

THE CONTACT

aflc youth worker's newsletter

Fall 2008





COFFEE SHOP

What If

by Leah Waldie

Pipestone, MN

What if thoughts, however harmless they may seem, have the potential to immobilize us with fear and anxiety, and keep us from trusting in the One who can provide comfort. I would like to share my own recent experience with a case of the *what ifs* that surfaced after I experienced a miscarriage. I pray that the biblical truths God used to help me deal with my *what ifs* will be an encouragement and blessing to you in whatever difficulties you face in life.

The first series of *what ifs* centered on the following topic: What if I did something to cause the miscarriage? I was blessed to see a doctor who explained that most miscarriages are due to chromosomal abnormalities, which cannot be prevented. Several books informed me that the miscarriage was not my fault. However, there were still those nagging doubts. What if I exercised too hard? What about those two sessions in the hot tub? But God says, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). In this verse, God tells us that we will experience difficult, painful things in life. This does not mean that we caused these things to happen. Events such as miscarriage are a byproduct of living in a fallen world tainted by Satan and the decay of sin. However, God gives us hope in that He has overcome this sinful world, and that one day we will live with Him in a place free from troubles.

The second *what if* I experienced was, what if the pain never goes away? After the initial onslaught of emotions, my feelings began to settle down, and I thought I was going to be just fine. Then I would be walking through the aisle of a grocery store and spot a pregnant woman, or eating at a restaurant filled with families with their smiling babies and children... and the feelings would come flooding back. I would spend the next few hours in a gloomy mood, withdrawing from others, crying in my room, surrounded by memories of what could have been. Would this pain ever subside? God answers: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles." (2 Corinthians 1:3). God does not say that He will take away our pain. We may have to live the rest of our lives with the sting of a broken dream or loss of a loved one, but we can fall into the arms of our Heavenly Father, who promises to comfort us in *all* our troubles. The God who sacrificed His only Son out of love for you, beckons you to turn to Him for comfort during your darkest times in life.

The third and final area of *what ifs* concerned the future: What if it happens again? What if I'll never be able to have children? Would I be able to handle having another miscarriage? Even though the odds are in my favor, there is no guarantee the second time around. Am I willing to chance it happening again? There is also the possibility that, for whatever reason, I may never be able to have my own children. I couldn't imagine giving up that privilege and blessing in life. However, like David, "I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust." (Psalm 91:2). Difficult circumstances and events really test our faith. Are we willing to trust God, even when we are hurt, broken, and the world seems to be against us? The Lord can be trusted, because He is truth and love, and He works all things for our good (Romans 8:38). Difficult times also force us to see where our priorities truly lie. "You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3). Even good things, like wanting to have a child, can become a god to us. Sometimes, like Abraham was with Isaac, we are called to surrender something that is precious to us. The process of surrender can be extremely painful, but through it we lift God up to His rightful place in our lives, and are drawn into a closer, deeper relationship with Him.

In the end, no matter what situation you personally face, *what ifs* can only be conquered through trust in God. As Christians who cling to the truth of God's Word, we can know that although we will experience tribulations in a fallen world, we have a God whom we can trust in completely to provide comfort, peace, and ultimately, salvation.

speakers

dave & rennie garda

www.cadreministries.com

afic youth ministries proudly welcomes
dave and rennie garda back for another
fantastic weekend at the 2009 youth
worker's retreat

what you should know about dave &
rennie: they love helping people be
successful in this life on earth and
with their journey with Jesus



friday night

process

saturday

evangelism is relationships
sessions

- 1 - INTERCEDE
- 2 - INVEST
- 3 - INTERSECT
- 4 - INVITE

location

the ARC

2372 30th Ave

Osceola WI 54020

website for more details
youth.afic.org

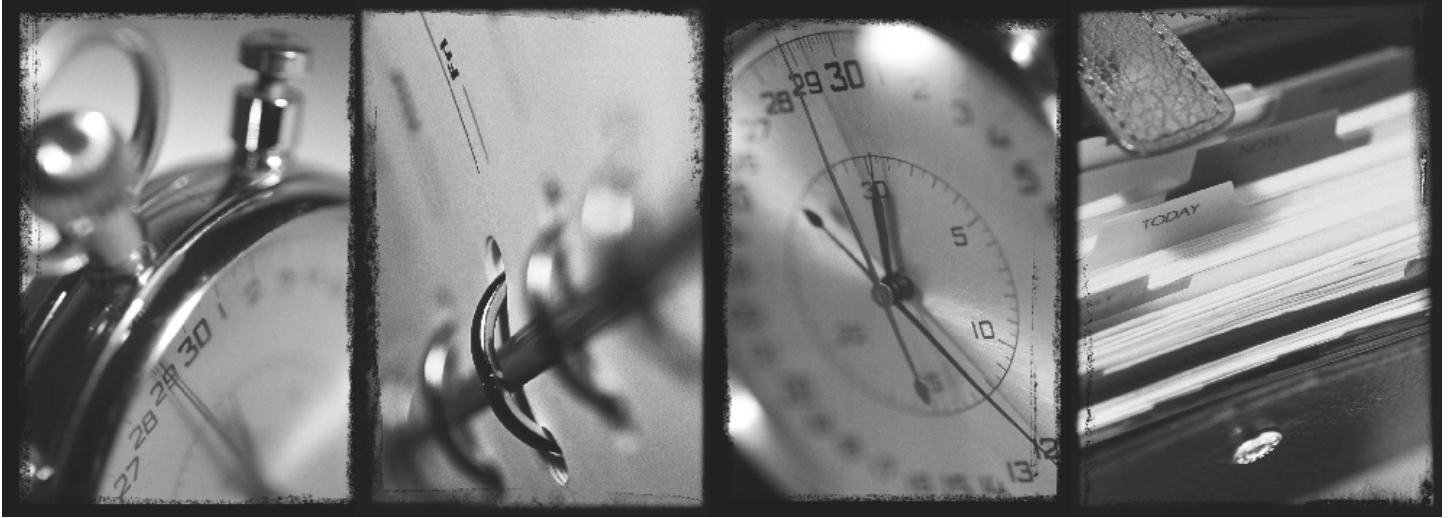


YOUTH WORKERS RETREAT

youth worker's retreat
January 23-25, 2009



REFERENCE ROOM



Time Management for a Christian

by Dan Gutterud

Fosston, MN

Always on top of things. Prepared for every situation. Every minute of the day is scheduled out, and that schedule is strictly followed. The daily planner is referenced so frequently throughout the day that a replacement is needed due to its poor shape. Am I describing myself? Absolutely not. If I am describing you, wow, that is impressive. What about the rest of us? What can be done for those of us in need of help with juggling all of the responsibilities and tasks of our busy lives? Good question.

Here is my situation. As the father of never-tiring boys, ages 2 and 4 (with my wife expecting again in December), an elementary school teacher of 26 active 8- and 9-year-olds, a high school baseball coach of 15 senior high boys, and as a student in a master's degree program, images of my daily life would illustrate how not to manage time successfully. Many of those images play out each day in my real-life. How is living a successful life possible with if you have days that seem busy enough to forget what a chair feels like, or even a bed?

The answer comes from God. Without His support, nothing is possible. From Matthew 6:33, we are reminded to ... "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Relax. Take a deep breath, and evaluate what is on your plate now. I am quite sure what I consider to be busy in my life is probably only a fraction of the busyness in your life.

Managing your time is stressful. It is not a sin to be concerned with your work and daily responsibilities, yet they should not consume your life and your time. By looking at the actions of Jesus, we can all learn how to manage time in a godly way. We are expected, by God, to use our minds so that we will use our time appropriately. Through our strength, given by God, we are to make the most of each moment, not dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. We are to make peace with God for our sinful pasts and trust in Him with our future. It is necessary to carry this message forward as we consider how to manage our time more effectively. Jesus has a plan for each of us. Paul explains this in Ephesians 5:15-17, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

It is necessary to develop our weekly schedules, but only through the guidance of God. If everything is fine with the constant juggling in your life, well done. If, not, here are some suggestions to get where you want to be in order to help make the most of your days.

Put God first. Start each day with Him as you study His word in the Bible. If you are concerned about a mountain of responsibilities, ask God for direction. He will lead you and will not give you more than you can handle. Pray. Seek wisdom concerning what

He wants you to do during the week. Write down what comes to mind.

Develop a schedule. Dr. Robert H. Schuller said, “Spectacular achievement is always preceded by unspectacular preparation.” Even if you are not wishing to do anything spectacular, everything starts with a plan. Keep in mind that the best laid plans are sure to be broken. Yet, without a vision of what may be in store, nothing is possible. Create a list of the events in your life that are set in stone. Write down the times for work, meetings, family activities, Bible studies, church services, etc. Then you are able to see what time is available for everything else in your life. Schedule other events and tasks around those times that cannot or should not be changed.

Exercise and eat well. There is no doubt that we make time for the things we want to do, but neglect other things that are important to our health. How effective are you when you are sick? Well then, investing in your body is a wise investment. Regular aerobic exercise will lead to greater endurance and mental sharpness. Plus, it is a huge stress reliever. After a good workout, you will feel recharged and ready with confidence for the rest of your day. Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). Heart, mind, and strength. Sounds like exercise fits into this requirement quite nicely. You only have one body, so use it, keep it fit, and watch what you put into it. Pizza, chocolate chip cookies, and Doritos taste great, especially when accompanied by an ice cold Coke, but none of these really fit into the plan of exercising and eating well.

Saying “no” is not a sin. Trying to do too much can often be a bigger source of stress because you are heaping more unfinished tasks onto your plate. Saying “no” does not mean you are not a Christian. God does not put pressure on you to do more than you are able, but He prepares and equips you for the work done according to His will.

Check it off your list. Develop a list of your responsibilities and tasks. Don’t trust your bad memory. More stress will usually be the result, along with wasted time later. Develop a list each day of your tasks to be completed, either using a computer

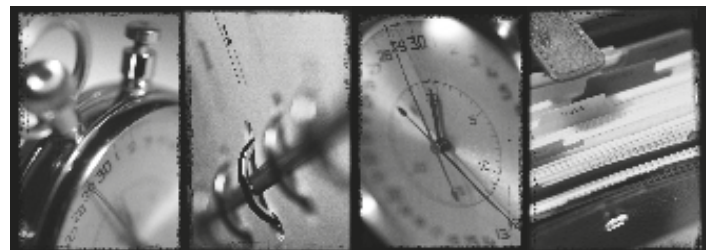
scheduling program or the old-fashioned pencil and paper type. Complete small tasks as quickly as possible in order to cross them off your list. Don’t waste time being forgetful.

Avoid distractions. Remain disciplined in sticking to your schedule. Following the completion of your work is a much better time to track the progress of your favorite sports team online or scan the channels on the TV. E-mail? Check it later even if you notice that a new message has been received.

Sleep. Without taking care of your physical self, you will be asking for trouble. “In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat, for he grants sleep to those he loves” (Psalm 127:2). God does not expect you to operate outside of your human limitations. You need a certain amount of sleep. Without it, you will not function properly, and bad things will result.

Christians fail at time management because we are forced to reflect and begin the process of self-improvement. Many think that simply having a relationship with Jesus is enough to become a better person. However, the Bible is clear that we have to make a real effort to become productive. It is nearly impossible to become more productive without making a commitment to improving time management abilities. Pray first then plan. God will lift you up to do work in His name.

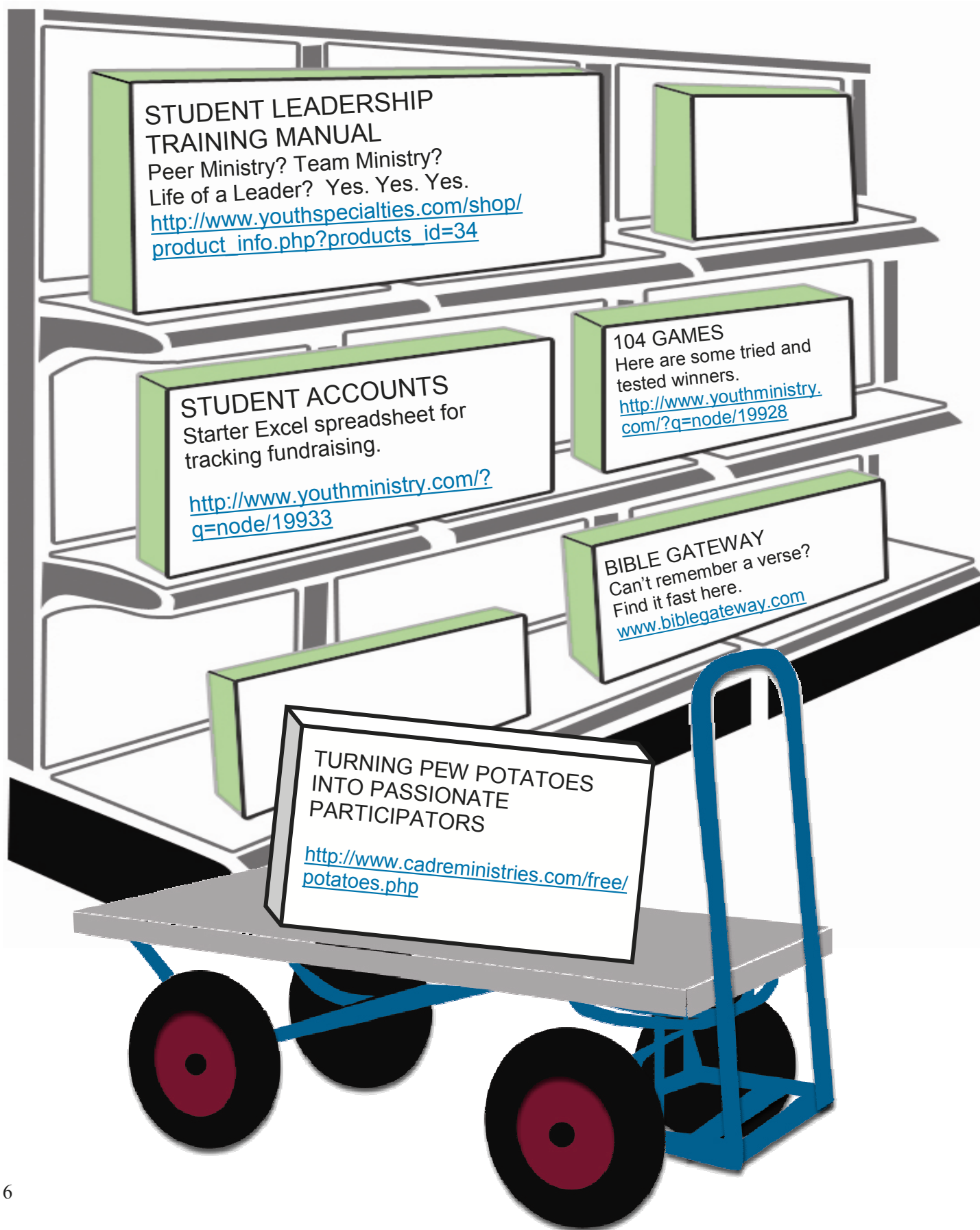
In a personal confession, it has taken me a couple weeks to finish this article. The Twins have been battling to get into the baseball playoffs, and I have decided to spend time with my boys rather than work. I need to have a life too (yes, I am easily distracted). It’s late now and time to get some sleep. Tomorrow is a busy day, and I need plenty of rest to prepare for it. ❖





CONVENIENCE STORE

by Pastor Jason Holt





URGENT CARE

by Pastor Jason Holt

Saint Michael, MN

“Caleb is bleeding on top of his head!”

My wife Jennifer’s voice was gripped with the reality of her own words. A playground accident had left our then 10 year-old son with a matted mess on his crown. I ushered him to our vehicle and we were off to get help.

We were given word from others at the playground about the nearest location for an Urgent Care. We walked in and the doctor on-call was abrupt. Taking one look at him, she replied, “You need to go to an ER.”

Not the most comforting words I have ever heard. Apparently this type of clinic was set up for coughs, colds, and bloodless scrapes. Blood here equaled referral.

As I drove to the ER, I wondered why a clinic would pass over such a slight injury. My son needed assistance. This searching for the next place was crazy!

The ER staff brought us into an exam room upon check-in. The medical personnel began to examine him and my breath was taken away. It turns out that what I identified as a small poke hole was actually a very different laceration. What I thought through the red and brown matted hair was a scrape the ER team found a cut that exceeded one inch in length and was almost as deep. My speedy analysis was seriously lacking.

I wonder today if that happens to youth workers like you and me with our hearts. We move through the laundry list of activities only to pause long enough on our own heart to say, “I’m good.”

Are you? Are you doing OK?

This column is entitled “Urgent Care”, because I am convinced from Scripture that we need to be active in allowing Jesus to flourish in our hearts. It is both an immediate and an on-going concern.

A number of years ago a prominent speaker and teacher in youth ministry related in a small group training setting that he had a season in his ministry of deep darkness. The ministry was humming. Teenagers were coming to Christ. The Youth Group was growing. Disciples were developing by God’s Word and His Spirit. But this youth leader’s own heart was not healthy. He was doing the right things with the wrong heart.

How is your heart today?

Ezekiel 36 has a powerful message of how the Lord works in the hearts of His people. But I am turning your attention to earlier in the book. In Ezekiel 11:19, the imagery of God’s heart transplant is given with a varied emphasis:

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. (NAS)

The Lord reminds us to never take lightly little holes in our hearts. His gift is an undivided heart. As I misjudged my son’s injury, may we avoid the devastating miscue of being divided in our pursuits. Our Savior knows you and His heart for you has no limits!

The Contact

E-mail: youth@aflc.org
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The Contact is published twice a year to encourage and engage youth workers of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. We are here to assist in making disciples!

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UPCOMING EVENTS

January 23-25, 2009

Date Change!

Youth Worker's Retreat
ARC, Osceola, WI

February 6-8, 2009

SideXSide
ARC, Osceola, WI
www.arc-aflc.com

March 20-22, 2009

Spring Campus Days
AFLBS
www.aflbs.org

June 5-27, 2009

Student Missions Trip
Uganda, Africa

July 6-11, 2009

FLY Convention
Estes Park, CO

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THE CONTACT

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