christ says, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But, take heart! I have overcome the world!" We are not perfect, our marriage isn't perfect, and our lives aren't perfect. I had become accustomed to running our household. Our daughters and I were used to a "girls only" household. We had our own routines and way of living. When Shawn came home, we had to learn to be a family again. I had to allow Shawn to be the head of our household and submit to my husband. The girls had to listen to Dad, and adjust to having two parents in the house again. It was important to remember that God is always with us, and He has a plan for our lives. He restored our family for a purpose. He saw us through our time apart, and He will walk with us as we grow together.

As time has passed with Shawn home, it's been important not to fall back into old patterns. We must keep the lessons He taught us in the forefront of our minds. For me, the most important lesson is to trust Him. In Isaiah 26, God promises to keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast in Him, because they trust in Him. That was the biggest lesson I learned during our time in Teen Challenge, and it still applies. I

must remember that He calls me to sit quietly with Him. It's easy for me to get caught up in daily life, and not put Christ at the center. He showed me so clearly how much He blesses me when I live for Him, and put Him first. It's embarrassing to admit that I need to be reminded to do so. By the same token, I often need to remind myself how blessed we are that He did not forsake

us and that He restored our family. I need to not become so caught up in my daily life that I allow my husband and our marriage to become low on my priority list. In 1 John 4, God reminds us to love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. As I grow in my love of Christ, I will also grow in my love of my husband.

I'm so thankful to be able to share our story with you. Shawn and I both believe God led us through these trials so that we may share His healing, redemptive love with others. He will use our story to bring hope to others. "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light." ~Ephesians 5:8.



900 N. League Rd.

P.O. Box 185

Colfax, IA 50054

Phone: 515.988-2204

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. Please call ahead for information and reservations. (515) 674-3713 or (515) 988-2204.



Fall Wives' Weekend –

October 28th – 30th

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service –

December 24th

Winter Wives' Weekend –

January 27th – 29th

