

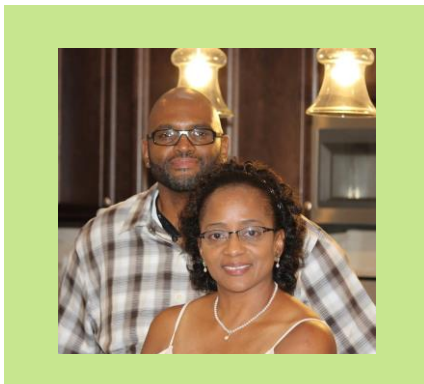


Atlanta Church of Christ in Gwinnett
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*The birds of the air come and perch in its branches.
- Matthew 13:32*

September 2017

Ten things you might not know about Tracy Burns...



Tracy and Jackie Burns

1. I was born in Canton, OH.
2. I was baptized on September 27, 1998
3. My favorite movie is Blade.
4. My favorite sport is football and my NFL team is the Cleveland Browns.
5. I married my wonderful wife, Jackie, on May 12, 1990.
6. My favorite Bible passage is 1 Corinthians 13.
7. My official job title is Campus Monitor.
8. I was born feet first.
9. I am the baby of two families.
10. I started off being left-handed. Now, I am right-handed.

Dates and Events to Remember in September

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September 1-3

SE Singles Retreat

September 4

Labor Day

September 8-10

Marriage Retreat – "Fairy Tales Do Come True"

September 15

YF Fall Games – Lilburn Park at 10 am

September 15-17

Middle School Retreat at the Swamp

September 24

Family Group Leaders Meeting, Band Room, 2 pm

September 30

*MS Girls Mocha Talk, 9:30 am
Teen Girls Coffee Talk, 10 am
YF Moms Breakfast, 10 am*

For other ongoing announcements, please visit the website. Thank you.

MEMO FOR WOMEN

Naked with no shame...

By M Yang

The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. (Genesis 2:25)

There is a rejuvenating spa here in Atlanta where half of the building is devoted to saunas that you completely strip down to enjoy. A girlfriend was telling me about it and I was embarrassed just talking about it, let alone actually going. But it made me start to think about this idea of being naked with no shame. In the beginning Adam and Eve were naked and they felt no shame. I think *naked* here has more than one meaning— not just being unclothed physically, but on a deeper level as well.

So, what is it about being bare that is embarrassing? Everyone can see your flaws. There is no hiding the few extra pounds, cellulite, dimples, or rolls. It's all there. There's no covering it, adjusting it, squeezing it into another shape. It simply is what it is and everyone can see it. It's hard for us to be that exposed and feel secure. Unlike children—they can be naked and not have a care in the world. I love that about them!

We were once these naked children. Somewhere along the way, we realized we were naked. We started to feel shame, and so we began to hide. We put on clothing that really doesn't express who we are, but who we think the world wants to see. We wear things that elongate or minimize different areas. We put on undergarments that reshape us and smooth us out. We put great effort into how we look in hopes that no one will see the flaws underneath.

I have learned the hard way that to truly have an intimate and meaningful relationship, I have to be willing to get naked. I have to be willing to expose myself...what I truly feel and think, flaws and all. Yes, in exposure there is a risk of rejection—without it, there's no chance for true intimacy.

For a long time, I played the dress-up game. I bought new clothes, cooked and cleaned like there was no tomorrow, tried to be supermom, worked on my career, and so on. I lost weight, gained weight, and lost weight again. I changed my hair and make-up. I was constantly doing this or that. I thought that if I worked hard enough at being the perfect mother, wife, and friend, all my fears and insecurities would disappear. The reality of it was, the more I tried to be perfect, the more tired I got and the further I was from getting rid of my fears. Trying to fix the flaws only made me more exhausted, and hiding the flaws only made them bigger because I knew it was just a matter of time before they would be exposed. And what would I do then?

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear...." (1John 4:18)

A few years ago, I realized I couldn't deal with my insecurities on my own any more. John's parents were living with us, his father had Alzheimer's and his mother had early signs of dementia along with a slew of other health issues. The pressure of being a primary care giver as well as trying to be a working mom and wife was more than I could handle, and it was tearing into our marriage. All the cracks and flaws in our relationship were being exposed. I think we were all fighting our own emotional battles. John's father was lashing out, his mother was in denial about his father's condition, John was trying to come to grips with losing a father he really didn't know in the first place and I was trying to hold it together for all of us. All my fears and insecurities were growing exponentially and I felt like I couldn't do anything right.

We were lying in bed one night after an exhausting day of running the madhouse, and I just broke down in tears. We were each on our own side of the bed and the distance between us felt like it could have been a football field. As I began to tell John about all my fears, the distance started to disappear. I was afraid I wasn't doing enough for his family and parents. I didn't know what questions to ask at the doctor's office. I could barely keep all his parents' medicines in order. I was afraid of killing one of them by giving them the wrong medicine. Truthfully, I felt like John was mad at me or disappointed in what I was doing.

I talked about my fear of being too controlling, and how that had driven him away before. I talked about how I wasn't sure if he really loved me because I needed him to say it to me often without me asking him. I talked about how I have never felt beautiful even though he tells me I am. I shared how afraid I was that if he really, really knew me inside out, he would be running for the hills. I told him how crazy I felt about everything and how I was convinced I was losing my mind just like his father and mother.

The lesson I learned that night was...to be naked in a relationship, I have to take off my clothes first. I think I was waiting for John to expose what was going on with him, but I couldn't force him to be open. I can only control how open and vulnerable I am. The amazing thing about vulnerability is that it draws people. I think we can admire and praise perfection though at the same time we always feel it's unattainably distant; but vulnerability draws us in and makes us fall in love.

As it turns out, John was feeling terrible for putting our family in the situation we were in and he didn't know what else to do. He had his own set of fears and insecurities, but as we talked and reassured each other, the fear began to melt.

Perfect love does drive out fear. But that perfect love is not about perfection. If anything, it's about understanding our brokenness. Yes, John can totally crush my heart as I expose all the pieces of it, but if he chooses to pick it up and cherish it, I am that much more loved because of my willingness to give all of my heart.

The world around us tells us to be strong, to hide our weaknesses, and not to give people the power to hurt us, but I say: be naked and run free. Those who would take my heart and crush it are not worthy of me, but those who take it and cherish it—we'll have the kind of love and friendship everyone longs for....