

LOOK WHAT'S INSIDE:

LAST LAUGH

RELATIONSHIPS

NCF IN ACTION

MENTAL HEALTH NEWS

When Love is Waiting

by Esther M. Bailey

Occasionally an entire community is shocked to discover that an assumed pauper died and left a fortune behind. He failed to use the incredible resources he had and robbed himself of the comforts of life and maybe even hastened his death.

Few of us would do this with our money, but surprisingly many do the same thing with our relationships. We live at the poverty level when we have resources for a much richer relationship. There is a great deal of love present but for some reason it remains unexpressed or unrecognized and is consequently of little value. Many marriage partners, for example, suffer pangs of loneliness because their spouses don't warmly express their love and affection in ways they desire or need. And many children grow up feeling unloved because one or both parents failed to express their caring in ways the children understood. There is a gap between one person's love and the other person's ability or willingness to express it in ways that are easily received and understood.

When that happens a wife may say to her husband, "If you loved me, you would spend more time at home instead of working so much at the office." And a teenager may say to Dad, "All you ever give me is money.

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Helping Teenagers Deal With Peer Pressure

by Robert L. Whitcomb, Psy.D.

Carol cried softly as she sat transfixed before her daughter's open diary. She hadn't meant to be snooping, but the diary seemed to beckon her as it lay unlocked on Kaitlyn's desk. At first she talked herself out of reading it, telling herself that 15-year-olds need their privacy. Then curiosity got the better of her. She recalled how Kaitlyn seemed so different recently and hoped the diary would give her clues to understand her daughter's changes. Unfortunately, she wasn't ready for what she read. It took her breath away and made her nauseous.

Kaitlyn had engaged in group sexual practices, apparently looking for acceptance from her peer group.

As she slowly regained her senses, Carol wondered what had happened to her daughter and the considerable efforts she invested to raise her children to become committed Christian men and women. She hoped her children would have a better home life than she did and tried to protect them from the profound injury she had suffered while growing up. But she wondered if Kaitlyn still felt the pain of the divorce. She knew the loss of her father would be difficult and

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Carol had tried to help her grieve, but perhaps the grief remained.

Carol's eyes were hypnotically drawn to the words over and over again as she grasped at understanding. She knew Kaitlyn had a difficult time after they moved from New Jersey the previous year. She must have been profoundly desperate for friends in order to violate her moral values so completely. Perhaps she was trying to fill the void created by her absent father. And she surely must have felt very badly about herself to cave in to such sickening peer pressure.

Carol agonized over how to put it, but she knew she had to talk with Kaitlyn.

"Hi, honey. How was your day?"

"Oh, Mom. Do you always have to ask me that? I feel like such a kid when you do," Kaitlyn protested as she scoured the kitchen for some kind of snack.

Not to be put off, Carol continued her pursuit and somberly stated, "We have something to talk about."

"Can't it wait? I'm busy right now. I have to call Jani to find out about homework and then I've got to watch Oprah; she's talking about dating today!"

"I'm sorry, Kaitlyn, but this can't wait. I read your diary today and I'm extremely concerned about what I learned." Carol was actually much more than concerned. She was still in shock. But she thought better of being so transparent and tried to tone down her reaction. She wondered when the fireworks would start and it wasn't long before she received her answer.

"You what? Read my diary?! How could you, Mom? That's private and you know it! It's none of your business!" Kaitlyn's face reddened as she glared menacingly at her mom.

Silence ensued and felt like an eternity. At first Carol wanted to shout back, "I'm your mom and it is my business," or "This is my house and as long as you live here, you will abide by my rules." Fortunately she controlled herself and tried a different tact. She remembered what her pastor had said in a recent sermon about communication. Be

calm. Listen to the other person. Don't get angry. Carol choked on her words as she finally broke the standoff and asked, "Did you really think that those kids wouldn't be your friend if you didn't do what they were doing?"

"You think I'm such a kid. You never trust me! I'm sick of your rules and your criticisms of my friends! Sometimes I just wish I was dead," Kaitlyn retorted.

The intensity increased until it reached a crescendo with Kaitlyn running out of the kitchen and slamming her bedroom door. Both she and her mom said things they didn't mean...but now it was too late. They could not take them back.

Carol is not alone. Many parents come face to face with painful realities about their teens. No matter what we try, all teenagers are going to face some temptations and negative peer pressure and many face incredibly strong pressures. Some teenagers are also more susceptible than others. Try as we might to "peer-pressure proof" our adolescents, many will still struggle against the relentless onslaught of teenage temptation.

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LAST LAUGH



"I'd like you to stay home tonight. The weather reports says there's a large area of peer pressure blowing in from the East!"

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Teenagers who give in to negative peer pressure are usually struggling with one or more of four issues. First, they feel badly about themselves (poor self-esteem) so they are looking for ways to feel at least temporarily better about themselves. Second, they aren't experiencing a sense of family unity and togetherness. They feel alone or misunderstood within their families so they are looking for a place to belong outside the family. Third, they are encountering strong homogeneous peer influences (literally "all of their friends are doing it"). And finally, they either don't have a personal relationship with God or it is very weak.

Teens may be pressured, rejected, or scorned for both petty and important things; personal appearance, academic competence (or weakness), drug use (or refusing to use drugs), language, and physical handicaps. Virtually any behavior, word, or deed that identifies one as different from the accepted teenage norm can trigger ostracism or rejection. The pain of peer rejection runs deep and isn't easily forgotten. Research has shown that social acceptance is a critical factor in predicting emotional struggles like depression and feelings of inadequacy later on in life.

Surviving Peer Pressure

So what is a parent to do? How can we help our teenagers survive attacks on their morals and their sense of belonging, worth and value?

Begin by doing all you can to develop a fun, supportive relationship with your teen. Hopefully this began when they were very young so they have years of enjoyable relationships and memories of times with you in their emotional/relational "bank accounts." They know you love and care for them and that makes it easier to resist peer pressure. If you weren't able or didn't take the opportunity to build that kind of relationship earlier, start now. A good supportive connection with you is your teen's best preventive medicine. Listen carefully: Don't minimize your adolescents' pain. Make it safe for them to express themselves without reproach on

them or their friends. Try to help your teens identify their struggles without asking too many questions. They may feel ashamed or afraid to tell you what is going on in their lives. If you judge or pressure they will immediately close up. So rather than pointing out the destructiveness of their peers, ask your teen how it felt to be left out, laughed at, or rejected. Expect them to initially be reluctant to admit the social ostracism and embarrassment they feel. But if you are patient, most will come around. They do want to be understood.

Empathize and understand: Young people need to know that you care about their pain. But be careful about jumping into your own history to try and let them know you understand. Teenagers are rather self-focused and aren't sure that adults really can relate to their generation. They are more touched by your acknowledgment that you have some sense about the hardships they are going through but that you will need their help to fully understand. Sometimes a statement about what you think they are going through will help you connect. Make comments like, "I can't imagine how difficult it must have been to make new friends here." "I'm sorry. I didn't realize how hard our move was for you." "I know our divorce made your life so difficult. I wish we could have worked things out." Your teenagers need to know that you "feel their pain" and that you have some understanding of what they must be going through.

Affirm your teen's value and worth: Adolescents don't respond well to blithe, global statements like "You are such a wonderful child." Yet they deeply need to know that's how you feel, that to you they truly are a "gift of the Lord" (*Psalms 127:3 NASB*). This will happen as they see that you want their opinions on things and care enough to come alongside, enjoy their fun experiences and sit with them in their struggles. When things are tough they need to know you want to help relieve their pain, not heap on guilt or shame with criticism or condemnation. They will experience your affirmation when you listen and respect their opinions rather

than just hearing their words. Listen for their feelings of joy, sadness, hurt or pain. And remember, teens are cautious about being vulnerable. They are trying to grow out of childhood to adulthood and are embarrassed by their failures. So don't rub it in or "treat them like a child." Be kind, supportive, and forgiving. Be there for them and let them bounce back and forth from awkward or successful attempts at being adult to times of neediness and increased dependency.

Once you have been able to forge a relatively good relationship with your teen, be prepared to offer spiritual and personal resources; but do so in a way that is not experienced as infantilizing or condescending. This part of the interaction may be one of most delicate. Guide them towards open expression of their fears of not belonging, anger at the peers (or even you or your spouse) who hurt them, or feelings of inadequacy, and the dilemma they face in returning to people and places where the risk of injury is high. Be slow to offer ways of handling their peers. Ask them what options they see and as they tell you they will begin to see the obvious.

It is not enough for your teenagers to find ways to protect themselves or escape from peer pressure or rejection. *Your teens must also find better ways of meeting their needs for love, belonging and understanding.* They need to find peers who value them, and are safe, and encouraging. Help them take inventory of the possible people or places that can be a resource for them. Few teenagers are able to resist destructive influences unless they have healthy alternatives.

The Bible is filled with encouraging passages on our importance to God, our value to Him, His forgiveness, new beginnings, wisdom and friendships. Find non-preachy ways of sharing rich passages that relate to their experiences and pray fervently for them.

Refer: Teens who are involved with drugs and gangs nearly always require professional help, hopefully from a

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LOVE, continued from front cover

That doesn't show you love me." Some of these expected "signs of love" are based on sound reasoning. Husbands and wives do need to spend time together to develop an intimate relationship. Money is a poor substitute for spending time with the children. And spouses do need to be told they are loved and special.

Demanding the ideal, though, usually doesn't bring it to pass. In fact, trying to weed out negative qualities through criticism is more likely to widen the gap between those involved.

To escape his wife's condemnation, the husband is likely to retreat to the office with even more regularity. And the teenager's lack of appreciation may cause Dad to cut down on monetary expressions of love.

Here are two things you can do if you are in this kind of relationship. First, learn to communicate your personal needs in a loving and non-threatening manner. Instead of telling your husband or wife "You're never home anymore" you might say "I'm so glad your work is going well. I can tell you love it and you are a great provider for our family. But I miss our times together. Can we try to find some more time to connect?"

If your spouse dismisses your request, be even more specific. "I know your job is demanding, but I feel lonely without you. There must be some way we can find time. If we are going to have a fulfilling marriage I need us to find a way of connecting regularly. I would even be willing to help out with your work if that would help."

If the other person has no ideas, suggest something. For a home-based business, suggest helping with the billing or making phone calls. For a sales-oriented business, offer to cook dinner for a customer. Find a way to become a participant in the enterprise. That should free your mate up as well as lightening his or her workload.

When Curt was forced to take an extended medical leave from work, he assumed his wife Judy would give him her undivided attention. Although Judy took care of Curt's

basic needs, she didn't offer him the comfort he desired. Her reaction stemmed from childhood experiences when her mother feigned illness to get her own way. Curt did not understand this initially and assumed Judy was just being indifferent toward him. But he learned that neither confronting Judy nor sulking would alter her behavior. So he told her that although he missed going to work he was glad it would give them more time together. Then he remembered that Judy's mother was somewhat of a hypochondriac. He asked Judy what it was like having a mother who faked being sick to get her way. Slowly Judy began to talk. Soon she remembered her intense sense of futility and anger. At one point she said, "I vowed I would never let anyone do that to me again!"

Curt joked, "I hope you don't think I got cancer to get my way!" Judy laughed, but as she did she realized in some ways she was reacting like she did believe Curt was trying to manipulate her. Curt followed up that conversation by telling Judy he knew his illness had put extra work on her, and that he felt badly about that but that he greatly appreciated the sacrifices she was making.

The combination of being able to express her frustration and being appreciated by Curt gave Judy freedom to be more attentive to Curt's needs. The key is to express your needs in an inviting, encouraging way. Too often we take just the opposite approach. We attack our spouse for "not caring" or "never being home." That just makes matters worse.

The second thing we can do is learn to see the love we are already being offered but have not yet recognized or accepted. We each give and receive love in different ways. Endearing words, time together, physical touch, financial support, sexual faithfulness, play, shared work, laughter, prayer and Bible study, honest sharing of ideas, hopes and dreams, and vulnerable sharing of needs, fears and wishes can all bring couples together in love.

But some of us very narrowly define the kind of actions that we will accept as love. The person who neglects to say just the words we want to hear or do just what we

want so that we will feel loved is perceived as failing the test. So we start to blame or accuse them. They withdraw. And the cycle goes around again. If that is your tendency, try to understand and appreciate your mate's way of showing love. You don't have to give up hoping he or she will learn to express love in ways that you find easier to accept but take a step toward your partner! Value what he or she does offer. And learn to talk about your different ways of feeling loved and showing it. Chances are you can both move a few steps toward each other.

If your mate, for example, doesn't verbally express his or her affection for you a lot but is a great financial provider, talk about that together. Some people show love the way they wish they had received it during childhood. Perhaps the financially-focused individual longed for money during a deprived childhood. To start a discussion you might say, "I know money is important to you and you are a great financial provider. Would you tell me how you came to be that way?" After hearing an explanation, say, "I really appreciate you telling me that and I appreciate what a good provider you are – But do you know what? I'd be happy to have a little less money if I could have more of you!" That can start a helpful dialogue.

Try nurturing any of your mate's qualities that might be interpreted as expressing love. If properly cultivated, even a tiny seed may take root and eventually produce a bounteous harvest. In fact, a closer look at the situation may reveal that the love you crave has been waiting all the time, just not packaged the way you want it!

There is no guarantee, of course, that even the most tactful response to a spark of human love will bring desired results. But very often it will. And when it doesn't there is also another kind of love. Love from everlasting to everlasting. God's love is available to each of us.

Christ-like attitudes combined with better communication and divine-directed actions help build loving relationships. If, however, those efforts fail, God is waiting to heal your heartache and find other ways to meet your needs. ✠

Living in Scottsdale, Arizona, Esther M. Bailey attends McDowell Mountain Community Church. As a freelance writer with more than 1200 published credits, she has a passion to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

With Thanksgiving

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God," Philipians 4:6.

With Thanksgiving—Those two little words made a big difference in my prayers this week. As I tearfully contemplated saying goodbye and sending my daughter off for another year at school in California...

*I was reminded to pray "with thanksgiving."
I stopped to think about that a minute.
I am thankful that she is attending college.
Thankful the Lord is equipping her with gifts that will see her through a lifetime.
Thankful that we can manage the college expenses and a plane ticket.
Thankful that she is receiving these good gifts from the Lord with joy in her heart.*

*Then I considered the alternatives.
I could have her living at home,
But at what expense?
Not exploring her abilities or following her dreams?*

*She would still be happy.
It is her nature to be content.
But she would not be at her best.
She would not be stretched and growing in the ways she is today.
Most importantly, she would not be receiving HIS best.*

*More than having her home,
I long for her to experience walking with the Lord in faith and all the excitement that journey can bring.
With a thankful heart I said goodbye.
She will be in my prayers
In my heart
And she will go with God.*

*Saying goodbye is never easy.
But a thankful heart blossoms in the midst of loss.*

— Roree Van Duyne

Roree Van Duyne is senior Vice President of a large credit union in the midwest and single Mom of three.

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sensitive Christian psychologist or counselor. Depressed teens who think about suicide need immediate attention. Issues that are less severe may be helped by caring lay persons, or by church youth leaders, or by connecting with an accepting group of Christian teens.

Church youth groups can be excellent places to meet the spiritual and social needs of teens. Try to find one with a great reputation for encouragement, acceptance, and a number of interesting and stretching experiences. Nothing will help your teenager more than a deep faith in Christ and a commitment to walk with

Him and learn the Scriptures in the companionship of other Christian adolescents. Participating in a local outreach to the poor or going on a short-term mission trip can get them thinking beyond themselves and finding meaning in serving others. Children who are involved in activities and get along with others are less likely to have the more serious problems we have discussed, whether they are the result of peer pressure, persecution, rejection or other factors.

Finally, remember that improving your relationship with your teen will nearly always be a major key to solving any adolescent problem. Teenagers don't live in

isolation and you are the most important person in their lives! Once you are able to break through their withdrawal, anger, hurt or fear you can be an incredible resource for them as they transition toward adulthood! †

Robert Whitcomb is a clinical psychologist practicing in Fullerton, California. This article is adapted with permission. Handbook on Counseling Youth: A Comprehensive Guide for Equipping Youth Workers, Pastors, Teachers, Parents, Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, 1996, Thomas Nelson Inc. Nashville, Tennessee. All rights reserved.

Kathy Narramore Addresses Chinese Mission Leaders

Due to strong anti-American attitudes, American missionaries are finding it increasingly difficult to get into many "closed", predominantly Muslim countries. Fortunately, God is raising up a new generation of non-Western missionaries including large numbers from Brazil, Korea and even Hong Kong and China.

Unfortunately, the attrition rate among the new Chinese missionaries has been incredibly high. They have often been sent to extremely difficult countries with little preparation in cross-cultural living, minimal financial support and practically no emotional and family support from their churches and mission agencies. Consequently, approximately half of the new Chinese missionaries have not been completing even their first term of service or, if they did, they were unable to return to the field again. They returned home stressed and burned-out due to cross-cultural adjustment difficulties and other struggles.

As the daughter of missionaries to China, Kathy Narramore, wife of NCF president Dr. Bruce Narramore, has a special burden for China and missionaries being sent from Hong Kong to other countries in the world. Nearly seven years ago, she challenged three Chinese Christian leaders from Hong Kong to consider opening a member care center



Kathy Narramore with We-Care co-founder, Mrs. Helen Loong, at luncheon for "Women of Global Action".

to support these new missionaries and increase their quality of life and effectiveness and "staying power" on the mission field. Kathy's friends took up her challenge and in 2004 founded "We-Care Center" the first Chinese member care ministry established solely to support Chinese missionaries being sent to other regions of the world. Their philosophy summed up the core of that new ministry: "We believe that in order for cross-cultural workers to experience effectiveness, longevity and satisfaction in their ministry, there must be holistic care for the whole person including the family." They realized that the ministries of missionaries can be no more effective than their own personal and family lives and that the best way to insure effective ministry is to have committed and well adjusted missionaries.

In a short five years, We-Care Center staff members have already served hundreds of Chinese missionaries through individual and couples pastoral care and counseling, weekend retreats and training, and equipping seminars for missionaries, church and agency leaders. To celebrate their first five years of ministry in Hong Kong, We-Care recently



Kathy Narramore and interpreter addressing We-Care anniversary celebration.

held a training seminar for mission leaders and asked Mrs. Narramore to be their keynote speaker.

Kathy addressed the group on ways that sending churches and mission agencies can work together to more effectively provide the spiritual, emotional and relational equipping and support that missionaries need. Kathy also addressed a group of Chinese businesswomen who are active in supporting missions as Christian laypersons. At that luncheon Kathy spoke on ways of avoiding burnout and balancing work, family and ministry responsibilities.

A few days after the workshop, one of the We-Care staff members emailed Mrs. Narramore that they were already working on implementing one of her suggestions. They are consulting with several sending agencies and churches to establish a Missionary Encouragement Team (MET team) comprised of several committed laypersons for each Hong Kong missionary. The We-Care staff will also be having a day long retreat to look at other ways of improving the spiritual and emotional support they provide to Chinese missionaries. It is an honor for the Narramore Christian Foundation to have a part in equipping this new generation of international missionaries. ✝



Participants in a "break out" group of missionary care workers at the We-Care training seminar in Hong Kong.



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MENTAL
HEALTH NEWS

Narcissism and the Me Generation

In April 2009, Free Press released *The Narcissistic Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement* by psychologists Jean Twenge, PhD and Keith Campbell, PhD. In their 352 page book, Twenge and Campbell uncover the illusions and consequences of the rise of narcissism in our culture. Their book covers the diagnosis, cause, symptoms, and prognosis and treatment of narcissism. Based upon their

While Twenge and Campbell consider self-esteem a good thing, they argue that narcissism is destructive and damaging. In critiquing our culture the authors assert that our efforts to build our children's self-confidence has "created a generation of hot-house flowers puffed with a disproportionate sense of self worth."² While addressing college students at Southern Connecticut State University, Twenge found students were little concerned with the destructive consequences of narcissism and even grinned approvingly when they were told they were the most narcissistic generation ever. Perhaps what the authors contend are serious consequences of narcissism such as discourteousness, distressed and broken marriages, abusive working environments, extreme entitlement, and depression could wipe the smiles off these self-absorbed and naïve collegians. Unfortunately we live in a culture where the use of YouTube and social networking with MySpace and Facebook only reinforce the belief that stardom and an inordinately large number of superficial relationships bring lasting happiness.

Students at the New Haven campus justified their pleasure at their narcissism by protesting that it was needed to deal with our ultracompetitive world. But Twenge and Campbell are convinced what we really need is what Christians have known for years, "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Rom 12:3). †



research over nearly 10 years, particularly research on narcissism from data collected from 45,000 college students, they have provided some provoking data. So significant were their conclusions that Newsweek was one of numerous national news sources that reviewed their book in April 27, 2009, in an article entitled, *Generation Me*.¹

¹Newsweek April 27, 2009, *Generation Me*, p. 48
² Ibid.

FOUR FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR FINANCES



- ✓ If you are 55 or older, you can receive, depending on your age, annual returns between 5 to 11% for as long as you live, through an NCF Annuity and receive a tax deduction.
- ✓ If you haven't updated your will for 5-8 years it could be seriously out of date.
- ✓ You can avoid paying capital gains tax on your appreciated property.
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