

From: MTM Foundation [charleschandler@mtmfoundation.ccsend.com] on behalf of MTM Foundation [mtmfoundation@verizon.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 23, 2011 11:40 AM
To: mtmfoundation@verizon.net
Subject: Tortured with "what if's" ?



Ministering to Ministers Foundation, Inc. Newsletter
February 23, 2011

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Backwinding Our Past

My wife and I sat in a movie theatre. The film had been on for a short time, when a noise came from the projection room behind me. The framing fell out of adjustment so that we didn't have a clear picture. Several patrons exited to report the problem to management. The projectionist finally came and stopped the movie. Several moviegoers groaned thinking they'd miss an important scene or two. Shortly a teen-aged employee came into the theatre with an announcement.

"Don't worry," he said. "They're gonna' backwind the movie so you won't miss any of it."

I was struck by this new word: backwind!

And though we didn't have this word until this young man invented it, historians frequently backwind and talk about the "what ifs." Some of these "what ifs" we'd like to change, and some stand as testimonies to good fortune.

On the positive side, Theodore Roosevelt survived a bullet because he had a wad of papers in his pocket. Ronald Reagan survived a bullet that would've been fatal had it entered one inch closer to his heart. On the negative side, Franklin Roosevelt believed had the Japanese come to the west coast after Pearl Harbor, they could easily have come as far as Chicago. John Kennedy ordered troop withdrawals from Vietnam shortly before his death in October 1963-a policy reversed by his successor.

Our lives are often tortured with "what ifs." What if I'd not lost my temper? What if I'd not said that? What if I'd not driven that car? What if I'd gone to the

Foundation in its ministry by making a donation using a major credit card. The Ministering to Ministers Foundation is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization.

[MTM Website](#)

Future Wellness Retreats

April 4-8, 2011
Green Lake Conference Center
Green Lake, WI

July 11-15, 2011
Carson-Newman College
Jefferson City, TN

July 25-29, 2011
Samford University
Birmingham, AL

For additional information go to the
MTM Website:

[MTM WEBSITE](#)

What's MTM all about?

Our Mission:

doctor sooner? What if I'd been morally stronger? What if I'd seen this coming and done something sooner?

Paul's word in Romans 7:14-20 resonates with us. He was a strong Christian, but he often struggled with his humanity.

"The good I would I don't do," he said. He willed to be strong, but his will sometimes failed.

I know Paul's struggle, for it's my struggle, too. And I've often dreamed about backwinding my life and redoing the past. However, such is impossible.

Since we can't backwind and redo, we have to overcome the past and be stronger in the future. Consider three ways we can overcome the past.

1. Practice restitution. The Bible exhorts us to make up for our failure in so much as possible. This is the Zacchaeus model. He promised Jesus he'd give half of his wealth to the poor, and repay four times over those he'd cheated (Luke 19:8).

Many of us should make a phone call, write a letter or send a check to make up in some way for the wrong we've caused.

One man did this with the IRS. He sent some cash and a short note: "Dear IRS: I cheated on my taxes. My conscience gnawed at me, so here's some of the money I owe you. If it ever gnaws at me again, I'll send some more."

I remember mailing a letter to a church leader with whom I'd had disagreements over leadership issues. I believe I was right, but I wasn't right to let the matter disrupt our relationship. I'd moved to another city and been away for two years or so, but I wrote and asked his forgiveness. He reciprocated with a gracious letter to me.

Restitution demonstrates our sorrow for wrong, and we can demonstrate this with restitution whenever possible.

2. Determine to grow stronger. We have a choice after we fail to wallow in the guilt and self-pity, or to learn from failure and grow stronger. Of course the latter is the best option. This is what Paul did. Richard Johns theorized in "The Thirteenth Apostle" that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a tortured memory of those families he'd disrupted because of his rampant persecution of believers. If so, Paul learned to go forward stronger and wiser.

J.C. Watts grew up in a rough neighborhood in Oklahoma. He fathered a child as a teen-ager and had several brushes with the authorities. He could've lived a profligate life, but he found Christ. Watts later gained fame in college football. He also served as a youth leader and in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Watts didn't wallow in guilt or self-pity. He learned from his past and became a better man. So can we.

3. Trust God with your past. In the final analysis, after we've done all we can do to make up for our wrong, we must put our yesterdays in God's hands. He's the God of the past as well as the future, and we trust he'll use our failures in his task of molding us into the image of his son.

In the midst of my personal crisis of termination, a former church member mailed me a tape with a gospel song. Its title was "What Sin Are You Talking About?" The song told of a person continually confessing the same wrong to God, and the songwriter imagined God speaking from heaven, "What sin are you

The Ministering to Ministers (MTM) Foundation seeks to be advocates for clergy and their families in all faith groups who are experiencing personal or professional crisis due to deteriorating employment or congregation-clergy relationships.

talking about?" In other words, the sin was in the "sea of God's forgetfulness" as an old chorus declares.

A God who deals with us in such mercy is a God we can trust with our yesterdays and with our tomorrows.

Michael J. Brooks
*Professor of Communications
Assistant to the President for Public Relations
Judson College
Marion, AL*

Contact us:

Charles H. Chandler, D.Min. Executive Director

Ministering to Ministers
Foundation, Inc.
2641 Cromwell Road
Richmond, VA 23235

Cathy Ralcewicz

Ministry Assistant and
Director of Development

Linda Serreno

Development Assistant

mtmfoundation@verizon.net

Phone (804) 594-2556

FAX (804) 897-4728

Editor: David Al Myers

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YOU Can be a Part of Providing a Blessing

Every Contribution Makes a Difference

In an email we received from a recent *MTM Healthy Transitions Wellness Retreat* participant, the minister stated:

"It was a pleasure, an honor, and eye-opening experience to meet all of you. To share our stories with each other...and especially to hold each other in prayer was a true gift to me -actually, all of us.

"Our time together was an uplifting experience... and just as importantly, it gave me tremendous insight on aspects of ministry that I was TOTALLY unaware of.

"Your wisdom, leadership, and loving dedication are most wonderful blessings. You truly follow Jesus' dictate of 'letting your light shine.' Thank you for being the lights you are!"

Another retreat participant said: "I don't know how you can make the Wellness Retreat any better, just have them more often. Some of us may need a double dose or a second blessing."

Your prayers and financial support are needed in order that others can have the same experience. Though we cannot "backwind" the past, eliminating their trauma, we can provide an experience which enables them to find healing and to grow from their experience of pain. Your gift of \$25, \$50, even \$100 will make a difference. Perhaps you, your family, your business, your church or your Sunday School class would like to consider providing a scholarship of \$1,650 for one person to participate in a five day *MTM Healthy Transitions Wellness Retreat for Ministers and Spouses*. You may click on [DONATE NOW](#) in this article and make a donation through PayPal, you may send a check to MTM Foundation, 2641 Cromwell Rd., Richmond, VA 23235, or you may call the office at (804) 594-2556 to make a donation by credit card.

If you have not yet financially supported the MTM Foundation, what a perfect time to start, and begin a pattern of giving for the future.

Thank you so very much.

Cathy Ralcewicz
MTM Director of Development



Past Issues of *MTM Messenger* on Line

Click this link, [MTM Messenger](#), if you would like to read past issues of the MTM Messenger. Interesting articles, personal testimonies and other information are found in each issue.

[Forward email](#)



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