

July 2009

Seven hours of painting! That's how I spent my Independence Day eve, much of which entailed slick maneuvering to avoid the weather's evil intent to ruin my hard work. Why spend hours painting the garage door under threatening skies, you ask? Why not wait for sunnier climes? A man can take bright turquoise trim for only so long before he breaks. I was teetering; you'd do the same.

After the paint vs. rain battle, which I providentially won... this time, Linda and I relaxed in front of the TV. That's when I saw the most outrageous and brazen attack on marriage I have ever seen. No, it didn't occur in a show we were watching. If it had, I could have simply blamed it on morally bankrupt Hollywood. Rather, it was through a commercial.

"When Divorce Isn't An Option," read the tag line for AshleyMadison.com, a dating service for married people. That's right, married people. When a married person is "stuck" in a bad marriage, he/she can simply go to the website and find a nicer, snazzier, thinner, sexier person to date, without having to sacrifice the benefits of marriage. What a deal!

When I search the scriptures, I find only two relationships to which God calls us to commit ourselves until death: our relationship to him and our relationship to our spouse. Although we are called to love everyone, our marital bond is considered

special. God's view of marriage stands in stark contrast to what's happening throughout our country, including Maine.

Marriage is slowly eroding in Maine. More people than ever are living together, gay marriage legislation has passed here, abuse and alcoholism are ever present. Now there's a dating service for married folk, promising both the cake and the fork to go with it.

Although this commercial is not targeting only Maine, it reminds me of how great the challenges are for Christian counselors here. After living in Maine for nearly three months now, I have heard of only four other Christian counselors. That's about one fifth of my graduating class of counselors at Covenant Theological Seminary, or roughly one Christian counselor for every 350,000 people in Maine. All this points to an escalating need for solid biblical teaching, preaching and counseling.

Jordan's Bridge Christian Counseling is now up and running and in need of your prayers and support. Please keep praying for potential clients, a permanent site in which to counsel, willingness of local pastors to embrace Christian counseling and of course for Free Grace Church to grow at God's pace.

In Maine we are up against an amazing array of attacks on marriage, including an audacious dating website for married people, and the army of Christian counselors is small. Please pray for us often!

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PRAISES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

- ☞ We rejoice that God is using the praise services to build community at Free Grace. We pray that he would continue to bless these times as we move to twice a month.
- ☞ We give thanks for Grace Community Church and how God is using them to build his kingdom in Lewiston-Auburn. We are especially thankful for their grace in letting us use their facility for our services.
- ☞ We pray for those who have come to the praise services. We pray that God would

draw them into making a commitment to him and to Free Grace.

- ☞ We seek God's leading as we work through the paperwork for insurance and the establishment of the legal entity of the church.
- ☞ We pray for Ken and Jordan's Bridge as he begins to meet with clients for counseling. We pray for the gospel to be clear in his work and for God to bring other broken people to him to be confronted by the gospel.



image by Mary R. Vogt

## Musings on Nothing Much at All

Beth

The sun is shining, the Maine sky is very blue, and God is good. It's easy to remember God's goodness on days like today. There's even fresh strawberry jam in the fridge! However, not too long ago, we were mourning the death of a neighborhood boy who had been friends with our boys. In this reminder of life's frailty, even for active little boys, I was also reminded of God's goodness in granting life to me and my family each day.

So all's well, then? Hardly. Between the days of mourning and days of rejoicing, are tiresome days of nothing much at all. Where is God when I've refereed the umpteenth fight of the day? Where is God when I've been working out for months and haven't lost a single pound? Where is God when, after nearly fourteen years of marriage, my husband and I still don't speak the same language? It's these in-between days that make me want to depend on my own strength instead of God's, not to mention wanting to rip my hair out.

Where is God? The same place he's always been, of course. Everywhere. Everywhen. What a comfort that God's goodness is not dependent on my recognition of it. God grants me life on roller coaster days as well as the tedious ones. His goodness never fails, no matter how many times I have failed to be good to those I love. If you were hoping for a more profound answer, I have no other. But I can think of nothing more magical and wondrous than God's love for the dirty rotten scoundrels that comprise my family. Come visit sometime - I'll even let you referee a fight or two! I might even share some homemade strawberry jam...maybe.

## How are the Morrises Adjusting to Maine?

Linda



**Kyle, Jason, and Scotty celebrate Ken's birthday with a paper "serenade"**

The Lord has been good to us all, and I just wanted to give you a taste of how we have seen that in the Morris family here in Maine.

Ken and I have been living in Maine now just over two months and it has flown by. During that time, we have been able to really settle in and get our bearings, thanks to hard work done by many folks.

On moving day, many friends from both Free Grace church and Christ the Redeemer showed up and all our belongings were stowed in a matter of a few hours. Wow. Ken's parents and my dad helped make light work of the unpacking and rearranging. Per and Beth have helped us in innumerable ways, from finding our way around, to fixing us meals, and more.

Free Grace church has had three praise services - what a ministry to our souls. The music team has done an awesome job, and we are enjoying our "new" pastor (Per) as well! God was present with us at these services and our joy was great. Our weekly Bible study on the Sermon on the Mount came just at the right time for our hearts.

God has granted us amazing neighbors - we've met the six immediate neighbors to our home and they all have blessed us with kindness and good will. One neighbor knows electricity, another landscaping. And we have been invited over for meals at neighbors' homes.

The Lord also blessed us very personally by saving the life of our dog, Foster. The vets in St. Louis were at a loss, and the vet here changed her treatment and brought her back to us. She is now running and barking like her old self. A testimony that God cares about even the smaller details of our lives.

Finally God has blessed us with a great new home. It has been raining here for about three weeks straight now, and our house is doing great amidst ALL this moisture. Not a drop of water in the basement and no leaks anywhere else. It may sound silly, but knowing what kind of winter we will have, we are glad to see our new home can brave the storms.

Thank you all for praying for us here at "Morris Maine" and for all of Free Grace. We are on the ground running now.



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