

LTi E-Newsletter December 2005

From the Ministry Journal of Steve Macchia

“Talk about Transformation!”***Depth of Soul ~ Vitality in Service*****□ Personal Reflections**

“Majesty in the midst of the mundane. Holiness in the filth of sheep manure and sweat. Divinity entering the world on the floor of a stable, through the womb of a teenager and in the presence of a carpenter...the merchants are unaware that God has visited the planet. The innkeeper would never believe that he had just sent God into the cold. And the people would scoff at anyone who told them the Messiah lay in the arms of a teenager on the outskirts of their village.

They were all too busy to consider the possibility.

Those who missed His Majesty’s arrival that night missed it not because of evil acts or malice; no, they missed it because they simply weren’t looking. Little has changed in the last two thousand years, has it?”

(from God Came Near by Max Lucado)

The season of Advent offers many wonderful opportunities for us to prayerfully reflect upon the mystery of the Incarnation. Jesus - Immanuel - God with us in human flesh...conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary...into a humble manger in Bethlehem. The first Advent is cause to pause – in wonder, awe, reverence and prayer. His advent into our hearts as believers is cause to praise – in celebration of the gift of salvation and the privilege of living a life of abundance this side of heaven. His future Advent, when he comes again in splendor, majesty and glory is cause to ponder – in our preparation for eternal life and in our proclamation of the whole counsel of God throughout the world.

Advent is a reminder of the many gifts of God, most specifically the gift of His Son, Jesus. May your pausing, praising and pondering lead you deeper into your life of prayer...for the depth of your soul and the vitality of your service in his kingdom. Keep the eyes of your hearts wide open and don’t miss out on His arrival!

□ Coming Alongside

We are in the midst of some significant work with local church leadership teams. We’ve walked alongside these teams as they’ve conducted their congregation and leadership team assessments. We’ve encouraged them to research their communities and listen intently to demographic data, unchurched neighbors, intercessors in the congregation, and city/town leaders. We’ve gone on retreat to practice the disciplines of listening prayer and team building. We’ve seen exciting vision and mission statements unfold through intentional dialogue among the teams. And, we’ve watched in wonder to see how the Spirit grants them favor in outlining strategic initiatives for their future ministry.

This hasn’t emerged without sacrifice. The process has exhilarated some team members in these settings while others have bowed out mid-stream. Some see the value of spiritual discernment and others have said “no thanks.” But, those who have persevered and worked through the challenges of this endeavor are seeing great fruit from their shared labor of love. As a result, the Church is strengthened and the Kingdom of God is being advanced right before our very eyes. To God belongs all the praise, honor and glory!

Other ways we come alongside leaders and teams include: soul care retreats (visit our website for upcoming dates); individual spiritual direction; ministry team consultations; spiritual formation groups; church and team ministry health assessments and strategic ministry planning. Call 978-646-4175 or email my assistant, Sage Chang (Sage@LeadershipTransformations.org) for more information.

Serving with me (and our small staff team) as we come alongside leaders and teams are faithful members of our board of directors: Diana Bennett, Kathy Crowell, Todd Klipp, Kevin Parke, Brian Lacey and David Schultz, Chairman. When you pray for our ministry, please remember to commit the work of our board to our gracious and loving Father.

□ Recommended Readings

If I may be so bold, let me recommend that you pick up a copy of my latest book, *Becoming A Healthy Team* (Baker Books, 2005). It was released earlier this fall and is the fifth book/workbook in the “becoming a healthy...” series (other titles in the series are: *Becoming A Healthy Church*, *Becoming A Healthy Church Workbook*, *Becoming A Healthy Disciple*, and *Becoming A Healthy Disciple Small Group Study and Worship Guide*).

In *Becoming A Healthy Team* I focus the reader’s attention on the importance of learning how to lead and serve ministry teams in a cooperative, community-based fashion. The primary biblical focus is the book of I Corinthians, with particular emphasis on chapters 12 and 13. I offer a holistic definition of healthy ministry teams based on the image of the body of Christ and outline five key traits of vital leadership for effective teams: Trust, Empowerment, Assimilation, Management and Service (which spells TEAMS!).

The book is filled with true team stories, practical applications, questions for team study, prayers at the end of every chapter and a teaching outline (with learning exercises) for your use. The primary audiences for the book are teams within local church and parachurch ministry settings. Paul Borthwick wrote the Foreword and Ted Haggard wrote the Afterword and twenty one national leaders have officially endorsed the book, including people like Larry Crabb, Leonard Sweet and Luis Palau. We are delighted to offer this new resource to the body of Christ and hope it will be of great encouragement to you and your team!

Be sure to check out our website for additional resources for leaders and teams:

www.LeadershipTransformations.org

Here you will find the full complement of ministry services and resources LTI is currently providing our constituents. Note some of the free resources available, the *Becoming A Healthy Disciple Small Group Study and Worship Guide*, as well as the growing number of language translations now available for *Becoming A Healthy Church* and *Becoming A Healthy Disciple*. And, every time you enter the CBD (www.ChristianBook.com) site through our website, a donation is provided to our ministry – another way to support LTI!

□ Renewal Yearnings

Let me close this newsletter with words from Brennan Manning’s *Reflections for Ragamuffins*:

“Is there anyone in our midst who pretends to understand the awesome love in the heart of the Abba of Jesus that inspired, motivated, and brought about Christmas? God entered into our world not with the crushing impact of unbearable glory, but in the way of weakness, vulnerability and need. On a wintry night in an obscure cave, the infant Jesus was a humble, naked helpless God who allowed us to get close to him. I wonder, if we were to stop people at random in the street on December 24th and ask them what they want most for Christmas, how many would say, ‘I want to see Jesus?’ I believe the single most important consideration during the sacred season of Advent is *intensity of desire*. Jesus Christ is of no importance unless he is of supreme importance. An intense inner desire is already the sign of his presence in our hearts. The rest is the work of the Holy Spirit.”

May your growing desire for more of Jesus be fulfilled in your hearts this Advent and Christmas season!

I trust you will continue to be an active part of the team – through your love, prayers, gifts, ministry suggestions and participation!

Your grateful brother in Christ,

Steve Macchia

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