Smudges on the overhead molding of interior doorways are a strong indicator that boys are at large. Watching as my own boys slapped the wall above the door as they passed into another room reminded me of my own adolescent habit; it just feels good to be growing taller and being able to reach higher.

How many young basketball players have known the joy of (at last!) being able to touch the net—then to be able to reach higher and higher, until the rim is within their grasp and, for a few, to rise beyond the rim to the heights of slam-dunking! I’ll never forget the thrill of watching my son Kyle slam-dunk in a high school contest against the Bigfork Vikings. It dawned on me how much he had changed and grown; yet, he hadn’t simply grown—Kyle had gotten better! Growth and change don’t always mean improvement.

My Cornish-cross meat chickens are getting bigger by the day, but they’re also outgrowing their legs and their hearts; plus, they’re treating each other abominably in their insatiable hunger. Some will not live long enough to be butchered for the freezer! Further, change for its own sake is often simply an indication of caprice, ignorance or dissatisfaction; improvement does not necessarily follow.

When God engineers growth and change, He always improves His project. Think of the progressive development of creation, as the Creator built from day to day. Jesus promised to build His Church so well that “the gates of Hades shall not overpower it” (Matthew 16. 18). The apostle Paul elaborated with regard to Christians being of “God’s household, having been built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2. 19-22). And Peter’s encouragement: “you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2. 5). As believers, “we are His workmanship” and are “being transformed into [the Lord’s] image from glory to glory” (Ephesians 2. 10 and 2 Corinthians 3. 18).

Four young basketball players have known the joy of (at least!) being able to touch the net—then to be able to reach higher and higher, until the rim is within their grasp and, for a few, to rise beyond the rim to the heights of slam-dunking! I’ll never forget the thrill of watching my son Kyle slam-dunk in a high school contest against the Bigfork Vikings. It dawned on me how much he had changed and grown; yet, he hadn’t simply grown—Kyle had gotten better! Growth and change don’t always mean improvement.

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Montana Bible College is working through the challenges of growth and change. Some we plan, much we don’t, but in either case we are confident in the loving eye and secure arms of our sovereign God. We would not have planned to say farewell to three of our friends and co-workers in recent months. God has built a wonderful ministry team, and seeing Barbara Dykema, Billie Orr and Jen Lundstrom move on would not have been in any script we would have written. We trust Him, though, to move the pieces on the “playing board” of His Kingdom according to His grand and perfect design. He has something “new and improved” for these sisters and for the Bible college they left behind. The Lord has provided Rebecca Sykes, Barb Hanno and Leota Fred to fill and develop those positions here.

We have had on our drawing board, though, a plan for modest growth in student numbers, and we’re seeing just that. Our design for intentional “making disciple-makers” involving all staff and students is coming together well. We’re moving forward toward the goal of accreditation with the Association of Biblical Higher Education, and progress is steady with the end in sight. We’re planning toward adding a concentration in outdoor ministry to our four-year Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies degree, and we’re seeing exciting open doors toward that end. All these constitute change, growth and, we are convinced, improvement. We try to be sensitive to how the Head of the Church is leading and where He’s steering us and, by His grace, to respond accordingly. And, hopefully, without the smudges!
Death Has Been Swallowed Up In Victory! - 1 Corinthians 15:54

We faced the grim reality of death and dying head-on, but our voices rose in joyful triumph: “Christ the Lord is Risen Today! Where thy victory, O grave?”

It was one of those “you had to be there” moments from the fall 2010 Montana Bible College Church Leaders Conference: Eventually Yours – Death, Dying, and the Church. There were many such moments. Jerry Bridges used a single illustration to bridge three sermons, and it will be unforgettable to those who heard it. He spoke of the three-legged stool holding up our faith as we face the pain and suffering of this world—even the last enemy, which is death. The three legs support our faith in the sovereignty of God, the wisdom of God, and the goodness of God. Perhaps you’d be interested in listening to some of these exceptional presentations. You can—or for free. Simply download the conference audio at http://www.montanabiblecollege.edu/leadersconference/conferencedownloads.php. If you prefer, we will send you an audio CD of the conference for just $10. Call the MBC office at 406 586-3585 to request one. We encourage you to put this audio in the hands of all your church leaders!

After the conference, one pastor wrote: “I greatly benefited from last week’s conference and would like to commend Montana Bible College for your hospitality and heart of ministry. What a challenging week to see over and over the centrality of the Cross in all of life’s circumstances! This coupled with an abundance of practical help, made this conference exceptional. I hope to bring my elder board next year.” We pray this is the vision caught by churches all over our region—to equip entire church leadership teams to shepherd God’s people effectively.

Now, to whet your appetite for next year, we are pleased to announce the 2011 Church Leaders Conference: Crushed in the Crucible – Intensive Discipleship in the Church. Jerry Bridges from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, has agreed to join us as our general session speaker. So, mark your calendars for October 20-21, 2011. Here are a few topics to try. What a challenge and blessing to see over and over the centrality of the Cross in all of life’s circumstances! This coupled with an abundance of practical help, made this conference exceptional. I hope to bring my elder board next year.” We pray this is the vision caught by churches all over our region—to equip entire church leadership teams to shepherd God’s people effectively.

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Late in the fall semester of 2009, Bjorn Anderson, a professor at MBC, had a dream of seeing a group of MBC students go overseas on a short-term mission trip. His desire was to see them exposed to missions and as a result have developed within them a greater heart for the nations. Early on August 1, 2010, this came true. Students Jennings Barmore, Lachelle Michl, Nichole Graham, Derek Lockrem, and Whitney Hendrickson, along with Bjorn Anderson, drove to Denver, Colorado. Their long-anticipated trip to India had begun, and when their flight from Denver arrived in New Delhi the evening of August 3rd, they stepped into a very different world.

Upon leaving the airport, they met up with a south Indian named Raj (a staff member with Passion Movement International and a member at Capital Bible Church), and drove across New Delhi to meet up with Erica and Tiffany Graham, MBC students who served with PMI for the previous two months. Within several minutes of leaving the airport and experiencing New Delhi, the students were overwhelmed with unfamiliar sights, sounds, and smells. There were run-down buildings, temples to Hindu gods on every corner, people, rickshaws, traffic jams, and ox-drawn carts everywhere they looked. This was going to be a very unique experience for them–an experience that would deeply influence their lives.

Throughout the next three weeks, the team worked closely with both Capital Bible Church and Passion Movement International (a non-government aid organization) in a variety of ministries. They taught and tutored the Indian people in English, worked with PMI's health and education program for slum kids, participated in PMI's ministry to the students of Delhi University, and Bjorn had the opportunity to preach on Sundays and teach on discipleship in the church. Each opportunity brought with it challenges, joys, and many opportunities to share the Gospel with people who had never before heard the good news of Jesus Christ. In addition to the ministry side of the trip, the team was also blessed to do a little sightseeing, taking a couple days to see the Taj Mahal, beautiful temples, and even do a little shopping in some of the many Indian street markets.

With each experience, they were touched by this nation's deep need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a world deceived, lost, and deeply enslaved to false gods. In addition, the team was challenged with the fact that although people in India worship tangible idols, in reality people worldwide are just as enslaved to idolatry as they worship idols such as money, jobs, family, appearance, and comfort. The transforming truth of the Gospel is the good news for the whole world!

India is an amazing, beautiful country, and it is safe to say that the seven MBC students who were privileged to experience it this summer will never be the same. Through it all, they were challenged with their own identity in Christ, the entitlements they felt they deserved as Americans, the deep need for the transforming and hope-giving message of the Gospel, and their call to obey the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. As ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), we are called to spread the good news of Jesus Christ to every people, tribe, and nation throughout the time of our journey here on earth.

These students were passionate about learning English, and I felt blessed and excited to help them accomplish their goal. Most importantly, I learned that God might be calling me to a ministry of teaching English or Bible translation. My prayer is that whichever ministry God places me in, He will allow me to build close relationships and share the Gospel with those around me.

Lachelle Michl

I've always loved kids, but after going to India I was struck by the awesome, sovereign love that God has for them. Whitney Hendrickson
Focus on the MBC Board of Directors
Dr. Donald Cheever

Don Cheever, born in Bozeman, Montana, has lived a fascinating life that exemplifies both growth and change. After graduating from Montana State University, he attended the University of Oregon Medical School in Portland and graduated as an MD with a focus on family practice. While there, he married a nurse, Shirley Koger, and they were eventually blessed with two daughters. After his medical training, Don enlisted in the United States Air Force and was stationed at the Base Hospital at Dyess Air Force Base, a Strategic Air Command base in Abilene, Texas.

While at Dyess, Shirley was diagnosed with leukemia, and upon the advice of his hospital commander, Don took a hardship discharge and returned to Bozeman—he needed the support of his parents to help raise his two young girls. God had a position waiting for him as the Student Health Services at Montana State University. After Shirley’s death, Don enlisted in the United States Air Force and eventually blessed with two daughters. After his medical training, Don served in the United States Air Force as a Medical Corps officer and worked with one of several medical teams as a Faculty Advisor for Campus Crusade for Christ as a volunteer physician under the auspices of the American Medical Association’s Volunteer Physicians to Vietnam for Vietnamese civilians under the auspices of the American Medical Association’s Volunteer Physicians to Vietnam for Vietnamese civilians.

In 1985, Don was stationed at the Base Hospital at Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, Texas. He joined the Montana State University’s Volunteer Physicians to Ethiopia Outreach Mission, using the training he received at MSU to teach the Word of God to literally millions of displaced Ethiopians around the world. In 1989, Grace Bible Church in Bozeman, Montana, sent Don and Winifred to assist the logistics of starting a medical center near Chapanza, Zambia. Unfortunately, the effort to establish a medical clinic, a church, and a school was thwarted by lack of funds. Their next venture led them to Colombia, South America. For two years, Don provided medical treatment for missionaries at Loma Linda, a Wycliffe translation center. Guerrillas and drug lords became more and more aggressive, and finally the danger elevated to the point that all members of the team were ordered to evacuate. Finally, in 1999, Don and others from Grace Bible Church went to Albania to assist missionaries Jonathan and Christianne Rosheger, who were given the responsibility to provide housing, food, clothing, and general assistance to approximately thirty thousand Kosovar refugees.

Don enjoyed bicycle touring, cross-country skiing, and camping. He has also served on the Grace Bible Church Elder Board. Knowing Don’s love for the Lord and his heart for service, it is no surprise that he took an interest in and became involved with Montana Bible College. He joined the MBC board in 1998 when only five students were enrolled. He has watched the growth and influence of MBC with great pleasure. We are fortunate to have this always-changing, always-growing, dedicated man on our team.

Jesus, I my cross have taken, All I leave and follow Thee. Destitute, despised, forsaken, Thou from henceforth all shall be. Perish every fond ambition. All I’ve sought or hoped or known. Yet how rich is my condition! God and heaven are still my own.

Let the world despise and leave me, Thy have left my Savior, too. Human hearts and looks deceive me, Thou art not, like them, untrue. O while Thou dost smile upon me, God of wisdom, love, and might. Foes may hate and friends disown me, Show Thy face, and all is bright.

Man may trouble and distress me, ‘Twill but drive me to Thy breast. Life with trials hard may press me, Heaven will bring me sweeter rest. O ‘tis not in grief to harm me. While Thy love is left to me. O ‘twere not in joy to charm me Were that joy unmix’d with Thee.

Go, then, earthly fame and treasure, Come disaster, scorn, and pain. In Thy service, gain is pleasure, With Thy favor, loss is gain. I have called Thee Abba, Father! I have stayed my heart on Thee. Storms may howl, and clouds may gather, All must work for good to me.

What does it mean to Plan?

Though the last several years have seen our country struggle through difficult social and financial times, as a people, compared to the rest of the civilized world, we continue to exist in unparalleled prosperity. The square footage of newer homes continues to increase; the most popular SUV’s continue to grow in size and amenities. What constitutes an average family vacation continues to become more extravagant. In short, self-indulgence is in; sacrifice is out.

According to Barna research, a Christian-based analysis firm, giving, even in evangelical congregations, continues below 3%. This is remarkable when we consider that giving during the Great Depression averaged 3.2%. What may be just as telling, of those who made giving a regular part of their life, most leave nothing to their church or favorite ministry through their will or estate plan. Why is that? It is simply that many have not been taught or challenged to do so! Most church or para-church ministries are significant failures at teaching God’s people how to give to God’s work creatively. For most, teaching on giving is what they do when they challenge people to tithe.

God, through the pen of the apostle Paul, told us that “if a man does not provide for his own, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” Consider this word profound. It is not simply daily care; it is a long-term plan that places one in a position to care for others if needed. Today, when that planning becomes specific and functional, it is called estate planning. On average, at least half of the households reading this do not have a will or trust. Of those who do, less than 20% have ministry included in their charitable plans. Take this time to commit to revisit your plans. Visit with our staff at Montana Bible College and see if God would urge you to include the work of MBC in your plans.

Jim Rollick, originally from Seattle, Washington, received Christ at the age of 24. He completed Bible College and Seminary in 1989, after which God placed him back in the business world, where he has worked ever since. Jim served in an estate planning and investment firm for approximately 10 years. Currently he works with a small business in Bozeman, Montana. Jim spoke at the recent MBC Leaders’ Conference. You can listen to his session at http://www.montanabiblecollege.edu/leadersconference/conferencedownloads.php.

Soul, then know thy full salvation, Rise o’er sin and fear and care; Joy to find in every station, Something still to do or bear. Think what Spirit dwells within thee, Think what Father’s smiles are thine, Think that Jesus died to win thee, Child of heaven, canst thou repine? Haste then on from grace to glory, Ann’d by faith and winged by prayer. Heaven’s eternal day’s before thee, God’s own hand shall guide us there. Soon shall close thy earthly mission; Swift shall pass thy pilgrim days. Hope shall change to glad fruition, Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.

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Montana Bible College is committed to glorifying God through Biblical higher education by training men and women for a lifetime of dynamic Christian living and service.