

Pot, Juicy Gossip, and Other Topics of Conversation

By Stephanie Sharp



“Hello, how are you doing?
Can I bring you something to drink?”

These words form the beginning of the script I repeat multiple times each day at the Florentine Restaurant on West Broad as I serve tables. I hadn’t worked there two weeks before coworkers were asking me if my relatives used a horse and buggy (since I am Mennonite). I found myself trying to explain the Mennonites to them, but I didn’t want to spend too much time talking about Mennonites. What I really wanted was to share my faith. I want the other workers to see me first of all as a Christian, and I want to tell them about what that means. But I struggle with knowing where to start with people who have so many misconceptions and who maybe don’t care anyway.

I am one of the only Christians at work, and people there react to my faith in different ways. Pete is an atheist. He told me not to waste my prayers on him and seemed astonished that I go to church so often. He grew up Lutheran, I think, and said sarcastically that maybe I’m at the Florentine to bring him back to God. Heather said she feels like she’s going to hell every time she’s around me because I’m “so nice.” Kate used to go to church with her sister but decided it wasn’t for her. Ever since, her sister hasn’t talked to her and Kate wasn’t invited to her family Thanksgiving because of her decision. Nicole is extremely angry and bitter at God for the life she’s had and for her son’s medical problems. She said, “I know God doesn’t give us more than we can handle. He must think I’m superwoman.”

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From the Editor

As I write this, snow is beating down outside. Based on my experience of winter in Ohio, I predict that as you read this snow will still be beating down outside. In Delaware, where I grew up, it didn’t snow very often but when it did the snow stayed on the ground for quite a while before it melted—sometimes more than 20 minutes. In Ohio, the first snowflake stops by in October, bringing a lot of relatives along, and they stay around like unwelcome houseguests until June.

I don’t always get as excited about snow as I used to, maybe because the snow portions are so generous in Ohio. When I was ten (and didn’t mind wet socks so much) snow was a lot of fun, but I also didn’t have to drive to work in the stuff. Now, instead of making a snowman I’m driving 25 miles an hour on the interstate and I can hear the road salt devouring pieces of my car.

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London Christian Fellowship seeks to develop authentic and passionate followers of Jesus Christ.

Simple Life

A Message from the Pastor

By Rob Swartz



This past Christmas was one of the most enjoyable that I can remember. It was a simple Christmas; we were home for the first time in 12 years. We actually celebrated Christmas on the 25th instead of early or late to accommodate traveling. And after it was over, we weren't packing bags, driving hundreds of miles, coming home with piles of laundry or sorting through piles of unopened mail.

I love getting together with our extended family, but sometimes the energy it requires can wear on me. This Christmas it was just us—my wife, my kids, and myself—and we thoroughly enjoyed it. We played games, we watched movies, we went out to eat, we laughed and argued, we stayed up late and got up late. The phone didn't ring and there was minimal e-mail. There was nothing pressing that we needed to do.

It made me wonder if all the rushing around we usually do is really that significant. It's true that there are many important things to be accomplished and I definitely want to accomplish some of those things. But surely we don't have to do everything. God didn't design us that way, and I also don't think He intended for our children to have everything or to do everything.

One of the things I appreciated about this Christmas was that it was less about "doing" and more about "being." We just enjoyed being together. Oh sure, there were fun things to do, but the most fun was from doing them together (playing a Wii is fun, but it just isn't the same when you're playing it by yourself).

All this to say that with all our doing, sometimes it seems like we just don't have the time to be *with* each other, to be present in each other's lives. We may see each other often or even live in the same house, but that doesn't mean we are "present." Doris and I have found that even as husband and wife, it is very easy in the busyness of life to pass each other like two ships in the night.

The truth is that our relationships need simple time, with nothing else planned. No agenda, no work, no expectations—just time. Maybe that seems wasteful to you, but I have discovered that these simple times are the most wonderful of all in my relationship with my wife, with my children, and with my Heavenly Father.

That's how things turned out this time. As I look back and remember, I would have to say that a simple Christmas was one of the best gifts I received.

Elders' Notes

Ideas and thoughts from recent meetings

The elders' team agreed that the new format for the Adult Discipleship Class—starting after the worship and sermon—seemed to work well. They are planning to use the same format when the class begins again in the spring.

The "Where are We Going?" congregational meeting on January 10 will be set up to let people comment on a variety of issues.

These include:

- Sunday morning (the worship service, Sunday school, childcare, format, etc.)
- Church structure (elders' team, pastors, ministry teams)
- Community connection (How are we serving our community? How are we doing in outreach?)
- Discipleship and Fellowship (small groups, the men's group, Beth Moore Bible studies, youth, junior youth)

There will also be an opportunity to comment on anything not covered in the above categories.

The elders are considering whether it would be helpful to give the congregation an opportunity to do a pastoral evaluation on a regular basis. It has been a while since the last evaluation.

The team will be praying specifically for the following people this month:

Keith and Lisa Miller (Ryan and Kris)
Levi and Cora Miller (Richard and Robin)
Todd and DeAnn Miller (Reuben and Vicki)
Mark and Rhonda Montrose (Keith and Shannon)
Kirk and Amy Nichols (Rob and Doris)

Help Wanted

If you would like to help out with running sound or the computer display on Sunday mornings contact Hans Stutzman (technical skills would be a plus).

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And as I go to work and interact with my friends, questions I haven't had to ask for a long time come flooding into my mind. How do I show these people Jesus? How do I, in some small way, heal the wounds the Church and other Christians have left on my friends? How do I show them that being a Christian isn't about going to church every Sunday and being "moral" but about knowing Jesus? How is my life reflecting Christ's character? How do I react when I hear about someone bringing pot back from a trip to Jamaica or being stoned at work? Should I defend people when everyone is gossiping about them or simply not participate in the conversation?

I want to be more than a nice person, more than the good girl at work who doesn't "party." I want to be honest about my faith and willing to answer whatever questions they ask me without being embarrassed, but that's hard.

My family came out to visit me a few weeks ago and stopped in at the restaurant. Dawn wanted to know where they would park the buggy while they ate. She was joking, but her question sparked a few minutes of religious discussion. Because I don't wear a cape dress, she assumes I've distanced myself from Mennonites. I tried to tell her that I prefer to show my faith by my actions, not by how I dress, and that being Mennonite is more than clothes and cars. It's more important to me that Dawn knows Christianity than details about Mennonites. How do I present this Good News in a comprehensible way? How do I whittle down two thousand years of theology and several hundred pages of the New Testament into a sound bite? Where in the world do I start?

I feel like I'm trying to describe my eyes to someone else. I use my eyes to look at everything and I can't imagine life without them. But because they are what I use to see, it's hard to describe them. They are such a part of me that it's almost impossible to explain. That's how I feel about my relationship with Jesus. It's a part of me that I see the world through and that I base all sorts of decisions on. It's hard to know where to start to explain my worldview.



If you think about it, pray for me. Pray that I'll have the courage to share when I need to and be quiet when I need to. And if you're ever on West Broad, stop in. We have great salads and spaghetti.

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We tend to get grouchy about snow and pour salt all over it to make it go away. But if that is our only reaction, we might be missing something important—wonder.

In G.K. Chesterton's book *Orthodoxy*, he talked about the wonder and magic in the world. "This world is a wild and startling place," he said, "which might have been quite different." Some people, he pointed out, see the world as being the way it is because it *has* to be that way. But a leaf doesn't have to be green; it could have been scarlet if God wanted it that way.

And God didn't have to make a world in which snow existed, either. Children know this. When they see their first snow, they react with awe and delight. Who knew such a thing was possible? As years go by, they learn that snow comes every winter and that it has been snowing for thousands of years, and the wonder fades. Snow is just something that happens because water freezes in tiny flakes in the clouds under the right conditions.

I think children have it right after all. Snow doesn't happen because "conditions are right," snow happens because God thought it was a great idea and created the right conditions to produce snow. And now millions of flakes whirl down, blanketing the ground in a white coat and completely transforming the dull brown Ohio winter landscape.

We can take the snow for granted and stomp around grumbling about it, but God and the children will still be having a great time.



Getting to Know... *Dan Frederick*



Why do you live in Columbus?

I originally moved here for school (Devry University for network and communications management). I stuck around because of the job market and the friends I made here.

Describe your job

My title is Systems Administrator. I basically do consulting work for small and medium-sized businesses. I administer their networks and set up servers, internet and phone systems, the whole nine yards. The company is called ComResource.

Do you have a favorite restaurant in Columbus?

I am not a person of favorites. I really don't have a favorite...

anything. It's kind of weird, people ask me about my favorite food, favorite movie, favorite song, and I never have an answer.

So it's Friday night and you can go to any restaurant that's not a chain restaurant. Which one do you pick?

If it can't be a chain restaurant like Red Lobster, then...right now I could sure go for a place called Bistro 86. They have a wonderful Cajun fish there. If there were a hole-in-the-wall place I'd want to go to right now that would be it. It's in Grandview Heights.

If you could get good at anything you don't already know how to do, what would it be?

I want to learn guitar.

Do you play any other instruments?

Well, it's been a while but trumpet. I was in marching band, concert band and jazz band in high school.

What do you do for fun?

I like hanging out with people. Talking, going out to eat, it's usually more casual stuff. That's probably number one, and number two is watching TV. If I had to pick a favorite show it would be Stargate SG-1.

What's your least favorite chore?

Do chores in general count? I really dislike doing dishes. Like really, really dislike doing dishes. I try to be proactive and just stick the dishes in the dishwasher as we go so I don't have to do a pile of them. It's the piled dishes that get me, this unsightly mess of things that are half-rotted and moldy...well, ok, it doesn't always get that far.

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If you'd like to make comments on any of the stories or "LCF Connection" in general, email us at: connection@lcfweb.org.

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