

# MAC

# News

MEN ABIDING IN CHRIST MINISTRIES

modeling + multiplying discipleship

Wonderful Father—

*I praise you in good times and tough times. Lord, I love you when on the mountain top and I love you from the valley. Because you are my Lord, and without you I am nothing.*

*Lord, thank you for your presence and for the gift to call your name, especially in times like these when I'm being tested to lose trust and faith because of the inability to see beyond the horizon.*

*Thank you for building awareness of your sovereignty amongst the noise and uncertainty that surround us tempting us to lose hope.*

*Lord, burden me with your desires for intimacy with you and the ability to be still and know that you are God (Psalm 46:10).*

*As your branch, give me steadfast strength to abide in you so others may experience the fruit of your being. Lord, cast out our fears so that we may glorify you even when it's hard. And help us Lord to not worry about tomorrow but walk with a faith that is centered in you today.*

*I love you Lord. Amen.*

**I share this prayer** as encouragement and an invitation for you to seek time alone in prayer. Although my meeting scheduled has remained strong (although more remote

## Spring 2020



instead of in person due to COVID-19), I am reminded of the need to help others to seek that place of "abiding" that Jesus calls us to.

Much of my focus in 2019 and into first quarter 2020, has been tailored around being "ALL IN" with the Lord. Just last month, I had the pleasure of taking one group on a two-day retreat. Although, all of us had known each other since middle school (and some since elementary school), we found that we could take our relationships even deeper when allowing ourselves to be intentional in spurring each other on in our relationship with Christ.

The articles enclosed in this newsletter are just a glimpse at some of the discussions that happen each week when walking together. Over time these discussions start shedding light allowing us to see that our response to Jesus is to approach him with an intent to be "ALL IN" and He takes over from there.

Please continue to pray for this ministry that I remain available and accessible to join men in their day-to-day walk helping others to become fully dependent on the Lord in every area of their life.

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## My Image of God

*And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

**– 2 Corinthians 3:18**

**A current theme** on any given morning in meeting with men, is trying to understand what God might be doing in a specific situation. Most often the situation being shared is fresh with a sense of urgency along with a lack of understanding of its origin and missing a clear pathway to a quick fix.

Just not having a quick fix in itself, can drive any man crazy. However, even if the quick fix is identified, the path is cluttered/complex because there are others involved including other values and perceptions to the situation. Can you imagine a situation in your life that is being described?

One deep-seeded belief in the Christian faith is that we were created by God and for God (1 Cor. 8:6). That our struggle in life is trying to swap our desires for God's, so that His will be done. Another deep-seeded belief with our faith is that our fulfillment comes from our communion with God, not just trying to please God with our actions, and ultimately being conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29).

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**ALL IN retreat: Joey Biddy, Matt Santini, Jeff Wallsinger, David Hines, Pat Mac, Rai Faircloth, Bill Watson, Chip Kanour**

## Conditional Love...

*"Before we get started, this past Sunday, the pastor spoke about the Prodigal Son. One thing that I struggle with is why the father was so quick to take his son back? I mean, that would be very difficult, as a father, if my son had wasted his inheritance on being disobedient and careless. It would be difficult not to let him work through the consequences on his own."*

**It was 6:35 am** and I had just arrived for the meeting (running late and hurried) and prepared to discuss Ephesians and this was how he answered my question, "how are you doing this morning?"

I love curveballs! I also love it when men let their guard down and ask questions about Scripture that, at first, are confusing but truly reflect our struggles in staying focused on God. In these situations, I get excited because I recognize the Holy Spirit is usually teeing up for a breakthrough.

In response, I started by rephrasing the question to capture what I thought had him stuck, "why had the father overlooked the son's actions and/or behavior... or been angered by what he was doing?" I then shared the father was loving him, not based on his actions, but on who he is. The father's love was not conditional on the set of circumstances, but on his son's developing awareness that he was desperate.

We love our kids based on who they are, not on what they do. Now, what they do does produce emotions of pride, happiness, disappointment, etc., but it's not the basis for our love. Similarly,

## How do I make Christ #1 in my life?

*Jesus replied. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and the greatest commandment."*

– **Matthew 22; 37-38**

**This was the question asked** as I was leaving a conversation to resume my day. Although the question was asked as we were closing our conversation, I quickly sensed the magnitude of his question.

He continued, "I've been consumed fighting for my marriage for the past two years and now that we're divorced I've realized I don't know how to make God a priority again in my life. I was hoping you could help me."

At first, it seemed overwhelming to think that I could help with this. The tyranny of the urgent seems to be our biggest battle when we desire to reprioritize our life and make Christ the center which can leave us hopeless not knowing which foot to place first.

One of my passions is to show the simplicity of the greatest commandment to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind. I say simple knowing that it's impossible when I try to "make" it happen on my own. Our sinfulness makes this impossible until we ask Jesus to do this through us.

In response, I started sharing a recent struggle which was keeping me awake at night. As I lay there, I remembered being coached to be intentional to dwell on loving the Father. Over the past year, I have been trying to fall asleep each night and awake each morning

our wives/spouses love us (most of the time) because we're their husbands, even when we don't deserve their love... we're still their husbands.

Jesus is the same way. Thankfully, his love is not based on what we do, but what He has DONE! (Eph. 2: 4-10). Our response to believe in Him, to accept His gift is how we become His children. It's not so much who we are, but whose we are. We are claimed by Christ.

My friend knows all this. His questioning and response was due to his losing ground in the busyness and stress of our day-to-day struggles where it's easy to flow in the direction of how we feel vs. how we're called.

We must be intentional to remain in a place of response such as the Prodigal Father does when he sees his son returning. If we're not intentional with our abiding, we may catch ourselves reacting through our own initiative to make things right and respond more like the older brother from that story.

As the conversation continued through that morning meeting, we realized how easy it is to get sidetracked based upon our tendency to make things fair in this life, but Grace isn't fair, it doesn't add up when approaching it from our place in this fallen world. And neither was Jesus' actions when he took the cross for all of us.

I have been grateful in my own household for the power of the Holy Spirit allowing me to respond with His love and not my feelings in the moment. My household appreciates it even more when we are "quicken" (as Watchman Nee likes to call it) by the Grace of Christ giving us an immediate restoration in Him.

repeating, "I love you Lord, please have mercy on me."

This practice of speaking "I love you Lord," has helped me grow my confidence in loving the Lord with all my heart, soul, and mind. It doesn't cure me from myself (especially my selfishness and stubbornness) but it does break me out of the busyness and urgency of my day to claim Jesus as my life.

Loving God completely is our goal and it does take our intellect, emotion, and will to do this, however a simple place to start is to be intentional in telling God that you love Him. Not only does this help you mentally reposition but it also allows you to intentionally interact with God. This always leads to knowing Him better which for me, is the greatest promise to increase my love for Him. And, the more I love Him, the more that I am willing to trust and obey Him (follow Him) which is our called response. I do want to remind you that the risk with obedience is that it normally doesn't make sense at the particular time (and at times, may never make sense). Consider the story from John 21 when a resurrected Jesus appears on the beach yelling out to Peter, Thomas, and Nathanael, who have spent the whole night fishing and not even receiving a bite, are called to cast their nets to the other side of the boat. It just doesn't make sense, but they're glad they did.

Remember, Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship. And like all relationships, it takes time to cultivate, just like one's marriage.

My friend is on the right path because he has the desire to make Jesus the priority in his life. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. My experience is that the Father will respond when praying for one's own desires to be replaced by the Lord's desires, but you want to be in the place to respond to these ordained desires. The simplicity of "I love you Lord" is a great launching pad.

## Chairman's Update. *by Scott McLain*

**This edition** of the MAC Ministries newsletter is packed with stories about the day-to-day ministry God works through Pat. Our understanding of the relationship between our image and God's image is critical to understanding our identity. Grasping "whose we are" rather than "who we are" allows us to build stronger relationships with others. And while the concept of unconditional love for our children makes sense to most of us, we very often struggle to comprehend God's love for us. And ultimately, loving God and putting Christ first in our lives is the evidence of our new hearts. I hope you enjoy this view "inside" the ministry.

I want to take this opportunity to update you on the Matching Fundraiser we held again in December. While the "late" Thanksgiving holiday made the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas hectic for many, Pat was able to sit down with dozens of people to share about the ministry and pray with and for them. Eighty-five donors



And while we are grateful, it is imperative that the ministry receive funding throughout the year as well. While spreading out a \$500 or \$1000 donation over 12 months may seem like it doesn't impact, I want to assure you that it does. And with automatic bill-pay from your bank it is very easy as well. If you have given to the ministry in the past, will you consider committing to monthly giving?

Thankful for this ministry and praying for you,  
*Scott McLain, Chairman of the Board, MAC Ministries*

participated this year including nine new donors, and we surpassed our goal of \$25,000 raised (plus \$25,000 in matching funds)! Thanks be to God! We are blessed and humbled each year to see the unique way(s) God meets the needs of this ministry through you, our supporters.

Each year the fundraiser has become a larger portion of our annual donor giving.

## My Image of God

*continued from cover*

At my age, I have learned that I tend to be conformed to those things that I am drawn to and pour myself into. As Ken Boa says in his book, *Conformed to His Image*, "we gradually come to resemble what we worship."

One's image of God is a huge factor in how one is molded and shaped in this life. That is why it is so important to me to help men repair their image of God so they have a more accurate and reflective image of the God that is versus the God they want or imagine.

Twenty years ago, God used a man named Dave, to help me see that my image of God was not accurate, therefore bringing an awareness that I didn't KNOW God like I thought. In a sense, I just knew about God.

I came to realize that my image of Jesus was not of a "living" God. My image of Jesus

was one resurrected and sitting on a throne way up in the sky and not fully aware of me or my struggles. As a Christian, this is a recipe for disappointment which can then lead to poor choices.

The awareness of not having an accurate image of God did not happen immediately. However, the awareness that I didn't trust Christ, was immediate, but how to respond and rectify this image was not. That is how Dave was used. God used Dave to plant a desire to start reading the Bible, the "living" Word, and start talking-praying-to God about everything. Dave understood that Scripture had been given to us not only to inform us but to transform us.

It is not uncommon for me to meet with someone who is completely caught off guard about the situation they have found themselves. A situation happens where there was no intention to go down a certain path, however the choices made were done

without thinking of, not just their spouse, but God. The thought of disappointing Jesus had not crossed their minds because they had trained themselves to only think about Jesus at certain times or days of the week, such as when they go to church or take time to pray.

They had not realized Jesus' presence was 24/7. This incorrect image keeps us from growing in conformity to His character which prevents us from experiencing the abundant life that is found only in Him. Remember, God's purpose for us is to find meaning in this life first through Jesus, which then brings meaning to everything else.

So I ask you, who or what do you worship that is conforming you into its image? Is your image of God one that lives in your daily life? I invite you to challenge yourself by answering these questions. God calls us to know Him, not just know about Him.



*Sean, James, and Liam at Cataloochee*



*Mary and Rose and Friday night football @ MHS*



*James and Sean and friends in Mexico*

PMB #104  
1000 Whitlock Avenue, Suite 320  
Marietta, GA 30064

## Will you help us multiply disciples?

*MAC Ministries is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization funded by individuals and churches who value this ministry in the community.*

We invite you to participate in supporting this ministry through your financial contributions:

- Online through Paypal at [www.macministries.net](http://www.macministries.net)
- Send a check payable to MAC Ministries at the address above

## A Note From Bridget's Heart by Bridget MacPherson

*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.*

– 1 John 3:16

**For the last 17 years**, if anyone asked what I did for a living, I would reply that I was a “stay-at-home” mom. Now that our community has been mandated to “stay-at-home,” I realize now that I was NOT really a stay-at-home mom. I was a “school volunteering, lacrosse cheering, cheer gym carpooling, drama mama-ing, fundraising, religion class teaching, small group attending, church going, ladies night outing, sometimes cooking, really hardly ever home” mom. Since March 14, ALL of that has changed.

To be honest, I have not been taking this new normal very well. I read something that equated the feelings that we are experiencing because of the shelter-in-place orders to the feelings of grief one experiences after a loss. That was helpful to put a label on what I was feeling. It was better to think of it that

way than to continue feeling like the rug I was standing on had been violently ripped out from under my feet and rather than just landing on my backside, I had fallen into an abyss that seemed deep, dark and out of focus.

Of course, the reality of my situation is this... I am not in a dark, deep, out of focus place. I am surrounded by a family who truly enjoy being together. We have the resources we need to tackle this online school. Our kids have a great attitude about what is expected of them. I am the one who needs an attitude adjustment.

As I reflected on what I would write for this article, the Holy Spirit reminded me that we are still in preparation for Easter during this time called Lent. Typically, during Lent, people “give up” something - chocolate, diet coke, gossiping, etc. This year, we are being forced to sacrifice our normal, everyday lives. For the last three weeks, I have been mourning that loss. Now, I choose to think of it in a different way. I consider this loss of my normal life activities as a

sacrifice. A sacrifice greater than anything I was willing to do on my own. If I equate this time of quarantine as a sacrifice, it gives this loss a purpose. It helps me truly reflect on the sacrifice that Jesus made for me. When I think of it this way, I begin to understand why it is important that I lay down my life for my brothers and sisters. I pray that the sacrifice that we are all being called to during this time is used for the glory of God and that all of us will be able to draw closer to God.

