

Direct Connect



Christian Reformed
Home Missions

JULY 2008

Dear friends,

Summer is in full swing no matter where you live in North America! Our goal in this newsletter is to encourage you. Take *A Sip of Coffee Break* and be inspired to share the Bible with someone new. Let the *Breath of Encouragement* from the women in Allendale wash over and bless you.

The journey of life has its ups and downs, doesn't it? I am in awe of the group of dedicated bicyclists who have committed to ride across the United States to help alleviate poverty and hunger. Let them encourage you to devise a *Spiritual Exercise Plan* so that together we can press on toward our final destination, God's new earth! And don't forget the kids – children love *A Good Story*. Tell it, re-tell it, and tell it again!

We are gearing up for the **Small Group and Evangelism Conference** July 18-20. It's less than two weeks away now, and anticipation is growing by the day! Registration is still open, but hurry! Time is short.

Hoping to see you in Lombard, IL,

Diane

In This Issue

A Sip of Coffee Break

Spiritual Exercise Plan

A Good Story

A Breath of Encouragement

Coffee Break...



Is a great place to find new friends



Means growing together



Is a breath of encouragement from God's Word



Offers continued clarity of God's love



Is a great way for me to get out of the house, grow myself, and have time away from 'little people' to grow relationships with other women



Is my one hour that I know will be spent in the Word and get other's views on things



Is my ray of sunshine in a gloomy winter



Is my sanity – a break from my child to learn more about the Bible and myself



Is a great way to get to know people in the community



Is a comfortable atmosphere where you can be yourself and not worry about what others think

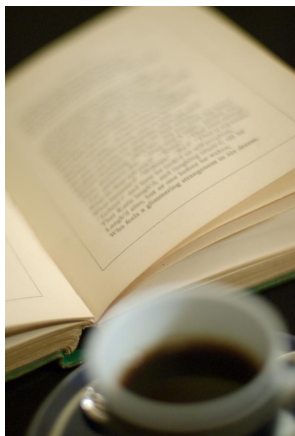
Kid Quote

“Eve ate the apple, and that was a BAD decision!” -Kaitlyn, 5 years old

Current Stat on Fragmented Families:

“One quarter of all children today will see at least one parent divorce twice.” -from Christianity Today

A Sip of Coffee Break



How do you help individuals who have not studied the Bible join a Coffee Break Group? Perhaps you have women who have attended a Mom to Mom parenting class at your church. Maybe, you have individuals who have been a part of an exercise class or a sporting club of some sort. You want to expose them to the word of God, but for many of them a Bible study would be a foreign concept.

You might try to give them a “sip” of Coffee Break. First, encourage them by letting them know how helpful the Bible has been for you. Give them a book based on Scripture, or some type of simple devotional written with a contemporary format, (see Resources). If in the course of conversation, you mention a story from the Bible that they have never heard about before, paraphrase it by using contemporary language. Mention Christian authors today like C. S. Lewis and Tolkien and how biblical themes are such an important part of their stories. As time goes by, ask them if they might like to try an informal time of Bible study for a few weeks. Suggest this short term commitment so they will feel more comfortable to try something new.

The church might be a good location, particularly for child care issues. However, you might consider starting your Coffee Break group at another location or even an unconventional time. This past spring I had a Coffee Break group that met in a home at 7:30 in the morning. There were only three of us, but it was a wonderful way to begin the day. I have also had small Coffee Break groups that met during the lunch hour. This makes it possible to include those who work in the home as well as outside the home.

Smaller may be easier when you think about forming a group. Finding a convenient time for three people is easier than finding a convenient time for ten. Also, consider a different location like a restaurant, coffee shop, or a home.



Gives me the opportunity to study God's Word



Is a place of genuine support and prayer

-thanks to 1st Allendale CRC for permission to use their words of encouragement

Resources

Evangelism Resources

A Place for Skeptics, by Chris Mitchell and Scott Larson. This evangelistic booklet is a helpful tool for a seeker.

The Reason for God, by Tim Keller. This book is a good one to recommend to those who have questions about God and the Bible.

Finding God at Harvard, by Kelly Monroe, or ***The Case for Christ***, by Lee Strobel, would interest those who need an intellectual or apologetic approach to Christianity.

Love Beyond Reason, by John Ortberg, is a book written in John's unique, personal, invitational style.

What's So Amazing about Grace, by Philip Yancey, takes a fresh, honest look at God's grace.

Online Resources

www.womensministry.net – Jennifer Rothschild's website for women includes many resources, including a free weekly newsletter, tips for leaders, ideas for groups, articles of encouragement, Bible study tips, etc.

Core Value Booklets

– now available online at www.crhm.org/smallgroups >Resources.

These booklets written specifically with

All of the women in my *Mom to Mom* parenting class have shown an interest in studying the Bible next fall. We will consider a time and location that will fit into their busy lives. We will also use a study that immediately will engage someone unfamiliar with the Bible. Going through a gospel that introduces them to Christ is a good first choice. Another option might be a book like Ruth, Esther, or even Jonah. These contain powerful stories where people new to the Bible can easily become engaged and find instant application.

Anyone who has been a part of Coffee Break recognizes the importance of Bible study. They know the truth found in God's word. They should also want to encourage others to have the opportunity to learn about the God who loves and saves. Begin to look for ways to make that a reality for your neighbors and friends. Before they drink deeply, they may need to take a sip.



- submitted by *Diane Averill*
Small Group Ministry Developer
East Coast US

Spiritual Exercise

As I write this on July 1, 2008, the bikers for the CRC Sea to Sea campaign are waking up and beginning the 2nd day of their journey across the United States. What a daunting task lies before them! What a journey they have committed themselves to!



We all know this major challenge isn't taken lightly or without intense preparation. The bikers have spent months conditioning their muscles and their minds for the trip. And today, on day two, I'm imagining that their commitment is being challenged as their minds and muscles scream back, "What were you thinking?"

Our spiritual journey is no less arduous and challenging. The goal of seeing Jesus and his restored creation seems way out there – so far ahead we can't even imagine the reality of it. So how do we proceed? What's the plan?

1. Keep Jesus and his words at the center of it all. Remember that you are not strong enough, smart enough, or young enough to navigate life's journey on your own. There are too many unseen, unpredictable forces – the wind, the weather,

an emphasis on the Coffee Break/Story Hour/Little Lambs ministry contain real-life stories and inspirational teaching. They are currently out of print, but available free on our website. You may print, copy, and use to encourage your leaders.

- ***Leading With Love***, by Barbara Brouwer
- ***Linking to the Lost***, by Donna Vander Griend
- ***Linking to the Church***, by Barbara Brouwer
- ***Little Ones Need Jesus***, by Jacque Bolt & Diane Dykgraaf
- ***The Priority of Prayer***, by Edi Bajema

New for fall 2008 from Faith Alive Resources!

- **Discover the Parables of Jesus** (6 lessons)

The stories Jesus told had lots of surprises and thought-provoking teaching in them. They often made you want to change your way of living—and that was the point. Learn together from Jesus what he wants to show and tell us about life in the kingdom of God.

- **Discover Mark** (12 lessons)

The straightforward, action-packed gospel of Mark is one of the first Bible books a new believer should read. In this newly written study, you and your small group can discover anew the good-news of Jesus and what his life and death mean for us today.

Children's Ministry Resources

My First Message, A Devotional Bible for Kids, by Eugene Peterson. One-of-a-kind Bible for children that transforms reading into an interactive experience. Filled with vibrant artwork, fun stories, and one of today's most beloved Bible translations, *My First Message* is changing how families experience devotions together. (www.messagebible.com)

illness. Wind blowing at your back is a wonderful thing, but wind blowing in your face is hard. Sunshine is awesome, storms are awful. You need Jesus to get you through. Stay in his word, study the stories and instructions and hear his words of challenge and encouragement – “I’ve been there, keep going, I’ll help you get through this.”

2. Find some friends to journey with you. We were not meant to travel alone. The mystery of the human race is that we are better together, created for community. We need each other for safety, for support, for encouragement. Our spiritual journey was not meant to be solo either. Get a small group of fellow travelers and covenant together to do the next leg of the journey together. Keeping Jesus and his word as your focus, love each other up the mountains and through the valleys of life.

3. Write it down – mark the memories. Be sure to rest. Stop and smell the roses, feel the morning air. Speeding along to get to the end of the journey is an option, but not optimal. God has placed within each of us the need to be refreshed. Our muscles are much more effective when we breathe deeply. Spiritually, too, we need to take time to see God as he reveals himself. He will do that through our friends and our Bible study, but also in the silence. Journal not only the activity of your life but how it feels to sit in the silence, listen, and breathe deeply.

4. Develop a wholistic plan. Bikers need more than good muscles to make it from Washington to New Jersey. Christians need more than intellect to get from birth to heaven. We are heart, mind, and body. What does your heart need to grow in Christ? Among other things, I need the hugs and smiles of friends, family and grandchildren. What does your mind need to stay healthy and alert? Do you need another Bible study or someone to pick you up and get you back on the road? What does your body need? Rest or a disciplined lifestyle? Develop a plan that allows God to permeate every minute of your life, not just on Sundays or in small group. Ask him to grow your heart, mind, and body so that you can press on as a fully forming child of His.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not

Donations Appreciated

Small Talk and *Direct Connect* resources are offered free of charge by Christian Reformed Home Missions. You can help support small group ministries through [your donation.](#)

grow weary and lose heart.

–Hebrews 12:1-3

Diane Dykgraaf
Small Group Ministry Developer
Great Lakes Region

Good Story

“Read it again!” I barely had the last sentence read and I heard these words from my three-year-old daughter. It was Cathy’s favorite book, and nothing pleased her more than to turn back to the beginning for another adventure with *Harry the Dirty Dog*.

We love a good story, don’t we? Think of your favorite book or movie. Stories have a way of involving our thoughts and emotions that transports us to another realm, yet connects us with reality at the same time.

Eugene Peterson writes this about the Bible: “The Scriptures, simply by virtue of their narrative (story) form, draw us into a reality in which we find ourselves in touch with the very stuff of our humanity; what we sense in our bones counts. It is a story large with the sense of God, a world suffused with God, a world permeated with God’s spoken and unspoken word, his unseen and perceived presence, in such a way that we know it is the world we were made for, the world in which we most truly belong. It isn’t long before we find ourselves imaginatively entering the story, taking our place in the plot, and following Jesus.” (*Eat this Book*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., copyright 2006 Eugene H. Peterson.)

Don’t grow weary in telling God’s stories to children. In this day of fragmented families and virtual reality, kids need the truth to impact their lives. As you repeat the words, pray that the Holy Spirit will breathe life into the story so the children will sense God’s presence in and around them.

You are receiving *Direct Connect* because you either signed up on our website or subscribed to this mailing list through a Christian Reformed Home Missions Small Group Ministry Developer.

You are subscribed as %%emailaddr%%. To unsubscribe, send a blank email to %%email.unsub%%.

If you have questions or comments about this list [e-mail us](#) or call 800-266-2175.