

MAC

Trust & Discipleship by Pat MacPherson

Last May, at my son's hockey tryouts, I had an interesting conversation with another player's dad that is not uncommon in my day-to-day. Although, the conversation started awkwardly, especially when he asked if he could speak to me in private, it was a discussion that I am often privy to in my work through MAC Ministries.

This dad started sharing about some anxiety and ambiguity that he was experiencing in his life, most notably at work. As he began to share and open up about what he was experiencing, it became clear that he was desperately looking for someone willing to listen. I could tell right away that he was not currently seeking an answer because he, himself, was not clear on the question. Although he could not articulate what he was feeling, we both realized that it was unique and probably not going away anytime soon.

I met this man several years ago through our son's sports team. He had recalled a dinner, at Chick-fil-A, after a hockey game where I told him about MAC Ministries. This simple introduction and acquaintance led

News

MEN ABIDING IN CHRIST MINISTRIES
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him to reach out to me three years later. What transpired was a weekly breakfast meeting every Tuesday through the next couple of months.

Even though he reached out to me and received the invitation to spend some time together, I still needed to develop a trust with this man that would allow for more sharing. As the meetings and sharing continued, enough trust was developed for me to ask more thought provoking questions about his relationship with Christ. As you may know, this is not always an easy subject to discuss. Over time, I noticed him accepting more and more what I was sharing about the Hope I have in Christ which brings new beginnings.

Ultimately, I told this man that it appeared to me that God was trying to be a part of his life and that he needed to let God in. As usual, the response was, "how do I do that?" which became a focus for much of our discussions.

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Above: Pat being interviewed for a TV documentary on Casa Samuel and the medical clinic in Monterrey.

Left: A normal occurrence of Pat amusing others while trying to play games with the kids.

I share this story with you because I am constantly reminded that between the "introduction" of connecting with someone and the "acceptance" of what I have to share about the Gospel, there must be a development of "trust." Trust plays a strategic part in the discipleship process.

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Trust & Leadership *by Dr. Jim Speed*

One of the foundations of the Presbyterian Church is how we utilize “Elders” for essential leadership in the church. Nowhere is this responsibility more evident than when one is becoming a new “Elder” through the mandated examinations, by the Session (current Elders), on matters of faith and belief before they can be ordained. Sometimes that process can be a surprisingly spiritual experience.

Many of us, elders and ministers, remember well listening to a new officer speak about his personal faith journey as part of that examination. The event stays in our minds because we felt the depths of our own faith touched by the sharing. We can recall being touched by the realization that we were privileged to hear something that the officer-elect may never before have said out loud. To put it simply, God was more present, and significantly, more trusted in those moments for both the speaker and the listener.

In the midst of those required times of sharing personal faith I have wished we had known how to continue into smaller groups or perhaps a series of one-on-one sessions in which the examining elders could respond with words of understanding, stories of their own faith and prayer. Something very important, spiritually important, had not been started but not completed.

The sharing of faith there even under duress does demonstrate the continuing need we all have for the direct personal relationship with God, where we actually trust God. For trust is the issue. Most people believe in God but do not feel close enough to trust Him. The officer examination also illustrates how hearing the faith of someone you trust can increase one’s trust in God. Trusting another becomes an open channel for trusting the Almighty.

This is what MAC Ministries is all about. Pat has a gift for enabling men to trust him. By listening, by gently questioning and prodding, by encouraging and all the while

standing with them, he creates an atmosphere where men can talk about their fears, guilt, longings and the empty places in their lives that only God can fill. They increase in their ability to trust, to listen, to share, to pray and in the process to begin living in humble, but confident, trusting relationships with God and, of course, with each other.

Trusting God changes everything. It transforms the home. It brightens the future. It warms relationships. It gives meaning to work. It undergirds integrity. Sermons take on more personal applications. Church friends become more clearly fellow travelers on the business of trusting God with life and the church itself.

What is MAC Ministries about? It is about trust. Who is it about? It is about God whom we know to trust in Jesus Christ. Where is it about? It is about the church which grows stronger when ordinary members are enabled to share personal spiritual experiences such as those elders hear in officer examinations.

Trust & Relationships *by Matt Santini*

It was about this time last year when I got a call from Pat wanting to gauge my interest in a Bible study group with a bunch of high school friends. I immediately said I was interested more for the social interaction than for the spiritual. We spent about an hour talking, about an hour sharing ideas, and the logistics of how this might work. Ironically, the only other Bible study I had ever attended was with Pat in our freshman year at Georgia Southern. I reminded him of that, and the fact that it didn’t go very well. In fact, I didn’t even make it past the introductions when we were asked to share what church we attended. When I said that I was Catholic, the group leader said, “Great! I have introduced a lot of Catholics to Christianity.” A short but pointed discussion followed, and I excused myself and walked home.

I mentioned that I was initially drawn to the social benefits of this group over the spiritual benefits, but as Pat and I spoke, I began to really think about this wonderful opportunity to try something new and to grow spiritually. While I certainly wouldn’t label myself as the most devout Catholic,

my faith is important to me, and I work to stay grounded in that faith so to guide me through daily life, in good times in bad. I tend to wear my religion in my heart and not on my sleeve and I believe that my relationship with God is a very private and personal thing. Being part of a group where we openly discuss that relationship was going to be a challenge, but one that I was willing to take. I didn’t know if being in a group of longtime friends was going to make this challenge easier or more difficult. After all, these are the guys who I have known for most of my life, and with each of them I have shared plenty of baggage, good and bad! I would liken it to going to a doctor for a physical exam. Would you rather have the doctor be a stranger or a friend?

While this group has only been meeting for less than a year, I can tell you that this group has made a tremendously positive impact on my life. The friendships that have been in place for two decades have strengthened through a deeper sense of sharing, understanding and support. It has made me a better person, husband, father and friend.

It has also strengthened my relationship with God in a way that I had never imagined.

I credit Pat for the success of this group not just because he got the group started, but also because of his steady and guiding leadership. He focuses on scripture that is relevant to everyday life while challenging us to explore the “between the lines” meaning of what is being said. The tone is always one of encouragement and never judgmental. We also share plenty of laughter and fellowship as we make our way through the topic of the day. Pat certainly has a gift from God that he is putting to work through MAC Ministries.

I have known that for a while, but experiencing first-hand how his work has enriched my life has made that even more apparent.



Perseverance and Pat by Michael Moreland



I first met Pat MacPherson

about two years ago, and within several months of meeting him for the first time, he called and invited me to a bible study he was starting with a group of men from our church.

Given my disdain for early mornings, I begrudgingly accepted the 6:30 a.m. invitation, and attended the first meeting. I had a fantastic time, but seemed to find excuses not to go back after that.

Aside from my lack of enthusiasm for early mornings, my wife had been experiencing serious and ongoing medical issues for quite some time, and although it was unknown to almost everyone around me, I had become angry with God. I was still attending church regularly, and had all the right answers at Bible studies, but I was not growing in my faith, and though I may have been praising God outwardly, internally I was at a crossroads, and wasn't sure where to go.

Over the next year, as I was wrestling with my faith, Pat kept in touch, and asked me several more times to meet him for breakfast to talk about getting plugged into a men's bible study at the church. Each time, I found

excuses as to why I could not meet, and I continued going through the motions, struggling with why God would allow bad things to happen to good people.

About a year ago, as I was reading several books by a few prominent Christian leaders, God started revealing to me that I had been shortsighted on who He was, and what He was doing. I had begun to think that life was all about me, that as long as I was happy, my family was healthy, and I had a great career, I was delighted to worship God. But as soon as something happened in my life that I could not control, and didn't like, I questioned God.

It was during this time that I was able to finally see and understand the full sovereignty of God, and I realized that he is the same powerful and omnipotent Yahweh of the Old Testament, the same God that sent his son Jesus to die for us on the cross, and the same God that raised Jesus from the dead.

I understand now that God has a master plan, and his plan will transpire no matter what, and that my job as a Christian is to worship and praise God in every situation, and to align and live my life as closely as humanly possible to the example that Christ set throughout his ministry here on earth.

As God was revealing this to me, Pat began calling again, asking if I wanted to get involved in another bible study he was

starting. Pat, likely knowing my proclivity to say no previously, made this commitment as painless as possible. We were going to study the book of Ephesians, it was going to be about one hour every Monday morning, and the only cost involved was the price of the book we were studying.

As Pat was explaining this to me, I realized that this was exactly what I needed, and that Pat's diligence had paid off. Pat began to teach and show us about what it means to abide in Christ, to sit and be still as God reveals himself to us, and the value of creating community and living authentic Christian lives. Pat's ministry has been an extremely valuable asset to my walk and growth in my faith, and serves an often ignored segment of most ministries, reaching Christian men. As men, we tend to shut people off, and rather than reaching out in our times of need, we put up walls in fear that people will think less of us if we admit our faults or express our doubts.

Through MAC Ministries, Pat is changing that age old tendency by tirelessly reaching out to Christian men and getting them plugged into a small group, so that they can fellowship with one another, and grow in Christ together. Men attempt to put up walls, but Pat is tearing them down one man at a time, and I am very thankful that Pat took the time to persistently pursue me.

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My approach to the mission work in Mexico is similar to my approach in Marietta. This was captured in an observation from Dr. Speed (a pastor and friend) as he describes my work in Mexico:



In front of the TV cameras playing "duck, duck, goose" or "pato, pato, gonzo" as we call it in Renacimiento.

"Several years ago, Pat, with some fellow church members, set out to begin a rather simple mission effort to reach a community in Mexico through playing soccer with children. The trust of children led to the trust of parents to the trust of a small church/ministry and then even to the trust of community and business leaders. In this one specific place, trusting Pat and his colleagues and through them trusting God means that in a destitute, chaotic and often hostile place in Mexico, a much needed medical clinic is being built and the witness to the gospel of Christ has built hope and a promised future."



With my friend, Julio from Renacimiento and Pastor Pem Cooley from Marietta. Julio has become a leader among the men in this community. A true blessing.

Thank you for your continued support of MAC Ministries and helping to enable this ministry to serve. May the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, be praised and honored as we move into 2014. Merry Christmas!

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Chairman's Update by Scott McLain

The Thanksgiving and Christmas Season is a wonderful time of year to connect with family near and far, and to enjoy intentional gatherings of friends. Amidst another busy holiday season I am sometimes frustrated by my own lack of availability to spend significant time with those I care about most. It is in this season that I am reminded of and amazed by MAC Ministries—the Ministry of availability. While most Pastors are overworked and many of us have scheduled our lives too full to really connect with those that need us most, Pat is...available. Available to teach discipleship lessons at almost all hours of the day. Available to offer sound Biblical counsel to men and women facing challenging circumstances. Available to walk with men during difficult seasons in their lives. And available to lead missionary initiatives in Monterrey, Mexico.

All of this availability keeps Pat's schedule incredibly full! But MAC Ministries is available because of a loyal donor base that consistently provides Pat and Bridget exactly what they need. This holiday season I am particularly thankful for those that help make MAC Ministries available for whatever good deeds God has laid out in advance. I hope your Christmas is full of the joy of Jesus, who died and rose for us.

Scott McLain, Board of Directors, Chairman



A Note From Bridget's Heart by Bridget MacPherson

We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

— Psalm 78:4

When was the last time you were introduced to someone new? Someone you didn't know before, but now, because of the intercession of a friend or even an acquaintance, you have the potential to begin a relationship. The introduction may go nowhere, you may never see the person again. Or this new contact may end up being an important part of your life.

Now think back to who it was that introduced you to God. For me, as I imagine it would be for many of us, the answer to that question is my parents. Back in October, I had the blessing of time and circumstance to reflect on my first introduction to God. I gathered with my parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins to celebrate the life of my grandfather, my father's father, Jack Brinckerhoff.

To me, he was "Grandpa." To my younger cousins and my children, he was "Papa Jack." Ten children called him "Dad" or "Pop." He was married for 42 years to my grandmother, Helen. After her death, he was blessed to find love again with a wonderful woman, Anne, to whom he was married to for another 23 years. From what we heard spoken at his funeral, numerous people called him "friend."

At one point during the Mass (that's church service for the non-Catholics), all 29 of us grandchildren (and perhaps 2 of the 19 great-grandchildren) stepped forward, one-by-one, to

place a single rose on the casket where my grandfather laid. Being the oldest, I was near the beginning and when I returned to my seat, I was able to watch all of my cousins participate in this symbol of saying goodbye. It was powerful to watch all these young men, women and children step forward with great love and tears in their eyes to pay tribute one last time to the patriarch of our family. Grandpa was the one we all had in common. He was also the one, either directly or indirectly, that introduced us to faith in Jesus Christ.

A social introduction is a beginning. The relationship that follows, whether superficial, circumstantial, or profound, is up to both individuals. The same is true for our faith relationship, except for one thing... God promises us that He is all in. We don't have to question His desire, His availability, His attention. Any doubts that we have as to whether or not He wants to be in relationship with Him do not come from Him. I am thankful for the "faith of my fathers." I look forward to the day when I see my Grandpa again and he takes me by the hand and says, "Bridget, let me introduce you to my friend, Jesus."



Liam, James, Rose, Mary Em, and Sean at Poole's BBQ in Ellijay.