

WHY DO WE HAVE SO MANY ISSUES

Enchanted—the Movie. Seen it!? It debuted in 2007, starring Amy Adams & Patrick Dempsey. In brief, it was a study of juxtaposed paradigms, one, an idyllic cartoon fantasy, the other, a hardcore, concrete jungle reality, that, through evil magic, meet up in New York City.

Okay, it was a love story. Cartoon, airhead princess wanna-be meets city tough skeptical New York lawyer. The rest of the movie is the story of how each of their worldviews is challenged, whoops, sorry; the rest of the movies is how they discover they are in love with each other.

Do you see the point here? We have become so enamored with words, with analysis, with categorization and the like, that we have lost sight of some very basic truths. Like, *LOVE*, for in-

stance. There's a lot you can say about love; but isn't it more wholistic, more exciting, to actually experience it, to taste it, to feel it? But, you say, it's just not that simple. Of course it's not. Love has become excessively complicated; most relationships have evolved into protectionistic chess games where each party is expected to give a little, to reveal proportionately, in relationship to what has been reciprocally revealed, etc.

We have issues.

Silent running fears, insecurities, relationship conflicts, parental discontent, privacy protection issues, fears of being known/fear of never being known, or loved: overwhelming responsibilities, crippling life patterns, persistent lying, faking good/faking bad, hiding behind a mask/wearing our hearts on our sleeves, eating disorders (chocolate excluded), obesity/anorexia, prescription drug dependence, substance abuse and addiction, uninhibited lust (men/women, cars, sports, jewelry, fantasy), envy, arrogance, judgmentalism, social posturing, organizational (& personal) manipulation, anger/revenge, grudges/backstabbing, laziness/fear of failing. And the list goes on.

We've turned our lives into such a jumbled mess of unresolved issues that we don't even know where to begin to unravel the Gordian Knot. Where is Alexander when you need him!?

In the fantasy world of *Enchanted*, in the imaginary land of Andalasia, no one has issues. Life is simple. Giselle loves the Prince: the Prince loves Giselle.

But, here, in this not so heavenly realm, we live lives of hesitation and fear because we might offend, or reveal too much, or make a mistake, or whatever.

Freedom of spirit, regardless of personality type, can only be found in a settling of soul that knows who it is and its place in the universe. In other words, you're comfortable in your own skin.

"FINE!" you say, "How do I get there!?" Quite frankly, it's a decision you make to stop playing games with yourself and with other people. If you've never been brutally honest with yourself, ask a true friend to help. Hopefully, you'll still be friends afterward. In social relationships it's a bit sketchier; the trick is to be *yourself* in every situation without constantly offending people.

Too many Christians have fallen into a game-playing motif with God, church, our families, and friends. We have lost the ability to be real, transparent, even truthful; let alone comfortable and at ease. Our world looks more like Andalasia than New York City. After awhile we only want an Andalusian Christianity; one that is all nice and pretty where everything is simple and straightforward. [Ah, wouldn't that be nice.] It's just not real.

We need to live our faith in the hard stuff of life, where we get dirty and our faith falters, and we get angry, and we want to throw the whole thing out the door. It's the hard stuff of life that builds us, that breaks us, that forces us to dig our way out of the rubble and start over again.

Sure, we have issues. But there is nothing we endure that God cannot use to soften our hearts and to steel our wills. We are meant for greatness, all of us..., issues and all. How are you doing with that?



SHIFT Tips

~culture clues that click

[Vol. 7, # 1.]

1. Stop complaining: start encouraging people.
2. Get on-top of political issues.
3. Read John Marks book, REASONS to BELIEVE.
4. Walk in the cold with a friend: then sit by an open fire.
5. Start something NEW.
6. Hold a Winter-fest for no reason. Make good food.
7. Shovel people's driveways.

dinner-table.

The objective of these **dinner-discussions** is to open the door for openness between a Christian perspective and the myriad of other intellectual perspectives held in the colleges and universities of our country. If you are unaware, there is an unwritten assumption that the Christian faith has little, if anything, to contribute to the educational process in our institutions of higher learning. In fact, it is seen as even anti-intellectual by most academics and administrators.

We hope that the open discussions we provide around a wonderful evening and catered dinner will open the door for the Christian faith to contribute just a little more to the educational process. Pray.

REASONS FOR FAITH— NONE!

If you recall NEED was asked to assume the ministry of The Leadership Connection in facilitating the **Five College Amherst RoundTables**. Our next RoundTable will take place on February 19th, at The Ark on UMASS campus. Our focus presenter for this dinner is **John Marks**, reporter, journalist, and former producer for Morley Scafer on **60 Minutes**.

John's newest book, **Reasons to Believe: One Man's Journey among the Evangelicals and the Faith he Left Behind**, will be released on February 25th. John graciously allowed us to get our hands on four of the chapters for our RoundTable discussion.

In his book, John Marks tries to answer the question posed to him in 2003—"Will you be Left Behind?" His answer traces his early evangelical roots in Texas and his gradual rejection of both his roots and any need for a belief in God whatsoever. He does not pull any punches. He is straight forward, erudite, and intellectually honest.

This should be an enjoyable evening as our group of about 45 professors from the Five College Area (Amherst College, Hampshire College, University of Massachusetts, Smith College, & Mt. Holyoke College), come together to respond to John's presentation then hold their own discussions around the

Forging Faith — Communicating Clearly

One of the courses in the final stages of development is Communicating Clearly: understanding to be understood. Our research has shown that Christians don't know their audience— we are so focused on getting our agenda across that we forget to listen to what the other person has to say.

We're looking for a place to *field test* this hot-off-the-keyboard course. Wanna play Guinea Pig! Contact us at admin@needinc.org, or call me direct at 413.259.0077.

GROUND HOG HEAVEN— six more weeks of winter

Every Spring it's the same ol' battle with our "pet" groundhog and his family. Us..., or them! Sometimes Starr thinks that we're planting our garden just to feed the local woodchuck population. She has oft hinted that she would like a .22 caliber rifle with silencer and telescopic-infrared sights. The upstairs bathroom window is her operations point. But until Spring, we now have six more weeks of winter, thank you Punxsutawney Phil.

Winter around the Davis Den is Christmas/New Year's celebrations stove in our "fire-room" and settle in with time to ponder our life, our future, and to

Starr and I enjoy each other; even love shoveling snow together. We nights. Romantic? Absolutely! It's true,

But we're ready for something know what, but something. All of us get we know it's time to change our life-patterns. We're there. So remember to pray for us if you will. We're not sure where all this is going.

My mother, Florence, is still going strong, at almost 94. Her humor is still sharp, even though her mind isn't quite as so. But she still get's around pretty good! Keep her in your prayers too, please. ☺ !



Ready! Aim! Infrared site ON?

always a time of warmth and wonder. Following the we're fairly tuckered-out. So we crank up the wood some good books and Star Trek reruns. It's also a talk about our concerns for what is to come.

we always have. Winter brings out the best in us. We have dinners by candle-light in front of the fire most ask our kids.

to **change**. We don't to that point in life where

To God be all praise,

Gary & Starr

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