*continued from front*

that God is bigger than my failings." As a disciple for 36 years, I've had my share! And most of the big ones were before Christ and early in my walk with Christ.

So my wife and I bought the book. I read most of it on the bus ride back to Worcester and finished it quickly. It was really well-written and I spent time praying over areas that needed some prayerful TLC! I highly recommend getting the book to everybody. It is great resource for personal edification and for helping others in their own messes.

After the class, Stephen Bowen introduced me to a brother named Brandon. When Brandon first visited church, he was a transgender female. The sisters learned he was a cis-gender male. And eventually, as he learned the scriptures and saw the true living God, he converted to Christ and back to what God created him to be. Brandon told me he saw that "God was right." It was the love and acceptance of the church that allowed him to become what God always intended.

Even though we do not approve of, nor condone sinful behaviors, we need to accept others lovingly. Five, 10 or 15 years from now, when people eventually see their need for God, we as God's church better not be the place they do not turn to because we self-righteously made them feel obviously unwelcome and drove them away.

Let me try to articulate the two lifetime lessons I learned from Stephen and Guy:

1) When God redeems you, he redeems ALL of you-including our past messes! God wants to use our former failings for his Glory as part of our new life. We appreciate his grace more, and others can see his love working through us as we help others in the same dire straits.

2) The gate to God's kingdom is definitely narrow, and yet, we need to allow people, lovingly, to first come and see Christ as they walk through their own door. No matter what lifestyle or sexual orientation people have, the pearl of great price will shine all the more brightly, when they see it in contrast to the choices they had previously made.

It reminds me of Jesus' heart in Matthew 12:20: "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out." Love your neighbor as your self.

To hear this class from Reach2016, go to: www.dtoday.tv. Subscribe and use the search feature, or find this class under "Reach audio: Friday classes."

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## • UPCOMING EVENTS

***2016 West and Central African Discipleship Summit***
Accra, Ghana
August 5-7, 2016

***2016 Korean Christian Conference***
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August 19-21, 2016

***Egypt Church of Christ Conference***
Cairo, Egypt
August 22-25, 2016

***2016 Australian Discipleship Summit***
Sydney, Australia
September 23-25, 2016

***Las Américas Discipleship Summit***
Lima, Peru
October 20-23, 2016

***2016 Biblical Study Tour***
Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Israel
October 21-31, 2016

CONNECTING DISCIPLES IN CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD

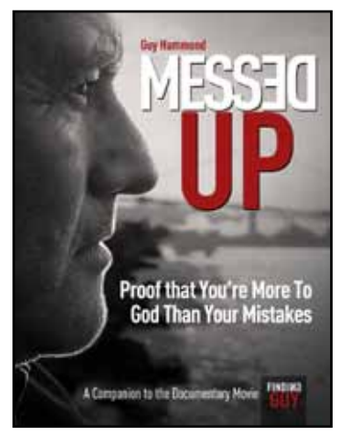
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# Reaching for Convictions in a World of Confusion

*Written by Jerry Maday -- Worcester, MA*

I experienced many transformational moments in St. Louis at Reach2016. Personally, the most influential for me was the Friday morning session with Guy Hammond and Stephen Bowen called "Reaching for Convictions in a World of Confusion." Both Guy and Steve have amazing life situations and have let Christ shine through them to and with their families.




Guy shared his spiritual timeline (strengthinweakness.org), which is an inspiring victory account! With all of the muck and mire from the first two decades of his life, it would be easy for Guy to walk around with a depressing burden of baggage on his back. On the contrary, Guy has shown that God redeems a person completely. He redeems all of me, and all of you, and all of each of us – even our massive failures. The mistakes and sins of our past are 100% redeemed. In this glorious plan of "the gospel," God is able to help others through our epic failures!

During the class, I was moved deeply in my spirit and tears welled up as Guy quickly mentioned one of his newer books, Messed Up. For some reason, as he mentioned the subtitle – "Proof that you're more to God than your mistakes" – I felt my heart swell with a distant, painful longing. It was as though a buried sore spot in my soul was awoken and it throbbed saying, "That's what I need. I need to see

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