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The Western FRONT

where the gospel meets the world



The Making of a Spiritual Arborist

Encounter With Fallen Tree Becomes Defining Moment

By John Broersma, Western Alumnus of 2011, MA Specialized Ministry

In the winter of 2002, while enjoying prayer and praise during my morning commute from my home in Scotts Valley to my office in Pleasanton, I encountered an obstacle that would change everything.

At the intersection of Owens and Johnson, about a block from my office, a large weeping willow tree had fallen into the intersection. While pondering how it could have fallen or have been knocked over, God was nudging me. As I pondered the tree, God impressed on me, "It looked healthy, but its heart was rotten."

The hair on my neck and arms and probably everywhere else immediately rose. The words were not audible; they were more like 30 font bold text inserted directly into my mind. I knew it wasn't my thought, and since I had been praying and asking for guidance I knew God had somehow answered.

But what in the world does this mean? I had no idea. God said what He wanted, and left it at that. So



I drove around the block to take a closer look at the tree. It was about a foot or more in diameter at the base, and where there should have been healthy heart wood, there was a foot-ball sized hole.

Only about an inch or so of healthy material around the perimeter had held the tree upright and giving the resemblance of health. The tree did look healthy, but its heart was indeed rotten. "Lord, what does this mean?"

By this time I was late for work so I drove down the street to my office. I let myself in, told my admin I was not to be disturbed, and locked my door to pray.

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IMPORTANT DATES

JUNE 6

Free Discover Coaching event on June 13 from 6:30-8:30pm. RSVP by June 6 at <http://westerncoaching.com> or contact Lisa Mueller (lmuel@westernseminary.edu)

JUNE 24

Commencement at Saratoga Federated Church at 4:30 pm. Volunteers needed! Contact Carrie Priest (carriepriest@westernseminary.edu)

JULY 1

Developing & Delivering Life Changing Messages class (PCW 515S) - FOR WOMEN ONLY. Registration begins July 1. Class begins Oct. 5.

JULY 11

Art Therapy Introduction class (CNS 565FS) Audit deadline is July 11. Class begins July 18.

JULY 21

Sex Addiction class (CNS 564WS) Audit deadline is July 21. Class begins July 28.

AUGUST 9-10

Global Leadership Summit at area churches with discount for Western alumni (p. 3).

AUGUST 30

Introduction to Coaching class (MCS 510S). Audit deadline is August 30. Taught as a 2-day intensive September 6 & 7, 8:30am-4:30pm.

Don't forget to use your free "Alumni Audit Opportunity." See p. 4. Check out Western's course schedules and syllabi at www.westernseminary.edu for a course description, class dates and times.

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There was no immediate answer, but as I prayed about the matter over the following weeks and months, God let me know that the tree was me... and also the church. Not unlike a petulant child I said, "Well, what do you want me to do about that?" His answer that came over time surprised me... He wanted me to quit work and go to seminary.



Yeah, right... walk away from a very healthy base salary and an even healthier bonus deal to go to seminary? Even though I knew the pressure and strain of work was killing me... soul first and body second, it seemed ridiculous.

So I bargained with God... "You know, I probably will not be accepted by a seminary and even if I was there is the financial side You'd have to work out, not to mention getting my wife behind the plan. I just can't see that all happening." To make a long story a little shorter, I was accepted by both seminaries I applied to, and God

arranged for my company to "invite me to leave" giving me the equivalent of two years of income to walk away quietly, resulting in my wife telling me to take the money and go to seminary... all within two weeks of when I had to notify Western I was coming. God, You are too funny!

The experience of being a middle aged man of means and influence entering an academic community where none of that really mattered was humbling, challenging, and immensely rewarding. Although I had been a lay leader in the church and was well read, it was in seminary that I saw a side of God I didn't know, and I gained an understanding of His great love for humanity throughout redemptive history, of which my story is only a little piece.

So here I am, a Western Seminary graduate, ordination application in process, non-profit discipleship ministry in formation, website semi-functional in development...

who'd a thought?

Though I have no outside income on the horizon, and my wife and I are hoping we don't outlive our savings, we are hopefully facing an uncertain future. Am I worried? Well, sometimes... but not so much. God has used Western to perform a work of grace in me at my advanced age, and has ignited a passion in me for Him and for discipleship as a means to ignite lay leaders in the church.

The Body (of Christ)'s health occurs from the inside out, and I am convinced that lay leaders are the key for health in the Church. My challenge now is: How do I get there to impact others? I really don't know. The things I've tried so far have not reaped results. But somehow I'm not too worried. My challenge is to obey with the light God provides.

If every believer is an ambassador of the Gospel to a weary and confused world, what would happen if lay leaders throughout the church got caught up as I did in faith and conviction? How might they influence the spheres of life they operate in? You'll never know what God can do until you believe Him and step out in obedience.

To reply to John, email him at jmammen@westernseminary.edu.

Q&A with John Broersma

How would you describe the discipleship training tool you're developing?

These are the three aspects my ministry is formed around: 1) Biblical Literacy – forming the mind of Christ, 2) Spiritual Formation – forming the heart of Christ, and 3) Leadership Development – forming the mission of Christ. There are many Bible study formats and discipling systems out there, but most focus on Biblical literacy.

I wanted to see an integrated approach that combined all three. What I am doing is segregating my extensive notes from my classes at Western, along with seminars and reflections, into one of the three discipleship categories. If you go online to www.youtube.com and type in "authentic discipleship, John Broersma" you can find out more about this training tool. I look

forward to the opportunity to walk groups of leaders through this integrated discipling experience.

How did you come up with this idea?

After attending Western for some while, I was struck by how limited my church experience had been in training and developing lay leaders like me. Many church leaders I've spoken to lament that the playing field we call Christianity is "a mile wide, ten miles long, and an inch deep."

I thought that since I had this fairly extensive digital file of materials topically organized, that just leaving it in my computer would be like burying the talent in the ground. As I prayed

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Alumni Pira Tritasavit, Dr. Louie and John Broersma wait for coffee to finish roasting.



Dr. Louie's Own

Recent Alumni Gatherings Foster Community

Alumni never know what they will discover about Western professors outside the classroom. They were taken by Dr. Jeff Louie's novel approach of using a customized popcorn maker to roast coffee beans. If you are wondering, Dr. Louie usually roasts his beans to a medium dark flavor.

This was one of the highlights at an Alumni Gathering that met in April at his home in Millbrae. Previous gatherings have included at least one faculty member and unique settings.

In January, alumni from three decades gathered at a restaurant in downtown San Jose to celebrate Dr. Gary Tuck's 24th year of teaching at Western. In February, many alumni, mostly Marital & Family Therapy degree grads, gathered at the home of Dr. Judith Needham-Penrose in Los Altos, CA.

Alumni discussed ways to serve and network in their local communities. They also responded well to the alumni mentoring program that is launching soon.

Anyone who would like to host a regional gathering at their church, home or local restaurant can contact Jeff Mammen in alumni relations at jmammen@westernseminary.edu.

Summit Discount for Alumni

Western alumni can register for the annual Global Leadership Summit on August 9-10, 2012 at a special discounted rate of \$79 (Reg. \$269). GLS is telecast live from Willow Creek Community Church and features world class speakers, music and drama to help equip Christian leaders around the world.

Here are the five Bay Area host sites. Come join us for lunch at Church on the Hill on August 9. Free to our alums.

- San Jose – Church on the Hill (Western hosting a lunch)
- Foster City – Central Peninsula Church
- San Francisco – Sunset Church
- Pleasanton – Valley Community Church
- Richmond – Hilltop Community Church

Contact Charmaine Williams for details at cwilliams@westernseminary.edu.

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about it, God seemed to be inviting me into this ministry, and a Missionary Church really got excited about the idea and invited me to work under their non-profit charter.

How did Western equip you for developing this?

I can't tell you how many times during class sessions when a point was being developed that I said to myself, "How come I've never heard this in church?" Through the process, God was changing me from the inside out and I was learning to know and love God more completely and committedly.

I caught a passion for God and discipling as a result of my professors investing themselves in their students where the I.Q. of Biblical literacy combined nicely with the E.Q. of Spiritual

formation. The result was a very naturally occurring ministry outlook of leadership development. I see my ministry sort of as "Western Lite" for church lay leaders.

What potential impact are you hoping this has?

As I have spoken with many church leaders and missionaries, it is apparent that God is up to something in drawing people into a more vital relationship with Him. I'm hoping that in some small way I can contribute to a greater understanding of the unity in the Church, and the high calling of discipleship. I'm hoping to have local churches get excited at such a prospect and hold local and regional discipleship training sessions for their lay leaders. Hey, you never know what God can do until you step out in faith.

Meeting Needs As God's Vessel

By Charmaine Williams

You may have heard it said, "You cannot out-give God!" If you've put this to the test, you know it's true. I am a student and an employee of Western Seminary due to the great provision of God and the obedience of His people to be faithful and generous to kingdom work.

Likewise, our Heavenly Father desires to make us a channel of His love to others. It is no mistake that you are part of the Western Seminary family. How can you exercise trust in God and be a channel of His love?

Offering TIME. The San Jose Campus just recently formalized a mentoring program to meet the needs of our students and recent graduates. Make a commitment to mentor those who are facing the challenges you faced, or volunteer at graduation this June. Contact Jeff Mammen at jmammen@westernseminary.edu with your inquiries.

Sharing STRENGTHS. In what ways could Western be a recipient of the abilities you possess? Are you a good editor, artist or tech specialist? What relational skills can you share with Western students? How can your God-given *strengths* and *gifts* meet the ongoing needs of our Western community?

Gifting POSSESSIONS. Finally, each of us is asked to invest monetarily into the kingdom of God. The class of 2011 has combined their gifts this fiscal year to assist with specific needs of the San Jose campus. We are grateful to many of you for your financial help that allows this evangelical training to continue. We pray that you will partner (or continue to partner) with us in the years to come. By sharing your money or in-kind donations with Western, you are helping to meet the continual challenges around scholarships, educational programming and campus operations.

As God's vessel you can meet needs at Western. It is not about the amount of time, depth of skills, or the amount of money. Simply begin by praying for Western and follow God's leading. As alumni you are making a difference and our seminary is forever thankful.

Let's talk about how you or your church can form a Gospel Partnership with Western by discussing an investment of time, strengths and possessions. Email Charmaine Williams at cwilliams@westernseminary.edu or call 408.356.6889 x412.



Mentoring Theme at Alumni Connect

Western alumni gathered on campus in March and shared a meal with Dr. Gary Tuck and other staff. Alumni Emmanuel DeNike (top) and Sarah Germain (right) shared how mentoring relates with counseling and coaching. Western also announced an alumni mentoring program that will soon be launched as an online tool. Dr. Tuck remarked on the centrality of Christ in gospel-centered transformation. This was the 2nd annual Alumni Connect.



Audit a Class for Free!

Alumni can take one eligible course per academic year free as an audit course, including Introduction to Coaching (MCS 510). You need only complete a [Non-Credit Application](#) form and the [Alumni Audit Opportunity](#) and submit them to [Carrie Priest](#), Student Services Coordinator. Email her at carriepriest@westernseminary.edu or call her at 408.356.6889 x 405.

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For alumni news, the Western Front,
and additional community events -
www.westernseminary.edu/Alumni
(click on the "San Jose" button)

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