



Abundant Living Ministries

Encouraging Christian Living since 1978

September 2018

HAPPY 40th BIRTHDAY!

As I began writing this letter, I realized that *Abundant Living Ministries* is celebrating a birthday right about now. I went to the filing cabinet and pulled out the OLD minutes. The first official meeting of the newly-formed Board of Directors was on August 25, 1978... that's 40 years ago! (I'm writing this letter on the 27th of August, so I guess I missed the big 4-0 birthday by two days! ☺)

The 33-acre Brickerville property was purchased by ALM on September 18, just 24 days after that first meeting. That's quick! I remember that the seller of the property gave a very small window in which settlement needed to take place, or the price would be increased. It looked impossible but God was at work!

Dad went to the bank where he had done his personal business for many years, inquiring about a ministry loan for purchase of the property. Of course, the banker quizzed him:

"Do you have a business plan to show us?" (Dad wasn't sure what a business plan really was.)

"How many clients do you expect to have per week in this counseling work?" ("We have no idea," Dad replied. "We will try to help everyone who comes.")

"Well, how much will you be charging each client for a session?" (Dad explained that ALM would provide its services without a fee, knowing the Lord would provide the necessary finances.)

The banker laughed Dad out of his office (well, maybe it was a polite chuckle, but still...). As I said, God was at work. A very significant gift was received from a gentleman who did not know what was going on. Many others gave smaller amounts. A local businessman offered to co-sign for the loan. And... the property was purchased within the two-week deadline.

As I sat reminiscing some of these details, I wondered if we still have record of the OLD newsletters. I found what I think was the very first newsletter written after the official formation of the ALM ministry. (You old-timers remember even-earlier newsletters which Dad and Mom wrote during their missionary years in Brazil.)

Dated January 25, 1979, the letter sounded as though it could be written today... which is a testimony to the steadfast continuance of the original assignment and vision given by the Lord for ALM.

Let me print a few excerpts from that first newsletter:

Many people have come for help. Several came with the specific purpose to find the Lord. We see Him reuniting broken homes, making good ones better, taking out roots of bitterness, and setting people free from fear, worry, anger, and resentment. Our wonderful Lord heals hurts and wounds. Yes, He pours in the healing oil where no one else can reach. He is setting people free from pride and selfishness too.

Then there are those who have no serious problem but need a little encouragement. Who of us doesn't? The Bible says, "encourage one another." And in Proverbs we read, "A word of encouragement does wonders."



Continued on page two

Continued from front page

and from their second newsletter, dated May of 1979...

It is thrilling to see what God is doing! He is working to:

***bind up the broken-hearted,
free the captives,
comfort all who mourn,
provide for those who grieve... to bestow on them***

***a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.***

***They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of
the Lord for the display of His splendor! (Isaiah 61:1 and 3)***

The letter concluded with, **"That's abundant living, isn't it?! Yes it is! And it is His will for each one of us! Praise His name! Thank you for your support of His work! - In the Joy of Jesus, - Norm, Betty and everyone at Abundant Living Ministries**

(John writing now) I'm not sure I need to say a lot more. God is still God of the impossible... the JOY-GIVER... the WAY-MAKER! We continue to see Him heal relationships just as He has done ever since the beginning of ALM. YES... His will is for each of us to live the **abundant life** He offers!



(Dad and Mom) Norm and Betty began counseling in their ALM living room, September, 1978

It's been 40 blessed years! THANK YOU!

John (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)



Question:

I am concerned because some of my child's friends are not good influences on him. Should I limit the time he spends with them? Will that just make him more loyal to them? How involved should parents be in their child's selection of friends?

Response:

Proverbs 13:20 states, ***He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.*** That's pretty clear... people become like those they associate with. Children are no exception. Therefore parents should be very involved in helping their children choose good friends. How exactly might they do that? Well, when it comes to our children's choice of companions, an ounce of *prevention* really is worth a pound of cure! In other words, helping your children *choose* good playmates is easier than ending harmful relationships. Consider some of the following suggestions:

When children are pre-school age, it is not necessary for them to spend large amounts of time with other children of the same

age. Scripture tells us that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child (Proverbs 22:15). That means that when two or more children are together... you have *multiplied* foolishness! In general, pre-school children benefit from lots of time with older, wiser adults. Short playtimes with other little ones are fine, so long as Dad or Mom, or responsible adult is supervising. But left to themselves, young children are prone to get into mischief... silly, foolish behavior. Sometimes this can launch bad habits of speech and/or behavior that can be hard to break later.

Once children enter school, teach them that it is important for them to be *friendly* to all their classmates, but to choose their *closest* friends very carefully. Discuss character traits that are desirable in a good friend and help your child evaluate behaviors that reflect good or bad character.

Learn the names of classmates, especially those that are mentioned frequently in after-school conversation. Invite your child's new friend over for some playtime. Be sure to either call the other child's parent, or better yet, go to their house and meet them personally. This not only allows you to get a feel for the friend's type of home-life, but also reassures the other parent that you will care responsibly for their child. Observe closely the classmate's behavior and interaction with your child. If it seems healthy and positive, continue to foster contact with that friend. If it is negative, simply let that relationship fade away.

Attend school functions where you can observe all your child's classmates and talk to their parents. If at school (or in other settings such as church, or your neighborhood), you notice a family that seems particularly wise, invite that family over for a meal or outing.

Be extremely careful about allowing your child to visit, unaccompanied by Dad or Mom, in the homes of non-Christians. Certainly Christian families want to reach out in friendship to non-believers. But that is best carried out as a family, rather than expecting elementary-age children to be little missionaries. If your child has a close friend from a non-Christian family, make it a family goal to reach out in love to that child. Invite him/her to attend church, Sunday School, VBS, youth group, etc. Bring that child along on hikes, family outings, special events. Let your child's friend see how you live. Let him/her hear you praying at mealtime and whenever needs arise. Show him/her what it means to speak positively, show kindness, work responsibly. Talk freely about your relationship with Jesus. Trust the Lord to work in the child's heart and bring him/her to a solid relationship with Him.

Be willing to go out of your way to connect your child with kids from other Christian families. I will forever be grateful to my own parents who sacrificed both time and money to transport me across town to church numerous times a week. It was there that I formed my closest friends. My school friends were mostly non-Christian. Had it not been for the influence of my church friends, I probably would have been pulled into the ungodly activities of my school friends and drawn into their lifestyle.

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connections when you are willing to trust Him
in this area.**

Pray regularly for your child and his/her choice of friends. God is able to orchestrate some great connections when you are willing to trust Him in this area. Pray regularly with your child for his/her friends, their problems, challenges, etc. It is wonderful when children develop the habit of praying about anything that concerns them, and especially when they learn to regularly pray for the needs of others.

Make conversation with your children's friends whenever you can and get to know them. When they come to like and respect *you*, they are less likely to suggest activities with your child that they know would displease you.

Do not allow groups of children to play in secluded rooms of



your home. Require them to keep bedroom doors open, and if things get too quiet, go investigate. It doesn't take a bad child to be lured into unhealthy play. Simple curiosity has often drawn children into activities that then developed into harmful, hard-to-break habits.

As children move into adolescence, recognize that peer relationships will become very important. This is a normal part of growing up. Don't allow yourself to be threatened or hurt by your child's desire to be with friends. Instead, continue to encourage positive friendships and make your home available as a hangout for your child's circle of pals. One of the best investments our family ever made was the installation of a campfire ring in our yard. Our sons and their friends spent many evenings around a bonfire, playing guitar, talking, laughing, and enjoying their good wholesome relationships.

Don't push your teenagers to date. Instead, encourage them to have lots of friends of both genders. When teen guys and gals pair off, their other friendships generally cool. Then, when this early-dating relationship ends (and almost all do), your child is left feeling very lonely.

Don't be afraid to say "no" when your child wants to spend time with friends that you have reservations about. You might have to suffer temporary unpopularity but better that, than to risk the permanent damage which could happen to your child. Be especially careful about allowing "sleep-overs." Children and adolescents left to themselves, unsupervised, in the middle of the night, can easily get sucked into inappropriate topics of conversation and/or unwise/harmful activities.

Model good friendship to your children. Let them see how you value and encourage your own friends. Let them observe you praying for your friends, writing notes of encouragement to them, inviting them into your home, helping them in times of need.

Remember that the wisest Friend of all is Jesus. Teach your child to walk and talk daily with Him. Then you can be sure He will bless your child with other wonderful friendships!



*Written by Sharon Charles
You can read more from Sharon
on our website blog.*



Coming Soon at Abundant Living

**Six Monday evenings
October 1-November 5, 2018
7:00 - 9:00 PM**

**\$120 per person or \$150 per couple
(textbooks included)**

Designed for those who wish to be more-effective people helpers within the Christian community.

Please register no later than
SEPTEMBER 19th by calling the
ALM office at 717-626-9575

**Registration Deadline
Extended!!**

Lay Christian Counselor Training

Open Arms Childbirth Class

**Five consecutive Thursdays at 7:00pm
October 4-November 1, 2018**

Taught by an experienced childbirth educator, this class covers the same information offered in a hospital course, but includes a distinctively-Christian perspective. You will meet and connect with other expectant couples and gain many practical helps as you prepare for a great labor and delivery. There is no cost for this course. Please register by contacting the ALM office (see contact information below).



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