

Loon Area Christian Ministry

October—November—December, 2011

Personal Note from Skip

It was a fairly relaxing summer with only three weddings instead of the usual six or last year's nine. With each wedding consuming about twenty hours of my time, that translates into an extra 120 hours over last year, a significant decrease in the stress of the season and more time to visit with mountain employees.

Weddings are one of the most enjoyable parts of my ministry. It's not just the ceremony itself, but the chance to get to know the couple during the required four pre-marital counseling sessions. These sessions, based on the results of a computerized survey of their relationship and personalities, often produce close (albeit temporary) relationships with those I marry..

It's amazing how much most couples don't know about each other—the different ways we operate and our differing needs as men and women. Men assume women think like they do, and women assume men can communicate like they do, and both assumptions set them up for conflicts and misunderstandings. One of the most enjoyable contributions I make is to help them see that their differing needs are gender-related, and not the product of a woman's insecurity or a man's pig-headedness. It's really gratifying to see the light bulbs go on and the “ohhhhhh”s of recognition that follow. My own marital failures before Joyce provide some enlightening (and amusing) examples of what to do and what not to do, as well as giving me the opportunity to further redeem that painful past. Occasionally the friendships that are formed continue beyond the cutting of the cake. One out-of-state couple makes it a point of returning every year in August to celebrate their anniversary. They'll give me a call and we'll get together at a local restaurant for lunch, one of the highlights of my summer. This past summer they even changed the route of their motorcycle trip so we could get together. Awhile back they were going through some difficult times and I was able to contribute to their reconciliation. It's happened on more than one occasion. I wish I could say that every couple I've worked with had such a story-book ending, but none of us have been so fortunate.

This past month I've been touched by the thoughtfulness of two couples I married—one ten years ago and another just last year. I got a call from the thrift store

(my office is at the other end of the mall) saying that a lady I married ten years ago wanted to see me. Uh-oh, I thought to myself, trouble. I steeled myself for whatever story of marital disharmony I was going to hear and walked over to the store. Much to my surprise, the wife—her three young sons in tow—explained:

“It's our tenth anniversary today, and last night we were looking at the wedding video.”

“You looked a lot younger then,” piped up the eight-year-old,

“and so did you,” I responded. She continued:

“My husband and I still talk about our sessions together and I just wanted to thank-you,” she said, giving me a hug.

A week later I got a call from a couple I married last summer. They were in the area and had dropped by my office in the morning to see if I was around. I wasn't, and he was now calling a few hours later to see if we could set up a meeting. I gave him a date and he responded with a “I'll check with the wife and get back to you.” When I didn't hear back I started to worry. I called and left a message on his phone and emailed her. Still no news. A few weeks later I was thinking about them again and sent her another email, asking if they were okay.

“Sorry not to get back to you sooner,” she responded.

“Thanks for your concern, but everything's great. I'm pregnant and we just wanted to share the good news with you.”

The groom was one of the few I've been able to lead to Christ during our meetings, so it was good news on more than one front.

From the better half (a/k/a Joyce)

One year and nine months until retirement! (Skip's line is: “One year, nine months and three days, but who's counting?”) We're looking forward to moving to the Bangor, Maine area to be closer to our daughters and grandsons. I'm not sure what is in store for me after we move. I'd like to continue to make and sell jewelry but I think those options will be limited in that area. I'll probably get a part time job and do my jewelry on the side, so don't be surprised if you walk into the Bangor

Walmart and a little old lady who looks just like me greets you with a cheery “welcome to Walmart!”

Of course having more time to spend with our adult children and our grandsons will be wonderful. Skip will continue his writing, having finished his book by then (I'm an optimist), and we've even found a church we're looking forward to attending.

The summer season is winding down for us and then we will have some R&R for two weeks. We're heading west to attend the Resort and Leisure Ministries Conference in Las Vegas. We'll also be visiting long-time friends John and Janet Livoti who recently moved to AZ as well as Skip's sisters Christie in New Mexico and Lynette in CA. In addition, Skip has re-connected with the gang he ran around with in grade school and they're looking forward to a reunion of sorts--Skip thought it would be a nice thing to do every fifty years. We're looking forward to catching up with everyone and seeing more of this beautiful country.

"The Book"

It was depressing. I had just spent another several hours trying to fix a laptop donated to our thrift store only to be frustrated by one problem after another. While far from a pro at this kind of work, I do enjoy it, but I seem to have met my match in this one. I started the day hoping to finish it, and went home discouraged that I hadn't. The thing that bothered me most was spending time on this computer that could have been more productively spent on “the book.” Those frustrations however, may have just turned out to be a watershed experience. Determined not to let such a waste occur again (it had already happened another two times in as many weeks) that evening I sat down and mapped out the next day's responsibilities, allotting the time I wanted to each. That computer got one hour and three were earmarked for writing. It worked! While not every day will so readily lend itself to such scheduling, many will, so I'm optimistic about what this will mean for the future and for the book.

At present I'm finishing up with subject number two, and have already started on my third person, Brad Lartigue from Big Sky, MT, the “shredder Chaplain” as he's called in those parts.

Successor?

The Lord appears to have provided someone to take over when I leave, and the more I find out about him, the more grateful I am. In fact, after our last email exchange, I found myself thinking that he was a better fit for this place than I am. He's a Bible School graduate, his father is a lay pastor, and he's presently working as the person in charge of recreational programs and retreats at a Christian Camp in New England after being instrumental in growing the camp to where it now sees over 2000 campers a year. He and his

wife and three children visited us in August and he and his wife are coming for a return visit the weekend before this Christmas. Our hope is that they'll move to the area next fall when he'll secure a full time position at Loon, hopefully on the ski patrol, follow me around on Sundays and get to know the place and the people, then take over upon our retirement the end of June, 2013.

Loon Mountain

Some of you may have seen newsreel photos of the damage to the main bridge leading to Loon Mountain. We're presently having to use a local road instead of the highway to get to the mountain, but they're planning on having a two-lane “Bailey Bridge” (think portable metal bridges used in wartime) ready for Loon's opening in November. These temporary bridges will get us through the winter and the bridge will be permanently repaired in the spring.

For the past thirteen years, I've been a part of Loon's Ambassador program, a volunteer auxiliary to the ski patrol that helps with customer service and on-hill safety. We man the tops of lifts to help those who fall, patrol areas where people need to go slow, and help out at accident scenes and with sweep at the end of the day. The program has ended and been replaced this year with a smaller “Loon Mountain Host” program that will concentrate on greeting and helping weekend guests in the base areas instead of on the hill. Since my Sundays and half of my Saturdays are taken up, I'm not sure if I'll be able to have enough days available to participate. Either way, I'll still be following up on our ambulated accident victims and helping out in other ways.

Summer Services

Our services have been going well, with attendance running close to the normal 70 (excluding rain days). One of the greatest blessings this summer have been the solicited stories of how God has been at work in the lives of those who are worshipping with us. Several have shared how Christ has delivered them from alcohol and drug addictions. One woman asked for prayers for their marriage, which they were hoping to restore. Several shared almost miraculous answers to prayer. Most recently a woman told of experiencing a delayed anaphylactic shock (a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction) and driving herself to the hospital at break-neck speeds to get there before she was unable to breathe at all. At a stoplight near the hospital, she felt God telling her to get out of the car. She did and fell to the pavement. Two young men dressed in jeans and t-shirts appeared, said “we've got to get you to the ER” and walked her the short distance to the hospital, her arms over the shoulders of each. When they got her inside, the last thing she heard before passing out were

the words “we’re losing her.”

Fortunately, they didn’t. The next day as she was on her way out, she stopped to express her appreciation to the nursing staff in the emergency room and happened to mention how grateful she was that those two young men came to her rescue. One of the nurses looked at her quizzically and said: “I was there when you came in. There was nobody with you. What I did notice however, was that you were holding your arms in the strangest ways.”

Finances

While things are tight, we’ve been able to reduce our expenses so that they’re not critical. The generosity of those who attend our services plus the unexpected and occasional large gifts that usually arrive just when we need them, have made the difference .

January-September, 2011

<u>Income Sources</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Received</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Donations	20,250	17,059	-3,191
Thrift Shop	42,300	34,960	-7,340
Real Estate	<u>16,425</u>	<u>20,472</u>	<u>4,047</u>
Totals	78,975	72,391	-6,584

Across the Desk. . .

From Men of Integrity 11/28/08

Key Bible Verse: O Lord my God . . . Your plans for us are too numerous to list. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them (Psalm 40:5). Bonus Reading: [Psalm 16:1-11](#)

I don't expect to ever again make the kind of money I made playing baseball, or receive the acclaim I received as a major-league pitcher. God's idea of prosperity for us goes much deeper. He wants us to prosper in our relationships—in our families, with others, and ultimately with him.

That's why last Thanksgiving, when I sat down to make a list of the ways God had blessed me, I came up with a strange list, including a bad marriage; infertility; my drinking problem; Christine's broken neck; the end of my baseball career; and four [adopted] special-needs children, including [Nicole,] a brain-damaged, one-handed little girl who may or may not ever be potty-trained, say "I love you," or call me Daddy. I can honestly say I'm thankful for those things because

each has played a major role in drawing me closer to the Lord. Take Nicole. She throws her arms wide in joyous welcome whenever she sees me across the room, and clings tightly to me when I hold her. Her unconditional love challenges me every day. She's like an angel in the midst of our family, modeling God's perfect, abundant love.

Tim Burke, in Major League Dad

Oswald Chambers “My Utmost for His Highest”
May 1 Faith— Not Emotion

We walk by faith, not by sight —2 Corinthians 5:7

For a while, we are fully aware of God’s concern for us. But then, when God begins to use us in His work, we begin to take on a pitiful look and talk only of our trials and difficulties. And all the while God is trying to make us do our work as hidden people who are not in the spotlight. None of us would be hidden spiritually if we could help it. Can we do our work when it seems that God has sealed up heaven? Some of us always want to be brightly illuminated saints with golden halos and with the continual glow of inspiration, and to have other saints of God dealing with us all the time. A self-assured saint is of no value to God. He is abnormal, unfit for daily life, and completely unlike God. We are here, not as immature angels, but as men and women, to do the work of this world. And we are to do it with an infinitely greater power to withstand the struggle because we have been born from above.

If we continually try to bring back those exceptional moments of inspiration, it is a sign that it is not God we want. We are becoming obsessed with the moments when God did come and speak with us, and we are insisting that He do it again. But what God wants us to do is to "walk by faith." How many of us have set ourselves aside as if to say, "I cannot do anything else until God appears to me"? He will never do it. We will have to get up on our own, without any inspiration and without any sudden touch from God. Then comes our surprise and we find ourselves exclaiming, "Why, He was there all the time, and I never knew it!" Never live for those exceptional moments— they are surprises. God will give us His touches of inspiration only when He sees that we are not in danger of being led away by them. We must never consider our moments of inspiration as the standard way of life— our work is our standard.