

LTi E-Newsletter Spring 2006

From the Ministry Journal of Steve Macchia

“Talk about Transformation!”
Depth of Soul ~ Vitality in Service

□ Personal Reflections

“How often do I come to God not with consumer requests, but simply with a desire to spend time with him, to discern what he wants from me and not vice versa?”

This was the pressing question for Philip Yancey, noted author and editor at large for *Christianity Today*. In the March issue of *CT*, Yancey’s back page article entitled “For God’s Sake: What 147 Elk Taught Me About Prayer” is a must-read for all who are looking for affirmation (possibly even permission) to spend time on retreat with one agenda: to hear from God. He writes, *“I’ve become more convinced than ever that God finds ways to communicate with those who truly seek him, especially when we lower the volume of the surrounding static. I remember reading the account of a spiritual seeker who interrupted a busy life to spend a few days in a monastery. ‘I hope your stay is a blessed one,’ said the monk who showed the visitor to his cell. ‘If you need anything, let us know, and we’ll teach you how to live without it.’”* Bottom line: we learn to pray by praying. We enter into prayer in all its fullness when we are stripped of every possible distraction that keeps us from enjoying intimacy with God. That’s why going on retreat should not be an optional extra for any believer, let alone Christian leaders. When’s the last time you “wasted an hour” (or better yet, a full day) in the prayerful presence of Almighty God?

□ Coming Alongside

One of the most exhilarating aspects of the LTi journey has been the multiple times we have been on retreat with pastors, leaders and teams. We have hosted our own Soul Care Retreats (10 in the first three years of our existence). In addition, we have facilitated nearly double that number for ministry teams from local churches and parachurch ministries. They all have one thing in common: when God’s people press the pause button from their activity-obsessed lives and listen for the voice of God...he speaks. He speaks powerfully through his Word, his creation, his people. Although not audibly, his voice is recognized with clarity as we pray, journal, weep, walk, reflect, read, confess, rejoice, celebrate, contemplate, and listen.

Are you looking for a way to make Lent 2006 one of your most memorable? Then I urge you to take at least one full day to retreat. Yes, retreat...retreat from the daily grind of responsibilities and come away for refreshment of heart, soul, mind and strength. Retreat so that you are replenished spiritually for the journey ahead of you. Retreat so that you can reconnect with the lover of your soul, who, like the prodigal father, is waiting at the window for your return and ready to throw his outstretched arms of love around you. In fact, he’ll actually throw you a party of sorts...all because you’ve come home where you belong.

If you are looking for a place to retreat, we’d love to provide a sanctuary for your soul. Our April 3-4 retreat has filled up but our May 22-23 retreat has a few places open for this small gathering of friends who are all seeking the same agenda: intimacy with God. If interested, consult our website for registration information today! Also, keep a look out for our fall 2006 and spring 2007 Soul Care Retreat dates to be published soon.

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

Serving with me 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 and our staff team: Rick Anderson (our new VP in our Colorado Springs office), Sage Chang (my multi-talented assistant), David

McKiel (our accountant). In addition, we are building a virtual team of associates who are positioned to serve the body of Christ in particular areas of expertise. When you pray for our ministry, please remember to commit the work of our board and staff to our gracious and loving Father.

□ Recommended Readings

I have been enriched by the writings of Eugene Peterson for many years. If you haven't read his works (beyond the stellar volume, *The Message*, his contemporary rewrite of the entire Scriptures), then I urge you to search for one of his many titles today. Most recently, I have enjoyed his spiritual theology, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* (Eerdmans, 2005). But, since entering ministry nearly three decades ago, his earlier writings have been go-to texts for yours truly over and over again, such as: *Working the Angles*, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, *The Contemplative Pastor*, *Take and Read*, and *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*. Anything Peterson has written is well worth reading...often multiple times!

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. If you haven't picked up a copy of *Becoming A Healthy Team*, then be sure to order one today. 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!).

In addition, note some of the free resources available on the website, 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*.

□ Renewal Yearnings

Let me close this newsletter with words from *Spiritual Life in the Congregation: A Guide to Retreats* (by Rueben P. Job): *"Spiritual retreats have proven to be one of the significant ways of encounter with God. From Abraham and Moses to Jesus and now to us, the custom or spiritual discipline of withdrawing for a time of concerted companionship with God has proven to be a transforming experience for individuals, congregations, and small groups. Retreats are a proven and effective way of opening our lives as individuals and as community to God's presence, guidance, healing, will, and way. Retreats offer opportunity to listen for the voice of God in decision making and in our spiritual journey. They are uniquely effective in providing satisfying food for hearts that are hungry for God. Retreats are also a way of caring for the soul, nurturing and sustaining life in the spirit for young and old alike."*

May your growing desire for more of Jesus be fulfilled in your hearts this Lenten season! If you go on retreat this Lent, please send me an email with how you used your time and how the Lord's fellowship enriched your spiritual development as his beloved child. I've been practicing this discipline on a monthly basis for over 12 years and it's been the most significant spiritual decision of my life!

I trust you will continue to be an active part of the LTI team – through your love, prayers, gifts, ministry suggestions and participation! We value your companionship as we journey together in this uniquely meaningful way.

Your grateful brother in Christ,

Steve Macchia

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