

The LCF Connection

February 2011

Strong Convictions, Strong Love

Editor's note: Jack and Molly Rosati are part of the family at London Christian Fellowship, and have been for years, even though they don't see eye-to-eye with many in the congregation on some issues. One example: the Mennonite belief that war and violence are never justified. Issues like this one divide many believers and keep them from worshipping together. I asked the Rosatis to share about why they take a different approach.

Jack:

I accepted Christ 46 years ago. Since that time I have encountered a variety of Christians with a variety of beliefs. I have come to one conclusion: belief in the Trinity, the deity of Christ, his sacrifice for our sins, his resurrection, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are the foundation of our faith. When these beliefs are personalized and accepted, other areas of disagreement need not divide us.

This is not to say that I lack strong feelings about other spiritual matters.

For example, I bristle at the suggestion that those who have committed their lives and, in some cases, sacrificed their lives in the defense of freedom and the innocent are not following God's will. I have been blessed to know a number of men and women in the military, law enforcement, and other services who clearly loved God and sought to serve him. At the same time, I am unwilling to accept the notion that those who are "non-resisters" are necessarily weak and inferior.

There is a difference between having strong opinions and allowing those opinions to divide us. With the former, we run the risk of someone being wrong, but with the latter, we are guaranteed to be wrong. Now, I am not talking about teachings that are so inconsistent with Scripture that the discerning Christian knows that the teacher is out of fellowship with God—you all know what I mean. We simply cannot fellowship with persons who teach that tolerance of people requires tolerance, and even celebration, of sin. Christ spent time with individuals who were notorious for their sins, but he *never* accepted their sin—he accepted them. With regard to lesser issues, however, don't make assumptions about the Christians around you who do not share your focus on a particular issue. And by all means, don't separate yourself from them. To put it bluntly, looking for reasons to divide yourself from other believers only serves the forces that oppose us, creates bitterness, and takes our eyes off of God.

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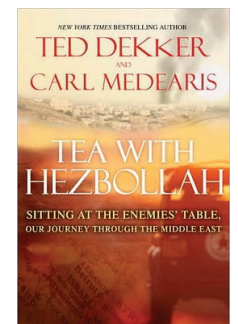
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Book Review: *Tea with Hezbollah*,

by Ted Dekker and Carl Medearis

Reviewed by Andrew Sharp

Despite the title and the fact Ted Dekker is involved, *Tea with Hezbollah* is not a thriller about a counterterrorism spy in the Middle East. Instead it's a nonfiction book released last year about a trip the authors took through various Arab nations and Israel, talking to some of the prominent enemies of the United States in the region. Their purpose? To find out what these people are really like, and to ask them what they think of Jesus' teaching to love our neighbors (and enemies).



Dekker and Medearis came up with this unique (and dangerous) idea while talking about whether it was possible to really love one's enemies, as Jesus, Martin Luther King, and Ghandi all taught (before they were all murdered). Medearis had lived in the Middle East for years and had many connections. So despite unrest and war in the region, the two set out on a trip to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria,

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215 US Rt. 42 NE London,
OH 43140
(740) 852-4268
LONDON www.lcfweb.org
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Be The Church

A Message from the Pastor

By Rob Swartz

What if we canceled church on Labor Day weekend? Even though it's still several months away, it's an idea I'd like us to consider. But I can assure you I'm not simply trying to get a break from preaching or to give you

an opportunity to sleep in. Instead, I'd like to see us participate in an event called "Be the Church." Many of the Plain City churches have been doing this event for several years, and this year several London churches are considering joining them. Participating in "Be the Church" is simply taking a day to move outside the walls of LCF to actively show Christ's love to our community through service.

Why would we do this? Let me give you several reasons to consider. The first is unity—when we work with the broader body of believers, our view of the church is stretched and broadened and we gain an appreciation for the diverse body of Christ, helping fulfill Jesus' desire that we all be unified.

Another reason is love. This event is another chance to show the love of Christ to our community. It's an opportunity to change the perspective of our community about what church is about and who "church people" are. We aren't asking for donations or trying to manipulate. We simply want to serve them and love them, just as Jesus did. We want to show them Jesus. He came to meet all of our needs—spiritual, but also physical and emotional. While this is a single-day event, it is not just a token gesture toward our community, but one of many ways we can continue to show them the love of Christ.

What would participation in this day look like? We would have a short worship time together, probably at the park. Then we would go out in teams to work on projects identified and planned for ahead of time. The teams are made up of a mix of people from all the churches involved, so we would also have the opportunity to get to know new people as we work. I'll be able to let you know more details later as event planners fill me in.

Would you consider being a part of this day? I'm sure it would be stretching, but I believe events like these are consistent with Christ's call for us to work together, to love each other, and to love the world. If we participate, there will be opportunities to help with planning, leading teams, identifying needs, communicating, and more. Let me know what you think.

Tea with Hezbollah continued...

Jerusalem, and the West Bank. They spoke to Hamas and Hezbollah fighters, the Bin Laden family, a prominent Muslim theologian, an Arabian sheik, a Syrian mufti (Islamic scholar and judge), a Jew, and an actual Samaritan. The story of their interviews with these people is interwoven with a modern-day rendering of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

One thing that sets this book apart is its focus on who these people are, instead of simply what they believe about politics. It's a chance for readers to sit down to tea with these people, as it were, and talk. Some things we find out:

- Arabic people have a good sense of humor. But their jokes do not make any sense at all when translated to English.
- They love their families.
- They feel they have a right to fight back against what they see as injustice.
- They have more in common with us than we may think, including a taste for western movies and literature.
- They recognize the beauty and truth of Jesus' teachings on love, but hesitate about practicing that teaching—much like we do.

Dekker (who narrates the book) says it's not a political book or one that attempts to solve religious issues. It's simply the story of a journey and an attempt to find an answer to a question. That's a noble goal, but don't expect a book without an opinion. Quite a bit of it leaks into the pages, questioning our views on the Middle East situation and on Muslims. Which makes it better, in my mind. Who wants to read a book without an opinion?



Regardless of what readers conclude about that opinion, it's worthwhile to think about. In the process of relating their crazy story, Dekker helps us see the people behind the issues in the Middle East.

In the end, for Christians it shouldn't matter whether these people are enemies or friends, since Jesus told us to love both. But it seems to me that Dekker and Medearis have hit on an important part of what it means to love one's enemies: to try to see the world through their eyes.

I won't give away the answer the authors came to about whether anyone is actually living out Jesus' words. Instead, I'll ask another question: what would our response be if Dekker and Medearis came to LCF and interviewed us about Jesus' teachings on love? Do we really love our enemies—or even our neighbors?

Looking Ahead...

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| February 26 | Benefit concert for Karissa Yoder at Shiloh Mennonite Church, 3-9 p.m. |
| February 27 | Concert by Salt & Light, a musical and vocal ensemble from Rosedale Bible College, at LCF at 7:00 p.m. |
| March 5 | Men's meeting at Phat Daddy's, 8:00 a.m. |
| March 6 | Bowling at Goshen Lanes in Mechanicsburg, 2 - 4 p.m. |
| March 12 | Computer Repair Day at LCF, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. |

Getting to Know... *Aaron Biscup*

Where did you grow up?

In Salamanca, New York. It was out in the country; 65 acres of woods with a lake out front and a creek in front of that.

So how did you end up in Ohio?

I started coming out here because I decided to come to Rosedale. I went to Rosedale for two terms and then I went from there straight into REACH [Rosedale Mennonite Missions' short-term missions program]. I have been out here pretty much ever since.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I always wanted to be a veterinarian, I loved animals growing up. But I heard that a veterinarian has more schooling than an actual doctor does, and that didn't sound too fun.

What is your favorite thing about February in Ohio?

(Long silence) I'm not really thinking of anything. This year's better than last year, does that count?

Are you a messy person or a neat person?

Somewhere in between. Certain things I keep clean, and then other things, like my desk in our office, for instance—it gets cluttered to a point and then I get annoyed with it and clean it up.

What are some of your favorite things to do?

Fishing, if the fish are biting. Any kind of fishing really. We had a blast in Florida [on a recent trip], we went out deep sea fishing two days, and we caught a whole ton of fish. The one day we caught 40-some, and the other day we caught 76. It was fun. [Around here] the only time I really go fishing is when the whole family takes a family vacation up to lake Erie and we go out on a boat up there and go fishing. I also like snowboarding, soccer, ultimate Frisbee, hunting.

Do you have a favorite meal?

I do, it's called nasi goreng, which is "fried rice" in Indonesian. It has a mixture of different vegetables and chicken usually, and it also has sweet soy sauce from Indonesia which is really good too. Andrea makes it for us sometimes.

What would you like to be doing in five years?

That's a good question. I would like to know what I want to do. I'd like to have my RN degree, and either be working at a hospital or something like that in the states and have a house and kids, or else be a missionary somewhere, being an RN.

What's a skill you want to master?

I'd love to be able to play the guitar a lot better than I do.



Work Continues on Building Project Details

The expansion team met January 29 to review three estimates for constructing a new building. It looks like the cost will be about \$1,150,000, which the team said should be the limit. The finance team is looking into loan options and monthly payment costs, while the expansion team works at narrowing down a decision on a contractor and making a recommendation to the leadership team. Richard Troyer, who leads the expansion team, said in order to move ahead with the project, monthly contributions from the church will need to cover the cost of the loan payment.

Richard said the final cost of the building could be reduced with "sweat equity," or members of the church helping out with the project as they are able. He estimated the price could be reduced in this way by as much as \$50,000. Examples of "sweat equity" include painting, woodworking, trim, and general cleanup. Bob Zachrich, who is part of the expansion team, was careful to emphasize that these are only some of the possibilities, and that people are welcome to come up with more.

The team is trying to gather as much information as possible before sharing their findings in a congregational meeting, which could happen by March.



Small Group Update

By Dan Frederick

Our young adult small group meetings currently have an attendance of about 5-7 members, depending on what everyone's schedules look like. So far the group is made up of Aaron and Andrea Biscup, Andrea Jantz, Jennifer Nutt, John McConnell, Sarah Frederick, and me. We've become very flexible about when and where we have meetings to accommodate the current needs of the group. We normally meet on Wednesday evenings in each other's homes, as well as in coffee shops like Tim Hortons. We are geographically diverse, so we carpool when we can, but the trip is well worth it.

Since the larger young adult group of about 18 became three groups, I've noticed some positive changes, which we were hoping for when we made that decision. Everyone is participating and providing input and opinions on the discussions, as well as taking turns leading. In a large gathering, it's harder for these kinds of things to happen, so this was a very nice change for our group.

I also feel that our relationships have begun to grow stronger as we focus on each other's needs and goals on a personal level. We have tried separate prayer times for the girls and guys to allow for more open discussion than we could have in a mixed group.

We have just finished going through the book of John, which was a study we started before we grew into several groups. This past week, we decided to watch Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ", not only because it provided a great follow-up to the end of John, but also because it gave us startling imagery of Christ's true deep love for us. Even though we had already individually seen it before, it was still just as gripping as the first time.

We are planning on changing things up a bit and starting a video series by Louie Giglio entitled "The Heart of Passion." It will be about a 4-5 week study that will help us focus on God and the universe he created. I expect it to be quite a humbling experience.



From left: John McConnell, Dan Frederick, Jennifer Nutt, Andrea and Aaron Biscup

Strong Convictions continued...

Molly:

I tell folks I attend a Mennonite church because "I like the people, they are very accepting," and then we just look at each other. So I joke to fill the silence, "though sometimes I feel like an ape at a tea party." I like to have a sense of humor over our differences and not take myself too seriously.

I go to church because scripture tells us in Hebrews 10:25, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Those in our fellowship have welcomed Jack and me to worship and serve Christ alongside them as "regular attenders" for more than 20 years. I appreciate London Christian Fellowship making a place for regular attenders and allowing people to work out their walk of holiness.

"The people at London Christian Fellowship are sincerely trying to follow Christ" is another reason I give for attending. I appreciate looking around on Sunday and seeing other folks working out living for Christ in their families, on their jobs, and in their lives. I believe differently on some issues, but I expect that. Having gathered my beliefs from the many fellowships I've attended over the years, no church could be a doctrinal match. In addition, I don't think it's possible for me (or any theological view) to contain the whole truth about God. God is too vast. I agree to...not understand.

Reuben Sairs suggested an image I've found useful. During a Sunday school class he suggested that doctrinal stands are like hedges our forefathers designed (or defined?) to keep their flocks close to God. I like this image, whether I am thinking of baptism, salvation, or nonresistance; the intent is to keep us abiding in Jesus. However, our human nature sometimes forms these doctrines into barriers. The hedges become walls blocking fellowship and unity. Instead of being derailed by differences, I choose to be intent on our shared purpose. "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)

The LCF Connection

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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.
Editor: Andrew Sharp; Layout: Doris Swartz