



The Challenger

December 2004

An Anthem...*Composed By a TC Student*

This is not your ordinary house.

In fact, it's beyond comprehension. It defies conventional wisdom. This house marks the culmination of a ten-year odyssey to see a vision become reality. This house represents the hands of literally hundreds of men and women who gave and continue to give of themselves. This house was constructed with bricks and mortar, wood and glass, but it was laid on a foundation of prayer and obedience to the call of God. Jesus is its cornerstone.

In May of 2003, equipment moved earth, and ground broke to adequately house Teen Challenge staff families. Families who wholly dedicate their lives to follow Jesus Christ. Families who accept His call, daily, to minister to and get deeply involved in the lives of students learning to follow Christ themselves. Their passion is Jesus Christ, their commitment is to the students and their demonstration of Godly love is unparalleled. Naturally, as existing conditions deteriorated, desired improvements turned into absolute needs.

So off they went to see a dream made real. With a vision and a prayer, a director and a volunteer set afoot to generate support. And what they got was the

hand of God working a Divine path to see this thing through. Person after person, group after group, organization after organization, each stepped up to meet the call. And what might have seemed impossible became utterly probable. And that's where the fun really started.

Enter the students of Teen Challenge. These are men who begin work on the project from its inception. These are men of vastly different backgrounds, learning to walk again in a new life in Christ. Some spent their lives building things and some don't know a hacksaw from a razorblade. Some come straight from the streets or some come shackled from the jails. Some haven't worked in years. None of that matters. The point is



to trust God, throw the schedule out the window, put leaders in place and provide a chance to teach and to minister, no small gesture when the project forecast reaches three-quarters of a million dollars.

Despite the potential for pitfalls, everything exists for ministry and it's all for the glory of God. And in God's good and perfect will, everything falls masterfully into place. Pray for a drywaller, one suddenly shows up on the student roster. Pray for a bricklayer and the following week who's on the doorstep, but a man with the skill and a need for God's love. This scenario plays out over and over, each man with a skill or a submissive attitude to learn, and a deep need to experience the love of Christ. So each nail, each sheet of drywall, each stroke of the paintbrush, each cement block and dryer vent and window well and 2x4 and retaining-wall timber represents a place in time where a formerly lost man builds something

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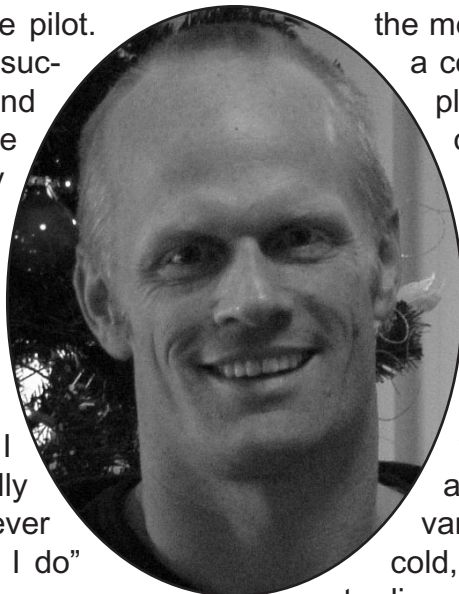
SET FREE! — A Testimony of Hope

God hated me. Or so I thought. God was too busy for me. Or so it seemed. God was ashamed of me. God didn't really care. God was distant and spiteful and irrelevant. I couldn't have been more wrong.

I grew up the son of an air force pilot. He's a great guy with a storied and successful career, with a beautiful and graceful wife. One of three kids, we had everything one could possibly need or want. But for whatever reason, I had a rough time of it. Making friends was tough and when you move as much as we did, the problem just compounds. Deep down inside, at my very core, I believed I was a loser, and I knew I needed to hide that fact. So, really young, I made it a point to do whatever it took to be accepted. "I am what I do" could have been my mantra.

And so it began. I pounded through school and did well. Went on to college and did fine. Had an incredibly successful and influential career. Went to graduate school. Traveled the world and kept getting mind-boggling new opportunities. But all along the way, nothing made me feel better, and to fill that mammoth-sized hole, I chose to drink and do drugs and to do all sorts of other "I gotta please myself" stuff. If it felt good, I did it.

And why not? On one hand, I was thinking everything's OK by worldly standards. But on the other hand I was going deeper and deeper into the mire. It got ugly. My teenage black-out drinking and pot smoking turned into a daily habit in my twenties. When that stopped "working," I turned to hard drugs. Blind drunk, I met crack cocaine, and life as I knew it ended. There was no more hiding my habit. By my early thirties I had left my career and become a full-time addict. I'd been in and out of rehabs, in and out of AA, and in and out of psychiatric wards and hospitals. I was slowly dying.



I tried to escape addiction, but couldn't. I'd even tried God, but was certain he had written me off. You see, my life as a Christian was limited to religion: an astoundingly rote and impersonal tradition where ceremony and legalism was the means to God. It was like being on a conveyor belt. We venerated people for their works and I thought I could never measure up. Church felt like penance, was characterized as penance and was far from celebration.

Having given up on God, I knew I'd be a piece of garbage the rest of my life. "Loser" went from belief to reality. My family was desperate, I was disgusted and my friends had long since vanished. I was a hopeless, lonely, cold, hard, cynical piece of dirt waiting to die.

Then one day, I was exactly where I needed to be. I was in jail and at the end of myself. I asked a chaplain to speak with me and offer guidance. This wonderful man looked me straight in the eyes, told me I had no relationship with God, and that Jesus is the answer, the only answer. Broken and weeping I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. The mountain began to move. Within days my obsession to use vanished. I landed in a place called Teen Challenge and here, I'm being taught how to follow Christ. I found hope. I found that God has incomprehensible love for me and it's not for any other reason than His Grace, not my efforts, not my life, and not my capabilities. It's His gift. I know for a fact I'm going to heaven. I have tasted God, through Christ. There is no turning back. I am not a drug addict. I am not an alcoholic. I am a new person in Christ Jesus. I am a beautiful child of God. Thanks Jesus. Thanks Teen Challenge.

An Anthem

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tangible and useful for God's kingdom. And even better, that man joins in acting out the Body of Christ.

They are in relationship, constantly. Perhaps they share a struggle: "Sometimes I wonder if God hears me," or "Hey man, am I really saved?" Or, "Dude, I miss my kids, will you pray for me?" Or, "It's seems like everybody else gets this Jesus thing, what's wrong with me?" You'll hear a guy pull out his Gideon's New Testament "dagger" and share on a scripture or you'll invariably hear guys worshipping God spontaneously and with fervor. And yes, there are countless times when men sharpen each other and confront each other and try on their new Christianity and work through things together, often stumbling, but practicing what's been inscribed in their heart by the Teen Challenge ministry and by God's Word. Jesus is present at more times than one can possibly imagine and healing becomes so real that it's hard not to take notice.

Add to this mix volunteers from around the community, Maps/RV'ers from around the country and staff who were once students. These are folks committed to God's calling and essential to the success of the project. Without them, this house does not get built. Without them, this dream does not become reality. It's as simple as that. And the real gift is that throughout, in relationship, elbows rub, lessons impart with compassion and selflessness, and what some might see as another construction project becomes a picture of love and relationship

and blessing after blessing after blessing. It's only something God in all of His glory could orchestrate. Young and old, hardened and tender, lost and searching or mature and steadfast, they all came together in a picture of perfection in the eyes of God.

Not a bad day at work for a bunch of scrappy guys delivered from the cesspool of addiction into the loving, compassionate Body of Christ.



It's no surprise then that emotions surrounding this house run strong and gratitude is deep. To see a staff member paint and fight back tears as the thought sinks in that this is his house for his family is a testimony of thanksgiving. To see a student and former addict who did nothing his whole life, hesitate to take his tool belt off because he thought

it was cool and he felt a part of a bigger purpose, something he could point to and say "I helped with that," that's a memory etched in the mind forever.

This isn't just a house. This is an epic. This is a brand new home with a long and beautiful history. This is the product of relationship. This is to the glory of God. Amen.

Our first staff family just moved into one of the just completed duplexes--what an exciting time! Please continue to keep the project in your prayers as we "nail down" the finishing touches. If you are interested in making a donation, or in personally volunteering your talents, please call Michael at (515) 674-3713.

Annual Hog Roast

Every year, Calvin & Ada Yoder host the Teen Challenge Annual Pig Roast on their farm outside of Kolona, Iowa. Not only do they welcome us with open arms to their home, but they donate a hog to be roasted and eaten while we're there. We eat, play football, eat, pet the calves, eat, visit the cheese factory, and eat some more! The Yoders and many other friends of the Amish & Menonite community in Kalona have been a tremendous blessing to our Teen Challenge family for many years, and we want to say a big "THANK YOU" to them for their hospitality!



Teen Challenge at the Yoder Farm



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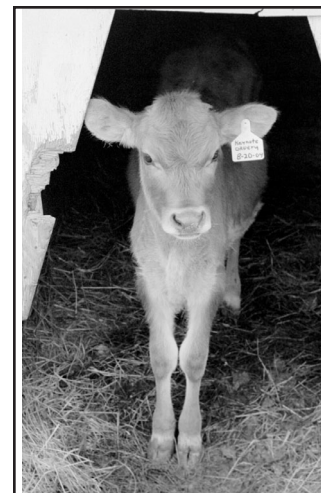
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Helping People Who Hurt

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One of our friends
that we met at our
Annual Hog Roast!