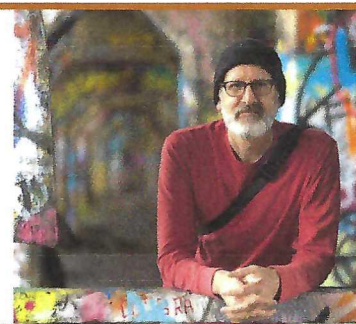


THE GROWING NEWS

Fall 2024

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Backpacking in Dolly Sods, WV, with my three favorite humans. ♥



My sweet crew out of Geneva College's 45 RDs and RAs, launching the new year.



My eclectic crew out of 75 Ohio students facing new fears and old anxieties in Barton's Cave.

"I blamed my canoe partner, but it was my fault." D stood in front of 10 of his classmates, sharing what had happened in the rapids. It was day four or five, and this day had been particularly tough. Normally soft-spoken, D had lost his cool with his friend.

"Was it his fault or your fault?" I asked. My coleader Paul was running the exercise but saw that I might be on to something.

D looked at me and said, "It was my fault."

"Then why did you blame your canoe partner?" I asked.

"I was having a hard time controlling the boat."

"Not a problem, you're all new at this. But why did you blame *him* if you said it was *your* fault?"

Several guys shifted in their seats. "I didn't want to look bad."

"Why?" I asked, again, now leaning forward on the picnic table. D was conscientious, attentive to details, even perfectionistic. His frustration today made sense.

"I don't know. I, uh, I guess I didn't want to be 'that guy'."

"What if you were that guy—that guy who messed up? So what?" D either wasn't sure how to answer or didn't want to answer. Regardless, he looked uncomfortable. I asked if it was okay for me to push like this. He did not hesitate: "Yes."

I looked at Paul who nodded, then I asked again, more gently, slowly, this time, "So what if you ended up being 'that guy'?" Paul and I both knew that D cared a lot about getting things right. A top student, a top athlete, there was an unspoken pressure he seemed to carry.

D swallowed hard and with a sober weight, finally said, "I would feel like a piece of \$%!@."

A deep quiet fell. I asked him to say it again.

"I would feel like a piece of \$%!@."

I breathed and sat up straight, taking it in. We all did. That unspoken pressure had a name.

Pray for D, who lives with a constant expectation to get things right. Pray for M, his canoe partner and friend, who received D's apology for blaming. Pray that truth—Christ's truth—would heal this young man who easily feels worthless.

It's hard to decide what stories to share in a public space. In these student photos alone, I could tell of pain and life "not the way it's supposed to be." We live in the now-but-not-yet kingdom of God, and we wait for all things to be made new. You and I can only do so much to quell, inspire, or heal. And the more I know students, the more I feel this limitation.

So what is possible today? We must keep going, keep praying, keep partnering, keep listening, keep loving, keep hoping. Romans 12:12 says, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer." Let's do that. Thank you for making this work possible.

Gratefully,

Sam and Julie
We appreciate you, Redeemer!

P.S. On the final day, Paul overheard D say, "I've learned a lot about myself this week. It's time I had a conversation with my dad."

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