

Transparency



Children's Bible
Fellowship

NY
CBF

Quarterly
Newsletter



— **Transparency** —

Explore how Transparency aligns with CBF's core value of being "Fully Known and Fully Loved," and discover its impact on the life of CEO Sean Stewart on pages 3-4.

— **Perspectives** —

Discover the perspectives of the dedicated team members who bring the daily operations and programmed events to life. Gain insights into how transparency shapes their journey on pages 5-10.

— **Connection** —

Join the expansive CBF Family and hear from our partners and volunteers about what drew them to the mission and how our distinctives impact their lives. Dive into their stories on pages 11-14.

— **Thank You** —

As we look forward to a promising 2024, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the CBF Family for their unwavering love and support. Explore what's ahead on pages 15-18

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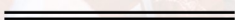
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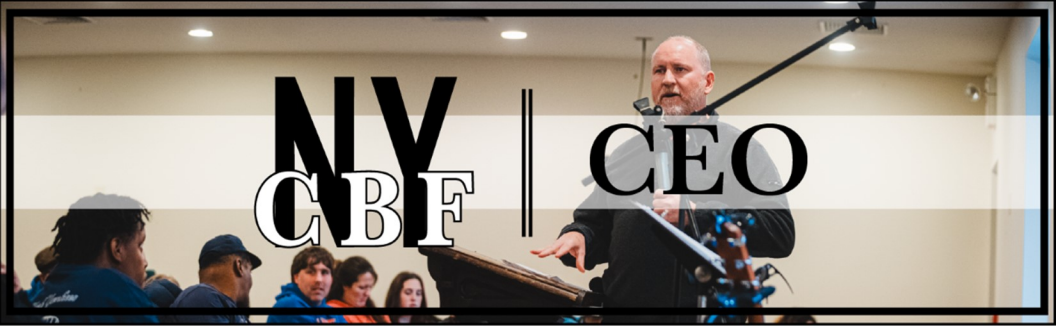
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I've been contemplating the progression of love within relationships. Fundamental to loving someone is the necessity of being present. Whenever I feel shame or sense someone's disgust pointed at me, my initial reflex is to withdraw. However, isolation runs counter to love. It is said the opposite of love is fear, and this is modeled in my behavior; when I live from fear I isolate and when I live in love I show myself in transparency. Transparency transcends mere physical presence; it embodies a willingness to expose my spirit, innermost struggles and feelings to another.

A distinctive of our ministry is fostering an environment where individuals can be fully known and still fully loved. This mirrors the love exemplified by Jesus for us (an incarnational love) and the love He desires for us to extend to one another. Throughout my life, I've grappled with deep-seated insecurities, feeling devoid of value or unlovable. Unsurprisingly, these struggles are prevalent within our special needs community and among inner-city youth.

With the support of the Body of Christ, I was led on a journey of healing through a Christ centered recovery process where I vulnerably shared an inventory of 31 character defects and sins with a group of men who listened and guided me. 1 John 1:9 says "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

For years, shame urged me to internalize these struggles and isolate myself. This internal battle persists even within my marriage. Negative assumptions about my wife's feelings towards me lead me to retract, share less, and isolate further. This withdrawal translates into diminished love from me, inevitably felt by her, setting off a cycle of alienation that



strains our relationship.

True healing only occurs when I discard false assumptions, communicate openly with my wife, become willing to hear her genuine feelings, and learn to dwell in reality. This started in Christ centered recovery for me where opening up in transparency with a group of men paved the way for vulnerability with my family, friends, and colleagues. When I wear a mask, only the mask receives love, not the authentic me. Without love, healing remains elusive.

The most powerful tool in evangelism and forging connections lies in relying on the Holy Spirit's guidance. As I share the narrative of my authentic self and my journey through sin and shame, God's transformative power is manifested in healing, redemption, and the unfathomable depth of His love.

~ Sean Stewart





NY CBF | Board

The “courage to be real”. If you asked me ten years ago to share my innermost feelings or my private character defects and sins, in other words to be real, vulnerable, and honest, I would have said “NO WAY!”.

I remember as a little boy crying easily and being labeled “the sensitive one”. In my little mind and determination, I made a commitment, “I will not cry or show emotion”. I thought that I would be looked down upon. I was a people pleaser, therefore, I started my emotional life at a young age as a “stuffer”. I did not know how to feel, to acknowledge, recognize and express my emotions, and especially not to process them. I stepped into life that way: my relationships, performance based thinking, my church life and career. Not only would I not express my emotions, I would not even acknowledge them. When interacting with me, I would deflect emotions, especially tough ones, avoid being real and vulnerable, and provide the person with what I believed would please them and would result in being liked. Being real didn’t matter.

The man described above hit a major wall about ten years ago. I was struggling with my oldest daughter’s drug addiction that was reckless and life threatening. I was also almost a decade into a serious cancer journey. Then my struggling marriage hit a major crisis. Even after 42 years of walking with Jesus, it was more than I could handle. I had no answers. I was desperate.

I found myself with a therapist that used recovery tools. I also found myself attending Celebrate Recovery: a 12 step/ Beatitude ministry that highlights Christ as the Higher Power. For the first time I looked inward and performed a Step 4 honest inventory of myself- it took one year. I admitted and confessed my character defects and sins to God, myself and other people. Wow- to other people! I processed tough

emotions, like fear, anger, and sadness. The pain level was so high that any shame that I might have felt was thrown out the window. Here I was: the attorney representing my church and other ministries, the father of six, an elder and leader in my church and community. Yet I was broken and messed up. Being vulnerable, real and authentic brought me healing, freedom and a wonderful sense of peace. James 5:16 says to confess your sins to one another, and be healed. What a wonderful promise!

To reveal is to heal. To feel is to heal. These principles rang true. In Celebrate Recovery, Sean and I developed a wonderful friendship. I can share anything with the men at CR. There are guidelines that govern our relationships and meetings, such as no fixing, "I and me" statements only and anonymity & confidentiality. For the first time, I felt safe to be real, authentic, and vulnerable. I acknowledged my emotions and processed them. I became used to sharing my sin struggles. I became real.

These tools of recovery had such an impact that Sean brought them to CBF: the staff and how CBF ministry was done. I was so impressed with the realness, openness and vulnerability with Sean and the staff that when I was asked to be on the Board, I said "Yes". Now, staff meetings, ministries and the "life" of CBF have been infiltrated and impacted by the benefits of being Recovery minded and therefore real, authentic, and vulnerable. I visit the campus in Carmel at least one day a week. I film a weekly podcast there called Cancer and Peace. Sean and I use recovery principles to assist cancer patients. These same principles of realness, vulnerability, and authenticity impact the special needs community and the Bronx youth. Now I say 'yes' to the invitation of being real and vulnerable.

~Peter Scalzo





NY CBF | Youth

As we journey through 2024, our hearts resonate with the theme of Transparency. It's about more than just showing up physically; it's about bearing our souls, sharing our deepest struggles, and embracing our vulnerabilities with one another.

Since our last newsletter, we've joyfully welcomed new church contacts into our fold and invested time in strengthening our bonds with the Bronx Studio School for Writers and Artists (BSSWA). One of the most impactful moments for me personally, is in our debrief time of the CBF Challenge activities. I have found that being the first to be transparent and vulnerable has a greater reciprocal response than my fear of being exposed would have me believe.

I remember being nervous to share a particular story of my own failings in some close personal relationships of mine. My co-dependent fear welled up in me about what the students might think of me because of it. Overcoming my fear; however, opened the room for safe discussion. The students were able to identify and share their own stories of hiding from themselves and others. It has been a beautiful thing to witness God using my failures and His grace to create openness in discussion I would have never experienced otherwise.

The impact of our proximity to BSSWA has been profound. We've felt the pulse of a hungry and eager community, as evidenced by the overwhelming demand for our events. Despite the logistical challenges that come with such demand, we embrace each hurdle with open arms, knowing that it's a testament to the need for the programs and support we offer.

Through these programs, I have spent time with Youth leaders and Pastors to learn from one another and share resources on how to best grow our reach to the students in our



neighborhoods. My response to these questions and promptings has been the same: "Have you shared yourself with them? Have you been real with them about your sin and struggles to help them see that they are not alone?" It is the scariest, and best advice I have ever received because you can't take someone somewhere you have not been or are unwilling to go yourself.

Looking ahead, our hearts brim with excitement for the adventures that await us. Each event represents an opportunity to deepen connections, foster growth, and spread this transformative message of vulnerability.

As we navigate the year ahead, let's hold fast to the truth that God is at work in the hearts and lives of students in NYC. Thank you, from the depths of our hearts, for your unwavering support and partnership in this beautiful, messy, and oh-so-rewarding journey. .

~Jack MacKay





NV CBF | Hope

As we came together to discuss our theme of transparency for this newsletter, I was inspired by the depth of connection and openness we share and foster here at CBF. In the spirit of transparency, I invite you to join me in reflecting on the transformative journey I have embarked on these past few years.

In December of 2021, I had lunch with our CEO, Sean Stewart, to discuss a potential job opportunity; however, the conversation took a different route than I expected. We...just talked. We spoke about my recent struggles with the church I had been working and ministering at, and the very real hurt I received and caused. Sean spoke about some of his struggles and wins from the past few years, and described to me the inner journey work that he and the staff were working on in great detail.

But there was one concept that stood out amongst the rest, and that was transparency. The courage to be real with those you live and carry out ministry with. No hiding. No masking. Just a place to be the real you; triumphs and failures alike. This was irresistible to me as I am a serial masker of pain and isolation, so that I won't have to be seen. Coming from a church leadership position, I was all but taught to present myself as my best self. To say the least, the last few years have been freeing, and lots of inner work to unlearn lifelong flaws, and allowing people to actually see what's underneath. What I've found though, is that it's worth every difficult moment.

My work with our special needs community is intimately affected by the vulnerability that transparency has brought into my life. The more real I am with the people I'm working with or serving, the more it's reciprocated. Thus, creating real relationships and belonging.

Speaking of, over the last few months we've had retreats, overnighters, Bible studies, CBF Challenges, an outing to the world record Christmas Light Show, an Army vs. Airforce Hockey game, and so much more. During these events, we were able to focus on teamwork and the joy of shared experiences. The moments we



spent together were immersed with vulnerability and genuine connection.

One such experience took place this past weekend; but, the foundation was built through a transparent and vulnerable relationship formed over the last few years. I had the opportunity to drive our participants home from our celebration and was able to spend a few hours in the car with the moms. One shared about her struggles with losing her identity in motherhood with a special needs child. I identified with her pain and shared some of my recent familial struggles as well. These shared experiences were an invitation for her to open up even more than before about her past, how she is working through it, and her constant juggling of roles. If the Holy Spirit hadn't prompted me to be vulnerable and share, I'm not sure the conversation would have happened. This is proof of concept for us at CBF. Transparent and vulnerable conversations create real relationships and belonging.

As I continue this journey of transparency, I must remember that through my authenticity and vulnerability the Lord cultivates meaningful connections and fosters a sense of belonging within our community. Together, let us embrace the courage to be real, knowing that it is through our transparency that we thrive.

~Codi Bement





NY CBF Volunteer

I was well into marriage and parenthood before any thought of my spiritual life surfaced. As a child my family had a friendship with a Methodist pastor. My grandad helped build his church. In this setting I am sure the topic of salvation came up, but I wasn't aware of it. I was taught right and wrong, but the need for a Saviour was not on my radar.

It wasn't until our daughter, Lori (8 or 9 at the time), at her friend's invitation, began attending a girl's program called Pioneer Girls. Then the boys joined in attending Christian Service Brigade. The kids caught the pastor's attention, Pastor Emmons. Well, he visited the house, and asked me if I believed in God. I was in my late 20's, and I told him life was good. I had a good wife, a good job, a good house, a good family...then he asked me to read this booklet called "The 4 Spiritual Laws." I must've read those 5 or 6 pages a dozen times. It asked in plain language: "Who is on the throne of your life, you or Christ?"

I had never given it any thought before then. I thought I was an ok guy, taking care of my family, my home, a good worker, you know all the things that the world tells you is good. I had to face the obvious answer that I was on the throne of my life, and that was not what God wanted from me. The change that accepting Christ brought was more of an attitude adjustment. It changed my motives and my perspectives on things. When my wife, Theresa, and I accepted Christ as our Savior, together, at our kitchen table, we were oblivious to the depths that a relationship with Christ would bring us to over a lifetime. We had a lot of wonderful Christian men and women pour into us over the past 60 years. These Christian brothers and sisters were a family like no other, and still are. Don't get me wrong in thinking there weren't squabbles and conflicts from time to time, that is the result of people being real, for sure. The difference was that the foundation has always been love, and it definitely covers a multitude of sins!

The freedom to be a fallible human being and still know that God loves you, cares for you, protects you, and forgets your sin as



far as the East to the West was a lesson that was hard won for me. Bob Parks was one of the men who spent a lot of time pouring into my life. He was an inspector for the state and our neighbor, and one of my leaders in Christian Service Brigade. In 1991 I was transporting a crane with my crew, and I forgot to lower the gantry, and as a result we hit an overpass that totaled the crane. I had 20 years on the job, but accidents like this are career enders. Bob stood up for me citing lack of training. It was the truth, but it would've been easier for him to avoid stepping into the line of fire with me. Having a Christian brother stand in the gap with me, was an encouragement that I needed, and it drove home what being in the Body of Christ is all about. Being real, being loved, and doing what you can when you can.

That's what brought me to CBF and has kept me coming back for over 7 years. A beloved group of people whose mission it is to share the love of Christ with the special needs and the youth. It started with someone I partner up with a lot on service projects asking for a consult on a difficult tree removal . Before I knew it we were meeting up regularly to work on the wood supply. I enjoy being behind the scenes, keeping the wood stoves supplied with wood, indirectly supporting programs by serving those who serve. In the process sharing in great fellowship!

~ Charlie Baker





I've been connected to CBF from age 13 to 35(current). I've been a camper, a summer worker, and a full-time staff employee. My role has changed now to supporting from a distance, and to say the least, it's been an adjustment. In the spirit of transparency, I want to share with you why I've stayed connected and continue to give.

My experience with the mission has been more than just a place to serve as a Christian - I gained a home. It wasn't always that way for me. Until 9 years ago, CBF was a retreat away from the chaos of the city and drama life brings. It graduated to my home the day I found it to be a place that could handle the depths of my desperation, addiction, and deep brokenness with grace. It wasn't just a place where I could be "real" or "transparent" but a place where my porn addiction didn't disqualify me from ministry or relationship. I was vulnerable and desperate, and I was taken in.

In my brokenness I landed at the doorstep of Celebrate Recovery where our fearless leader, Sean Stewart, accompanied me. He was trying to fix me. But what Sean meant for His glory, God meant to break him and change a mission. I've journeyed with my brother for about a decade now and each step has been an adventure. I've seen him do battle with himself and external circumstances gracefully and terribly. However, I can honestly say that this man has been vulnerably by my side through thick and thin. Likewise, Anne has been like a mother to me, which has been a thorn in my side at times and other times extremely refreshing. What I've



seen in both these leaders are traits I've honestly seen nowhere else in a church or para-church context: the capacity to embrace brokenness and lead from weakness, not strength.

I've learned that transparency doesn't mean much to the one fighting to control the narrative. Transparency with the potential of getting hurt is a true vulnerability. I've felt the grace of God most where He has covered my vulnerability. I can attest to the leaders of this mission following the heart and courage to live and love vulnerably. This is the heart of the Gospel; the knowledge that at my lowest I am fully known, fully loved and fully accepted. I continue to stay connected and give as much as I can because at CBF I gained a family. It's a family where I can be myself without the compulsion to prove myself as a man of value. When I get together with them, I am loved and accepted.

Over the summer I got to spend some time with Anne at the beach, and we talked about anything and everything. We are both long winded. One of the biggest blessings this summer was Anne taking time, on her vacation, to love me and my babies like we were her very own. I will always support this place because the leaders wear the love of Christ with their lives not just their words. If I am in crisis or blessing, I can depend on these guys to be my family. And being someone who has no strong connection with mom or dad, these influences have meant a world of difference in my life. I see God moving here in deep ways and I don't want to miss out.

~ John Martinez



NY CBF | Vision

We're excited to invite you to three remarkable events that showcase the transformative work of CBF.

Save these important dates:

June 19th: Annual Gala Fundraiser, headlined by the dynamic Tim Washer. This elegant evening offers an opportunity for supporters to contribute to our mission and introduce us to family and friends.

September 7th: Church Partner Lunch, a collaborative gathering to foster dialogue, exchange ideas, and explore opportunities for partnership with local churches and faith-based organizations who share our vision for ministry.

November 2nd: Donor Update Lunch, an intimate occasion celebrating the generosity that fuels our mission and offers a glimpse into the impact of your support on the lives of the inner-city youth and special needs community we serve.



NY CBF Thank You!

We are incredibly grateful for you, Our Community. Your support has created greater opportunities for discipleship to NYC youth and the special needs community. Thank you for selflessly providing your resources, talents, and time at CBF. You are the very heart that moves the mission forward. Please continue to remember CBF in your prayers in the coming months as the programs move forward.

Pray • Donate • Volunteer

To become a CBF Financial Partner like our friend, John Martinez & Charlie Baker, donate to us directly online or by check, simply follow the directions below!

- ◆ Donate by Check to Children's' Bible Fellowship
250 Nimham Rd., Carmel, NY 10512
- ◆ Donate online at www.cbfny.org/donate or scan the QR code below with the camera app on your smartphone phone to donate directly with PayPal.





Alumni

CBF Family "Album"

Share your memories & help us reach the people whose investment in CBF continues to bless the mission today.

We would like to highlight a story each quarter chronicling our rich history and God's faithfulness over the years.

Please send stories and pictures to alumni@cbfny.org.

Or mail to:

Children's Bible Fellowship of New York
250 Nimham Rd, Carmel, NY 10512

