



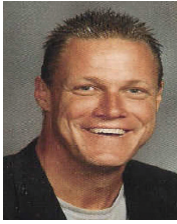
SALTS Impacts Pastors, Churches, Communities

A quarterly newsletter
Summer 2005

Real Grace for Real Wounds



A Pastor's Experience with SALTS



*Jeff Porte, Pastor,
Third Reformed Church,
Kalamazoo, MI*

Jeff Porte, Senior Pastor of Third Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, MI kept putting off attending the Survivors of Abuse Leadership Training Seminar (SALTS). He didn't believe it would be of much help, since he wasn't aware of being abused himself. It was not until being approached for a third time by Mary Bonham, who told him she felt God was saying he should go, that he knew he couldn't put it off any longer.

"I hated the whole concept of going to another seminar," confessed Jeff, who has been in the ministry for nineteen years, has been to "every training imaginable," and learned that they all follow a similar pattern of "if you follow these steps, you'll get these results." However, Jeff believes the SALTS training helped him obtain a much deeper understanding of human nature. "The training has given me a better appreciation of why people do the things they do without excusing bad behavior."

"I was surprised by how engaged I was during the whole training," said Jeff, who by the second day, was really into it. "I didn't believe my story would be an integral piece of the puzzle, but Mary was intuitive."

By getting in touch with who he is and not just with what he does, SALTS raised his level of awareness and sensitivity, not just as a pastor, but also as a husband and a father. "I can't think of any area of my life it hasn't touched in some fashion," added Jeff.

SALTS, presented by Open Hearts Ministry, offers a biblical approach to recovery from the wounds of life to men and women from around the world. It is an intensive six-day seminar based on the content of a comprehensive twelve-week program, after which the participants can then take their experience to their local churches, organizations and communities. The training is intended for women and men who are interested in becoming Grace Groups' group leaders in an existing program or in starting a Grace Group ministry.

Open Hearts Ministry believes that personal experience is the best way to train leaders. The SALTS seminar is designed to engage the hearts, as well as the minds, of participants. Guided by capable and caring facilitators, the process also includes meaningful worship, Biblical teachings, insights into the group process, life stories and personal reflection. Attendees are asked to

SALTS is for Pastors



Mark Bonham,
Executive Director, OHM

In an ever expanding ministry to people with wounds, OHM is seeing one noteworthy trend. Pastors are seeing the value of connecting with their own hearts as they minister among people that are increasing aware of their wounds. At our most recent training seminar sixteen men and women with pastoral responsibilities joined our “birds of a feather” lunch to discuss the impact of the SALTS experience. This is what we are hearing:

“It was difficult to take off my pastor’s hat and receive this for myself. I am so use to ministering to others and yet so need people to speak into my life. I hardly knew what to do when people in my group risked moving toward my heart.”

“I was never taught in seminary how to hear and respond to people who are deeply wounded. Yet increasingly this is the world I minister in. I don’t know where else to go for this kind of help.”

“We need a safe place where pastors can look at their own wounds. This has been a place where I can be real and still be embraced. I wish that this was my church.”

“It has been easy enough to send others to SALTS and cheer on their ministry. But this week I have come face to face with my own wounds and realize how much I need to step out of denial and face what I am doing to my kids, my wife and my church.”

Henri Nouwen, in his book “The Wounded Healer”, reminds ministers that, “In our own woundedness, we can become a source of life for others.” He goes on to say, “The minister is called to recognize the sufferings of his time in his own heart and make that recognition the starting point of his service. His service will not be perceived as authentic unless it comes from a heart wounded by the suffering about which he speaks. Thus nothing can be written about ministry without a deeper understanding of the ways in which the minister can make his own wounds available as a source of healing.”

This is frequently not the minister experienced by the people who come for our training. Nouwen says, “If there is any posture that disturbs a suffering man or woman, it is aloofness. The tragedy of Christian ministry is that

SALTS is for Pastors continued...

many who are in great need, many who seek an attentive ear, a word of support, a forgiving embrace, a firm hand, a tender smile, or even a stuttering confession of inability to do more, often find their ministers distant men who do not want to burn their fingers. They are unable or unwilling to express their feelings of affection, anger, hostility, or sympathy... Who can take away suffering without entering it?"

At SALTS we begin with pursuing a deeper understanding of our own woundedness. As pastors face, feel and talk about their own stories of how sin has touched them, they are no longer aloof. They begin to recognize that standing above a wounded traveler, clothed in spiritual knowledge, is not the position of the Wounded Healer, Jesus Christ. He is the Good Samaritan who stoops and gets involved, treating the wounds with care and compassion and providing a safe place for healing to occur. He is the one who knows and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.



Today's ministers are more often revered for their platform skills, their CEO capabilities, their ability to lead with a clear vision and strategy. Without despising such abilities, Paul makes it clear that if I do not have love, I am nothing.

.....

I believe that the next great movement within the church will be away from a one man show that tries to hold the attention of many toward a community that consistently offers genuine care and compassion, grace and truth to the wounded. I believe that by the grace of God OHM is poised to play a significant role in helping the church move that direction.

Let you pastor know that SALTS is for pastors, just as it is for missionaries, counselors, lay leaders, and any person with wounds. That should include all of us.

(Quotes are from The Wounded Healer, pp. xvi, 71-72)



Mary Jane Hamilton,
SALTS Trainer, Speaker,
OHM Board Member

Grace/Mercy/Truth: Can you balance all three?

Having led and supervised many groups, I have noticed responses from group leaders that can cause participants to get “stuck.” While cloaked with good intentions and full of compassion, a person’s dignity and integrity can be overlooked. How could this happen? Read on.

Story is a big part of this ministry. We listen, we tell, and we respond to story. Our responses validate pain with empathy, cover shame with grace and affirm dignity with truth. All are vitally important to create safety in the group and let the one telling their story know that they have been heard. This can be a model of offering *grace and mercy* to another person. My observation is that leaders often do this well...sometimes too well. Offering only grace/mercy, can enable group members to remain “victims.” Especially when *truth* is not spoken. It is up to leaders to make the shift for group members to hear *truth*. *Truth* empowers others to change and gives hope for the future. It calls out integrity and it affirms dignity. *Truth* says, “There is more here for you and I will risk going for the more!” *Truth gives a vision for relationships with God and others.*

Why do we find it so hard to respond to others with *truth*? *Grace and mercy* are wonderful gifts to give and receive and there is very little risk in going down this path. Everyone feels the warmth of these words and that feels good. There can be a measure of *truth* here that feels good as well. But do we want to get “stuck” nurturing the “victim” without offering hope for change? Of course not!

In the group context *truth* is communicated as you “speak the messages God is weaving through your heart.” It requires listening to God. It requires trusting your heart, the very place God resides. My initial response to this thought was, “Someone will get hurt if I speak out those messages.” The reality is: Someone will get hurt. But they will live through it and so will you. Can you recommit when this happens (and it will) and go again? I hope so.

Speaking *truth* requires you to risk...do you care enough to speak *truth*? Leaders with low expectations are rarely disappointed. But group members can feel cheated knowing that something is missing for their life. To care takes commitment and risks misunderstanding, believing that more is going on, and knowing that people long for intimacy and impact. Group members will recognize when the shift to *truth* takes place because something will get “knocked loose” within them. They may feel curious, challenged, empowered, frustrated, free or angry. They will feel something. We want our commitment to *truth* to be permission giving for others to dig deeper and to discover what God has for them.

Do you find yourself withholding *truth* because you are afraid others will not like you? It takes maturity and integrity for leaders to offer *truth* from their hearts and to value others as a higher priority. It is important to remember: Your scorecard as a leader is not measured by how much others like you. It is measured by your commitment to them. As you balance *grace/mercy/truth* for others, you will see how God honors your commitment. He may even bring you full circle within the group as others begin to really value your commitment as a leader.

Remember, *truth* releases the fullness of God’s glory in others. *Truth* invites others to live life large. *Truth* embraces others. *Truth* liberates others into freedom. *Truth* opens the door for change. *Truth* is a gift.

Handle *truth* with care as God’s love is freed to speak through you.

: Do you have a question
: regarding a situation
: you’ve encountered in
: leading groups? Email
: it to: office@ohmin.org
: and we’ll try to address it
: in future newsletters.

.....

SALTS Alumni

Develop your leadership skills at ALTS (Advanced Leadership Training Seminar). Get feedback from peers and input from experienced SALTS trainers. ALTS runs concurrently with SALTS training. You owe it to yourself and your group to keep your heart connected, your skills sharp, your understanding growing. Join us in October. Take advantage of the \$100 Alumni discount AND the \$100 early-bird registration discount!



Open Hearts Ministry
161 East Michigan Ave.
Suite 600
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

A Look inside...

A Pastor's Experience with
SALTS
Upcoming Events
SALTS is for Pastors
Leader's Support Section
SALTS Scholarship Update

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
KALAMAZOO, MI
PERMIT NO. 307

Upcoming Events

July 29, 2005 Last Day for \$100 Early Discount for October SALTS

August 4-6, 2005 California Leaders Retreat, San Jose, CA.

August 19-20, 2005 Great Lakes Leaders Retreat, Bridgman, MI.

September 8-11, 2005 Texas Leaders Retreat, San Antonio, TX.

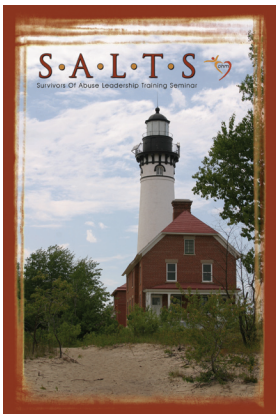
October 10-15, 2005 SALTS, Maranatha, Muskegon, MI.

February 6-10, 2006 SALTS, New Braunfels, TX

Contact the OHM office for more details.



SALTS Scholarship Update



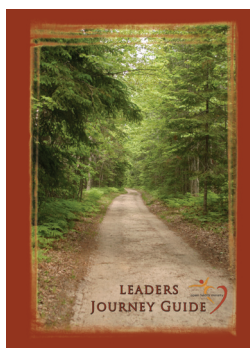
At the April SALTS ten people received significant assistance to attend. Included were pastors, missionaries and foreign nationals. Their gratitude was overwhelming and through them many will be impacted. The fund was depleted and now we are receiving new requests for assistance for October. Would you consider partnering with us to enable deserving people to receive training that they can offer to others? This is a gift that keeps on giving.

Send your gift payable to Open Hearts Ministry and indicate that it is for the scholarship fund.

Thanks to those who use the Meijer Community Rewards Program to support the scholarship fund. \$1187 has been received over the past 18 months. Pick up an application at your Meijer store or go to our website and enroll on line (click on the Meijer logo and use the OHM code: 378921).

New Journey Guides

Reminder: New “Journey Guides” for participants and leaders are hot off the press. Order yours now for groups starting this fall. For your convenience order these off our website: www.ohmin.org. Click on the “Products” tab for order form.



Leader's Journey
Guide: \$25.00



Participant's
Journey Guide:
\$18.00



161 East Michigan Ave., Suite 600, Kalamazoo, MI 49007
269.383.3597 • www.ohmin.org • office@ohmin.org