

In This Issue:

▲ **Enhancing Marriages and Sharing the Gospel, Too!**

Promoting and developing healthy marriages is one of the greatest challenges pastors and church leaders face. Many churches are beginning to address this issue through the utilization of "Marriage Coaches."

▲ **It Was the Best of Times.** Mark Hoeffner's sabbatical provided the opportunity for his family to connect the key life elements of family, home, community, church, school and ministry.

▲ **It Was the Worst of Times.** Mark's sabbatical ended with him being unreachable at a time when his daughter was diagnosed with a serious medical condition.

(Remember all our present and past articles and many other helps are on our web page.)

**Two places
for pastors to
rest, relax, refocus,
rejoice, and renew:**

Camp Tadmor's Lake House

Free to pastors and their families.
Call Jeremy at 541-451-4270 to schedule.

Shepherd's Rest

Call 360-666-9703 for more information or to schedule, or visit www.shepherdsrest.org. This ministry is free to pastors and their spouses.

**Insight on the web:
www.cbnw.org/insight**

Enhancing Marriages and Sharing the Gospel, Too!

by Al Ray

A newlywed says, "My husband wants to be the spiritual leader in our home. We are going to church and praying together – for the first time!" A young couple commits their lives to Christ and are baptized. A teenage son stands up in church and thanks God for bringing his family back together. A young husband and father turns his life over to Christ and serves on a mission team to New Orleans. All of them attribute their changed lives to MarriageTeam coaching.

Promoting and developing healthy marriages is one of the greatest challenges pastors and church leaders face. Many churches are beginning to address this issue through the utilization of "Marriage Coaches."

Most churches have couples willing to serve as coaches and they also have couples who need coaching. Laurelwood Pastor Mike Wilde explains, "It is great to have a cadre of trained MarriageTeam coaches who can help couples in need. I regularly refer couples in our congregation for both premarital and marriage coaching. I have seen some remarkable results. Not only does this ministry bless our couples who receive the coaching but it also benefits our coach couples. And it gives me the ability to refer couples who need help so I can focus on other issues affecting our church."

MarriageTeam began as a ministry at Laurelwood Baptist church before becoming an independent non-profit. MarriageTeam equips Christian lay couples to serve the Lord as coaches by giving them the skills and materials they need to be effective. The vision is to have Christian coaches throughout the Northwest who can help couples in their local area.

As a relationship develops between coaches and their couples, coaches can share their faith and invite non-churched couples to church. This provides an effective outreach as couples, struggling in their relationships, gain new skills and improved marriages. As founders of MarriageTeam, my wife Autumn and I ask potential coaches, "How many times have you listened to someone in despair over his or her marriage relationship and wished you could help?" It had happened to us and provided the motivation to begin this ministry.

Autumn explains, "It really isn't difficult to become coaches. Couples in good relationships easily learn the necessary skills and material in the 26-hour training program. Couples, who complete the training, report an immediate improvement in their own relationships that they can model for others."

In one coach training session, a participant commented that "the coaching zeroed in on our own issues. We received more in 20 minutes than we did from several weeks with a professional counselor." Pastor Tom Schiave, who completed the training program with his wife, said, "The training hit on every important topic and provided extremely helpful tools. It's the best material I have seen." ▲

More information on page 4



It Was the Best of Times

By Mark Hoeffner

Serving Christ in vocational ministry for the last twenty-eight years is something for which I will always be thankful. Even so, one of the greatest gifts I have ever received is my three-month sabbatical leave from the CB Northwest trustee board.

The extended time with my wife, seven children, two grandchildren and parents has been truly wonderful. Camping, fishing, enjoying the family ranch, helping my eldest son and daughter-in-law move into their first home and putting in a hardwood floor has been a restful change from my daily responsibilities at CB Northwest.

I will always be indebted to Luke, Dave and my staff at the office who worked twice as hard in my absence.

The Board's purpose in providing this sabbatical was to bless and honor me and to give a time of respite with my extended family. However, only a few days into the sabbatical, Janell and I discovered we needed to "connect the dots." Family, home, community, church, school and ministry were all a part of our family routine. Yet over the last seven years of ministry, these six elements had become disconnected from one another, making each aspect an entity unto itself. That disconnect of key life elements can wear out a family. It also erodes the foundation from which we share Christ to lost individuals who appear in the margins only when these elements converge.

For an example of such convergence, kids at my girls' school were connected in community through 4-H, and that led to my sharing Christ at the county fair to some of their dads. Another example was our family helping another family in our church brand calves. This allowed both of our families to share Christ with a third family who happens to like going to brandings. When connected, family, church and community lead to the opportunity of sharing Christ with others.

Very early into the sabbatical, God was making it clear to Janell and me that we needed to connect as many of the six elements as we could. That connection was not only to renew our strength as a family unit but also to reinforce the life paradigm of being a missional family.

However, knowing you need to connect the dots of key family elements and actually doing it are two different things. The need to connect these elements became the spiritual journey of my sabbatical. When all was said and done, it required a change of residence, a change of schools, and establishing ourselves in our home church. By having our family, home, community, church and school connected, our family ministry will be salt and light to those we contact in the margins, along with other families from our church.

I pray and believe that with a stronger family foundation under us, I will be a better leader at CB Northwest. And my family will be a better example of the life paradigm we so deeply believe in.

My sabbatical ended in a fourteen-day moose hunt in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska with a good friend. Lo and behold, I was given the awesome privilege of sharing Christ with a man who came along with us while I was harvesting my moose. What a wonderful way to finish a three-month sabbatical! Rafting 128 miles down an Arctic river, harvesting a 55 ¼ inch moose, and talking to a man who is seeking Christ.

It was the best of times. 🌲



It Was the Worst of Times

by Mark Hoeffner

My sabbatical ended with a fourteen-day Arctic moose hunt in which I not only bagged my moose but also shared Christ with a man who came along. That's not a bad way to finish. At least that is what I thought when the last plane dropped us and our gear in Fairbanks, Alaska. I couldn't wait to call my wife and family and share the story of the wonderful experience I had in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I was so pleased with all that God had allowed us to experience.

However, when I placed the call, my wife's cell phone didn't ring in our home but in a hospital where Janell was having one of the darkest moments a parent can have – finding out that our 14-year-old daughter, Mary Ellen, has a very serious medical condition that is draining the very life and strength from her.

The emotional upheaval I went through over the news Janell had to share with me on that phone call reduced me to tears. My worst fear was being realized, the fear that I would be gone and unreachable at a time when my family needed me most, and that my wife would have to carry the pain of suffering alone. At the very time God was giving me one of my best life experiences, my wife and daughter were enduring their worst life experience.

As I boarded the plane to return to my family, my head and heart were trying to reconcile all of these experiences with what I know to be true from God's Word. In these times of deep sorrow, fear, and uncertainty, God the Holy Spirit makes more real that God the Father is the Father of all mercy and comfort.

Experiencing God's mercy and comfort prepared me to be an agent of mercy and care to my wife and daughter. Just as God ministered to me in my pain, I found Him ministering through me to my family in their pain.

As that ministry to my wife and daughter was taking place, the most wonderful thing happened. What God was doing in and through me by the Holy Spirit, He was doing in and through my wife and daughter. The very same things I was giving away to them, they were giving to me.

As the words of Christ, in all their richness, began to live in each of our hearts, His wisdom continued to teach and counsel; comfort and give patience; and knit our hearts together in peace.

After many months of my daughter living with this life-altering condition, there are still moments of deep sorrow, fear and uncertainty. Yet, under all of that is the abiding peace and comfort that comes from experiencing this journey together as a family. We travel on with God's Spirit abiding within us all.

I'm back to work now – realizing that my sabbatical ended much like it began - there is nothing new under the sun. There is a time to work, and a time to rest, a time to rejoice and a time to cry. However, no matter what the time is, we will glorify the Lord who is the one who knows all our times and seasons. 🙏

2008 Youth Workers' Retreat

april 13-15

camp tadmor

\$45/person

church community ~ premier training ~ soul care ~ rest

We invite you to join with fellow youth workers for a time of connection, training, prayer and rest. Bill Clem, from Mars Hill Church in Seattle, will take us through the topic of Bible Storying.

For more information and to register, go to www.cbnw.org/evens/ywr or call 503-405-1531.



PO Box 30029
Portland, OR 97294-3029

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Fairview, OR
Permit No. 2562

MarriageTeam Leadership

For additional information on how to start a MarriageTeam at your church go to www.marriageteam.org, call 360-450-6042 or send an e-mail to info@marriageteam.org.

Al Ray is retired from the U.S. Air Force. In his last assignment, he led the ROTC program at the University of Portland. He was the training and organizational development manager for Multnomah County until leaving in April 2007 to become the Executive Director of MarriageTeam. He has a bachelor's in mechanical engineering and a master's degree in counseling and human development. Autumn Ray is a graduate of Excelsior College with a degree in General Studies that focuses on social work. She manages the Multnomah County community justice volunteer program and is a past president of the Northern Oregon Volunteer Administrators Association. During the past six years, the Rays have trained more than 85 coach couples representing 18 different churches. The Rays have been married for 37 years.

