



PazNaz
July 2015

WELCOME



Welcome to *Transformed Under the Pepper Tree*. In this monthly magazine, you will read stories of how God is changing people's lives at PazNaz, transforming them into the image of Jesus Christ by the power of his Spirit!

You might be asking, "Where can I find information about a specific PazNaz event?" Some information about specific events on campus is found within these pages, but each month *Transformed* is focused on relating stories about what PazNaz is really all about. Rather than programs or events, there are stories about changed lives, stories about people coming in contact with the Savior, and people exploring what it means to become a follower of him. It is exciting to hear what God is doing in the lives of people!

Years ago, Pastor Earl Lee and a group of staff members gathered around a pepper tree located on the northern-most point of what was to become the site for First Church of the Nazarene of Pasadena. They dreamed and prayed that God would provide a place where more people could find power for living through Jesus. What began then has been going on for over thirty years as men and women, boys and girls have come into relationship with Christ in significant ways under the shade of that old pepper tree. The mission of the church hasn't changed. May it continue to flourish as people experience the transforming power of Christ.

Blessings,

B. Scott Anderson
Executive Pastor

CONTENTS

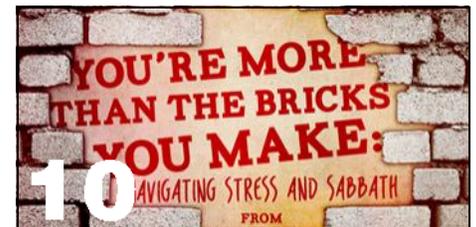
My Name Is Cadillac & I Represent P-Town 3
An Article from Pastor Mackenzie Smith

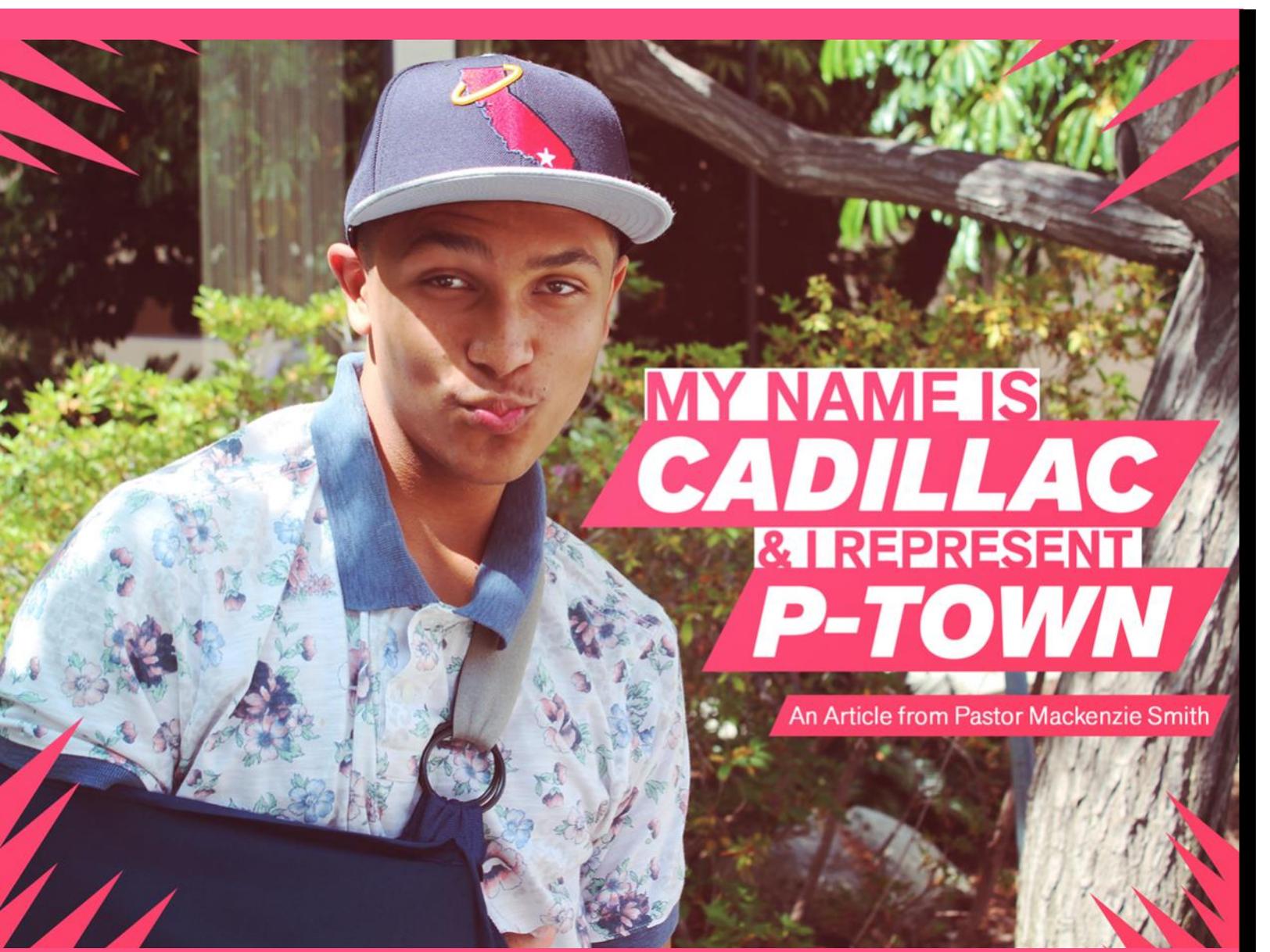
A SoCal Faith Journey 6
The Story of John & Leslie Thompson

You're More Than the Bricks You Make 10
From Pastor Drew Vinson

Transformed is a magazine publication of First Church of the Nazarene of Pasadena (PazNaz). It is designed to highlight the Church's stories of personal transformation. For a complete overview of PazNaz, their beliefs, and ministries, please visit the website www.paznaz.org.

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3700 East Sierra Madre Boulevard
Pasadena, California 91107
626.351.9631
Fax: 626.351.5160
www.paznaz.org





MY NAME IS **CADILLAC** & I REPRESENT **P-TOWN**

An Article from Pastor Mackenzie Smith

**“Louder! I can’t hear you.
This is the FINAL ROUND!”**

A roar erupts from the thousand spectators, as they realize the best player of Kajaba Jaba Can Can will be crowned within the next minute. This game, which is essentially a combination of Tug-of-War, Ring Around the Rosie, and “Don’t touch the trash can,” is happening in the middle of the gym at Point Loma Nazarene University. Charles “Cadillac” Acker, local PazNaz Kajaba Jaba Can Can hero, stares at his opponent with a fierce gaze, preparing for the championship round. The referee makes sure both parties are ready, and then initiates the final round of the tournament by shouting into the microphone. Right as Charles tugs on his ropes, his opponent hurdles a trash can while dragging Charles behind him; in that moment, both the most memorable and the lowest point converged for Charles, as he is catapulted over the trash can for both second place *and* a trip to the emergency room with a broken collarbone. Through the extreme pain, Charles shakes the hand of his opponent and disappears into the crowd of spectators, plotting his competitive revenge for the following year.

This was the unexpected halfway marker of Elev8 2015 for Charles Acker. As an 8th grade student who is involved in PazNaz Middle School Ministries,

he went with over 50 other PazNaz students to Point Loma Nazarene University. Every year, on Memorial Day weekend, hundreds of students from youth groups in Nazarene churches throughout California, Arizona, New Mexico, Southern Nevada, Southern Utah, and Hawaii gather to participate in a variety of competitions, from bubble gum blowing and hopscotch, to a talent show and flag football. Along with the many competitions, the trip is a chance to serve the local community, spend time in worship led by a band from Point Loma, and hear daily messages prepared by the weekend’s speaker, as the community of students strives to know what it looks like to be a community marked by the presence of holiness.

For the group of students who attended from PazNaz, the weekend was filled with Ultimate Frisbee, basketball, volleyball, dodgeball, timed art competitions, a talent show, hula hooping, hopscotch, ping pong, billiards, and many other competitions. PazNaz made a great showing this weekend: Kelly Ng was victorious in the staring contest, Janelle won the girls' arm wrestling, and the 3-on-3 basketball team made it to the final 4. Xanthe Tsirotis won a category of the hula hoop competition, and Mary Neely was a special performer in the *Elev8's Got Talent* show. PazNaz Student Ministries was well represented in all of these competitions and many more, with students passionately giving their all while continuing to recognize the humanity of the students they were competing against.

Charles started coming on trips with the youth group just under a year ago. Traveling to Colorado for *Destination Unknown* (D.U.) in the summer of 2014 was his first experience, and he has attended multiple trips since. Before Elev8, his favorite trip was "definitely D.U." Even though Charles and his family have attended PazNaz for years, my first real exposure to him was on this trip. It doesn't take long before Charles' catch phrases unknowingly slip into your mind, and you find yourself saying things like "psyche," "I'm not even worried about it," and "why would you say that if you know what I've been through." Charles walks through life with a perpetual grin on his face. His joy is contagious, and he constantly builds friendships with the people around him. His constant humor helps people to see their situations in a new light, and his ability to make new people feel welcome helps to make him an integral part of the youth group.

Charles also rarely complains when he is uncomfortable or in pain. Throughout an exhausting weekend at Point Loma, I never heard a negative word come out of his mouth. His broken collarbone was never a reason for him to complain, even in the extreme pain and the time spent in the

emergency room until 3:00 am. He has the ability to endure situations of discomfort or disappointment, and not only tries to stay positive, but sees his own responsibility in helping those around him stay positive as well. Charles' presence on the Elev8 trip and at weekly youth group sessions is valuable to those around him and the ministry as a whole because of the character he shows.

After being back from the trip for a week, and while still donning the sling on his right arm from his encounter with the PLNU gym floor, I had the opportunity to sit down and talk to him about some of his experiences on the trip, his participation at PazNaz, and his hopes for summer plans.

Pastor Mackenzie: How long have you been at PazNaz?

Charles: I've been at PazNaz for a long time. It's been since I was just a little guy.

PM: What do you like most about PazNaz?

C: I really like the community. Everyone's really friendly! It's also cool how they make learning about God fun.

PM: What areas of ministry are you involved in at PazNaz?

C: I've been volunteering with *In His Image* for a year now. I also go to Sunday School a lot. And I like Crew nights too!

PM: If you could change anything about PazNaz, what would you change?

C: I don't know, I really like food. I think more food and hot tubs.

PM: What was your favorite part about Elev8 2015?

C: I liked the food a lot. We had an exciting speaker who told stories I liked, too. I really liked the games! Especially Kajaba Jaba Can Can. That game was my favorite.

PM: Now that you have gone to Elev8, do you have any other plans for the summer with Student Ministries?

C: Yeah! I'm going to NYC.

PM: What are you expecting there?

C: I'm hoping to learn a lot of stuff and just have a good time. I'm excited to get to know my friends better and do fun things with them.

PM: During Elev8, you made it to the championship round in Kajaba Jaba Can Can before being thrown over a trash can and landing on your shoulder. What was going through your mind when it happened?

C: Just don't cry.

PM: Great! Thanks for your time, Charles. Is there anything you want the people reading this article to know about you?

C: You can do anything! My name is Cadillac and I represent P-Town.

- Pastor Mackenzie Smith



Blessing of the Backpacks 2015

Community Partner Supply Drive



PazNaz is collecting school supplies to benefit children in need throughout the LA area. Please bring all donated backpacks and supplies to the drop-off bins located in the Sanctuary Foyer by Wednesday, July 29.

Please provide (1) backpack stuffed with the following:

- Basic Ruler (1)
- Spiral Notebooks in solid primary colors (2)
- Pocket Folders in solid primary colors (4)
- Glue Sticks (2)
- Scissors (1)
- Box of 24 Crayons
- Box of 12 Color Pencils
- Box of 12 Pencils
- Box of 12 Pens, either blue or black
- One zip-pouch for supplies in solid primary colors
- Package of Erasers

For more information, contact Pastor Joe Halbert at jhalbert@paznaz.org or 626.351.2421.





A SoCal Faith Journey

The Story of John & Leslie Thompson

It's always a joy and an inspiration to hear stories of faith, and to see that God is actively involved in our lives. Here is a story about his grace, pulling us to him, often long before we realize it. Meet John and Leslie Thompson, who are relatively new to PazNaz, and enjoy their story of how God has worked and continues to work in their lives and their growing extended family.

- Pastor Alan De Vries

Family History and Background

John and I were both born and raised in Southern California; he is from Monrovia, and I am from San Marino. We met while both of us were working for the City of Monrovia in the Parks and Recreation Department. It turns out we both were at Cal Poly Pomona majoring in Recreation Administration just a few years apart from each other! We married in 1980 and quickly started growing our family. John has a daughter from a previous marriage, and we soon gave her 8 sisters and brothers! We built a log home on 2½ acres in Pinon Hills, an unincorporated community on the northern side of the San Gabriel mountains and called it home for 28 years.

Interests and Occupations

John owned his own landscaping and yard maintenance business that he started before we were married and, on top of that, in 1994, we opened a family-owned and operated business, *Thompson's Family Game Room*. We catered to youth and families by providing a space to play interactive games, and offered a place for classes and community meetings. We were a one-of-a-kind business at that time and were well-supported in our high desert neighborhood. Our older kids loved the game room as it provided them with part-time jobs after school in a

fun environment. The younger children got a bit lost in the shuffle.

We closed the game room after four years, realizing that even though the business was a success, our family was suffering. John put his efforts back into the landscaping business and I started teaching in our local alternative high school; we began the process of healing our family and providing a more "normal" lifestyle. We had attended several different churches in the community, but in 1994 were invited to New Life Church of the Nazarene. There we made several "forever friends" and found the spiritual healing and grounding we were looking for.

Spiritual Journeys

John and I have had different faith-journeys. I grew up in a non-Christian home, but had neighbors who took me to church occasionally. When I was 10-years-old I went to a weekend Christian camp where I first met Jesus and understood that he

wanted a personal relationship with me. I became the “white sheep” of my family. My parents had a very relaxed parenting style and my brother and sister took advantage of the lack of discipline, but I was the “good one.” I realize now how God protected and guided me throughout my young years, and am so thankful and overwhelmed by his loving care.

John grew up attending church regularly with his mother. He was the third of four children, but the siblings were quite spread out; the youngest child came along when John was 10 years old. In John’s words, “I always felt God’s presence in my life, although I didn’t really respond to him until I was an adult. It wasn’t until Leslie and I joined the Nazarene church in 1994 that I truly gave my life to the Lord. Our church was quite small and I learned a lot by just spending time with the pastor and some of the guys on a regular basis. My biggest period of growth came when I volunteered to take over the adult Sunday school class for one quarter. That three-month period extended to many years of teaching that I thank God for now!”

Unknown to either of us, we had someone praying for our salvation before we were even born. As I said, my immediate family were not church-goers and neither were my grandparents. However, my grandfather’s grandfather was a devout Christian man. My great-great grandfather, Lyman Stewart, left a legacy that has greatly impacted both my life and the lives of my husband and children. Lyman was a co-founder of what is now Biola University, the Union Rescue Mission, and Union Oil. Most importantly for us is what he wrote in his last will and testament, “It is my earnest desire that my children and grandchildren shall ... accept as their personal Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who has redeemed us all with his own precious blood.”

I didn’t know about Lyman’s strong faith until I was in my mid-thirties; to my family he was a crazy religious fanatic – an embarrassment. John and I are humbled to know that God cares for us and loves us so. We have 9 children, and our 15th grandchild was just born in late March. We are truly blessed! Most of our children are following Jesus, and the grandchildren are all growing up to know God’s love. Our prayer has become like Lyman’s – that our children and children’s children would know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior and serve him.

Life Challenges

Our family has gone through some tough times. We had to have one of our sons removed from our home in 1996. This boy had always been a hard child to discipline, but he really began making bad choices and spending time with the wrong people as a pre-teen. When he was 14 we had him escorted to an “outward bound” type of program in Northern Idaho that was supposed to last for six weeks. He didn’t respond as hoped, so we enrolled him in a school through the same program where he stayed for the next couple of years.

The decision to have our son physically removed from our home was one of the most difficult things we have ever done. It’s too long a story for this article, but let’s just say he was a danger to both John and me as well as our other children. God did a lot of healing during those years and our church family was very supportive.

God Is Working!

The longer we live, the more amazed we are at God’s mercy and loving kindness! Most recently we went through some major life changes beginning about 4 years ago. I retired from teaching, and the very next year both John and I went through some medical issues that

were much easier to handle with me at home. God knew where we would need to be! We retired from our positions in our church the next year (we were both on the board and leaders in a variety of areas) feeling that God had a change in store, yet not knowing exactly what to expect. Again, God knew what our future held.

Soon, my mother was diagnosed with lung and bone cancer and given a few months to live. I began spending most of my time with her at her home in San Marino and John would commute back and forth from the high desert. During this journey it became evident that God had freed up both John and me to be able to spend the last few months with my mother unhindered. She passed in June 2013, leaving her house to John and me. We moved to San Marino nearly two years ago now. God orchestrated some house trading in our family; the house we built in Pinon Hills is now the home of one of our daughters, her husband, and their two little girls. God is amazing!

Words of Wisdom

We reluctantly came to PazNaz in September 2013 – it seemed way too big! Our old church in the high desert had a membership of about 80. However, we trusted God to guide us to a new home church. We loved this church from that first Sunday, and were surprised to feel such warmth and love. We joined the Del Rey Sunday School class that fall, transferred our membership, and became part of a home group. Just recently a position opened up and I am now serving as an administrative assistant to the Worship and Celebration Arts department!

Over the course of this faith journey, we have learned to trust God to provide for all of our needs. We’ve learned to look for lessons in the situations that God has allowed us to experience and to use the lessons we’ve learned to help others. We believe that everything happens for a reason and that, like Moses, we may not get to see the fruits of our labor – but we work diligently none the less.

- Leslie Thompson

Over the course of this faith journey, we have learned to trust God to provide for all of our needs. We’ve learned to look for lessons in the situations that God has allowed us to experience and to use the lessons we’ve learned to help others.

PazNaz Praise

An Evening of Praise & Worship

Featuring the Celebration Choir and Sunrise Orchestra



Sunday, July 12

6:00 pm, Sanctuary

*No Tickets Required • Open Seating • Freewill Offering
Ice Cream Sundae Reception To Follow*

First Church of the Nazarene of Pasadena
3700 East Sierra Madre Boulevard
Pasadena, California 91107
www.paznaz.org • 626.351.2433

PazNaz



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

If you feed those who are hungry and take care of the needs of those who are troubled, then your light will shine in the darkness. - Isaiah 58:10



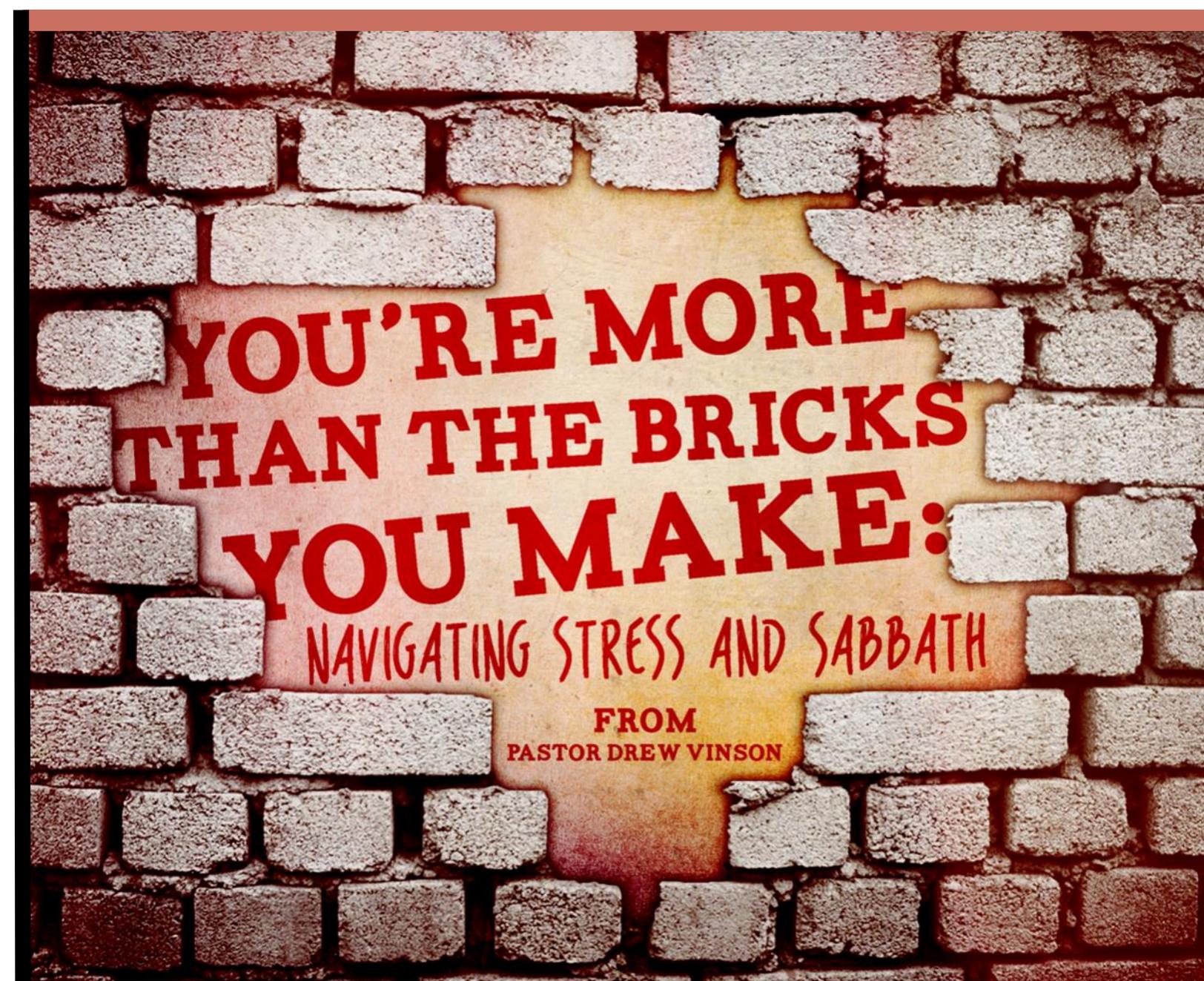
Church in the Park Needs You!

There are approximately 80,00 homeless individuals, including children and adults, in Los Angeles County. Church in the Park provides a hot breakfast and uplifting devotional to nearly 150 people each week at Central Park near Old Town Pasadena. Each Sunday, breakfast is prepared on the PazNaz campus at 6:30 am and is served in the park at 8:45 am.

Ways You Can Help

- Pray
- Volunteer Your Time
- Financial Support

Please fill out a Sign Up Form from the rounders on campus or contact Pastor Joe Halbert at jhalbert@paznaz.org or 626.351.2421.



YOU'RE MORE THAN THE BRICKS YOU MAKE: NAVIGATING STRESS AND SABBATH

FROM
PASTOR DREW VINSON

It was the end of a very long summer, and my wife Laura and I *finally* took a vacation.

We went to Hawaii and stayed on the beautiful island of Oahu at a resort in Waikiki. It was right on the beach with a gorgeous view of the clear blue ocean. Because it was my first time in Hawaii, I had a huge bucket list of things I wanted to do while we were there; I wanted to see and do everything imaginable. So we drove our convertible rental car all over the island, hiked up a volcano, went to four different beaches, ate a lot of pineapple and shaved ice, went sea kayaking, swam under a waterfall, went to a luau with fire dancers... just to name a few activities. By the end of the trip, we were more exhausted than we were before we left for vacation. We went on this vacation to rest and relax, but we both came home sick because of how exhausted we were!

I'm guilty of being someone who doesn't know how to rest. I love to be active and work hard, so I get a little anxious when I sit still for too long. Maybe you can relate. Maybe your life is really busy and stressful like mine: you are active and involved in so many things, you work really hard, and sometimes you forget to just *stop and rest*.

As a youth pastor, I see so many high school students who are even more stressed out, anxious, and rest-less than I am. So many expectations are

placed on today's teenagers, everything from getting good grades, to excelling at sports, to winning awards and scholarships, to participating in as many extracurricular activities as possible. And let's not forget the added pressures of dating, friendships, and family.

Dr. Tim Elmore is a best-selling author and speaker who is an expert on leadership and young people. He cites a recent report from the Anxiety and Depression Association of America that says one in eight children suffers from an anxiety disorder. It is very difficult, especially in today's world, for teenagers to navigate the overwhelming stress thrown at them

on a daily basis. Dr. Elmore observes two realities that have led to what he calls the "stress dilemma" among today's young people:

Teens have never been more pressured by adults to make the grade, make the team, make the cut, and make a difference. They feel like losers if they're not the best.

Teens have never been more devoid of coping skills to handle adversity. This is due to adults over-connecting, over-protecting, over-serving, and overwhelming them.¹

* * *

At the beginning of the book of Exodus, we find out that the ancient Israelites had become slaves in Egypt. Pharaoh put them to work in his kingdom as brick builders and field laborers. They worked all day and never got time off. All they knew was pain, suffering, work, and hard labor. It was a brutal existence. Their worth was attached to what they produced, to how many bricks they made.

Many of us know the story well: God and a guy named Moses teamed up to free the Israelites from bondage under Pharaoh. They started a new chapter of their history as a freed people. God gave these freed Israelites new laws to live by as they started their new chapter as a holy nation. One of those laws had to do with *rest*:

Keep the Sabbath day and treat it as holy, exactly as the Lord your God commanded: Six days you may work and do all your tasks, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Don't do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your oxen or donkeys or any of your animals, or the immigrant who is living among you—so that your male and female servants can rest just like you.

Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, but the LORD your God brought you out of there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. That's why the LORD your God commands you to keep the Sabbath day.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15, CEB

The word "Sabbath" comes from a Hebrew word that means "stop" or "cease." God wanted Israel to have a Sabbath day when they would stop working. They wouldn't spend this day laboring hard in the fields – instead, they would stop and rest and thank God for it. God wanted everybody to do it – family members, leaders, servants, donkeys, oxen – everybody, even animals, was to *stop and rest* on the Sabbath day. The Sabbath day was grounded in the order of the world that God set in motion from the very beginning, a rhythmic order of work and rest.

Imagine you were an ancient Israelite. You spent your whole life as a slave in Egypt where your entire existence was defined by work. Your identity, your self-worth, and everything about you was wrapped up in what you produced, in the work you did, in how many bricks you made. Then God came along and said, "Work is good, but I'm commanding you to *stop and rest*. Stop working and just be." God didn't want Israel's identity to be wrapped up in what they did or in their work. Their identity was in God and God alone. This was a weird law because it went against everything Israel knew to be true. This God declared that they were more than the bricks they made. This God declared *rest* to be a holy thing.

We're a lot more like the ancient Israelites than we think.

How often do you get caught up in the stress and busyness of life?
How often do you forget to *stop and*

rest? How often do you define yourself by your work, by your jobs, by your careers, by the money you make, by the stuff you produce? These are not inherently bad things (I'll be the first to admit that I love my job!). But when we start attaching our self-worth and identity to what we produce, we are living in slavery and not in the freedom of being chosen and loved by a redeeming God.

We use this metric system for our young people, too. High school students, in particular, are defined by their marketable talents, athletic abilities, GPA and SAT scores, part-time jobs, community service hours, and church participation. Stopping and resting is difficult to do when so many other things demand their attention. What if they get behind? What if they miss out on something? The pressure can be unbearable. Dr. Elmore says, "Our young people are far too valuable—and their future is far too important—to allow stress to dictate these years they spend preparing for adulthood." I agree, and I think the biblical idea of Sabbath can help our young people with the constant stress and anxiety they face on a daily basis. It can help us adults, too.

The stress and busyness of life are not always bad things. What's bad is when we let them define who we are. Our identity and self-worth is not attached to how hard we work or how many bricks we make. Our identity is not based on what we do, in what we produce, or how good we are at different things. Our identity is found in a God who loves us and invites us into an order of the world with a healthy work-rest balance. Sometimes we just have to stop, rest, and realize who we are and to whom we belong.

- Pastor Drew Vinson

¹ "What to Do About a Stressed-Out Teen," November 4, 2014, <http://growingleaders.com/blog/stressed-teen>

OUR IDENTITY AND SELF-WORTH IS NOT ATTACHED TO HOW HARD WE WORK OR HOW MANY BRICKS WE MAKE. OUR IDENTITY IS NOT BASED ON WHAT WE DO, IN WHAT WE PRODUCE, OR HOW GOOD WE ARE AT DIFFERENT THINGS. OUR IDENTITY IS FOUND IN A GOD WHO LOVES US AND INVITES US INTO AN ORDER OF THE WORLD WITH A HEALTHY WORK-REST BALANCE.

Wednesday Nights at PazNaz

Summer of Stories

July 8 - August 19 at 6:30 PM

A weekly intergenerational event filled with stories from the PazNaz community

For more information, contact Pastor Heather Rickert at herrickert@paznaz.org or 626.351.2477.