



THE ENCOURAGER

Let us never forget

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“Let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the day approaching.”
Hebrews 10:25

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MEET A MEMBER



Slade M. McLendon
Vice President Sunbelt Fire, Inc

My name is Slade McLendon and I am excited about the privilege of sharing my journey with you. I grew up in a wonderful home with parents who loved me. I was raised with great morals and knew right from wrong. I had head knowledge about God (I knew why we celebrated Christmas and Easter) and attended a church regularly but I never understood the why behind these profound holidays. My routine was to live how I wanted during the week and clean the slate on Sunday. I was several months away from going to college when I met with two friends of my father, John Parker and Rick Skinner, who impacted my life for all of eternity. I love people and getting to know their stories, so when John and Rick presented an opportunity to visit new families to our church, I grabbed it! Every Sunday evening, for 2-3 months, we did visitations only to be successful in meeting one family. People were either out at dinner or not at home. Instead of just driving me home and dropping me off, John and Rick spent hours talking to me about life and eternal matters. The more we talked, the more I realized I didn't grasp the gospel at all and just had head knowledge about the Lord. My last time out with them I prayed to receive Christ and life took an incredible change from that moment forward. Romans 6:23 remains a rich truth to me, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus.”** This was the start of a journey that I am still amazed to be traveling. Why would such a great God allow me to receive a gift that I have done nothing to deserve?

A month later I went to college and joined a fraternity and met a few guys that also had a profound impact on my walk with the Lord. They introduced me to a college ministry called Campus Outreach. This ministry taught me how to study the Bible, understand the gospel, how rich God's grace is to us, and how to walk with Him daily (which I might add isn't always a walk in the park, but I know that I am not walking blindly).

In the summer of my last year of college, I had the privilege of meeting a great woman and realized I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her. Her name is Wendy and she definitely is the perfect help mate to a sometimes not so loveable man!! We have three great children, Slade Mitchell (9), Merri-Broxton (4), and Samuel Henry (brand new-5 weeks). I'm realizing daily that one of the highest calls I have in life is disciplining these little ones to be a light in this world. Some days I feel like I am just surviving and then the Lord gently reminds me about Matthew 6: 31-34, **“So do not worry about tomorrow, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ Or ‘What shall we drink?’ Or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”** If you are like me I forget this often and can let worry creep in, but I'm thankful that He is reminding me that I am not in control on this journey of life—He is!

I love my family and we believe that our Father is sovereign and always in control. Even when it doesn't feel like it, we know that He has a plan at all times. Early in our marriage my wife was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis (lung disease) and we realized at that point how truly out of control of our lives we really are. Our first response was fear and anxiety of the unknown. In and of ourselves we couldn't take the disease and knock it out. To date there is no cure, but we are learning that this is the exact plan that the God has for our family. His plan doesn't make sense to us at times but His scripture reminds us about His love to us. Psalm 103: 15-19 reminds us, **“As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children's children—with those who keep His covenant and remember to obey His precepts. The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.”**

I had a man give me some counsel years ago, “as you travel through life make sure you attack the problem and not the person.” I get this mixed up and have to stop at times and remember how valuable people are in my life. We need to not let the issues in life become the relationship. I am learning this daily and sometimes not fast enough.

I also love what I am allowed to do for a living. I have the responsibility of serving some of the best people in this country and that is the firefighters who protect our communities. My family has had the privilege of being in the fire service for four generations. Our company is Sunbelt Fire and we are located in Fairhope, Alabama. We serve several states through the southeast helping them with fire trucks, equipment, service, and whatever their needs are in helping them protect their community. My father has had a great impact in my life and I had the privilege of working with him until he passed away over six years ago. Dad just loved people and loved to make people feel at home. I'm so thankful for the opportunity to have had him be my father and to have learned so much from him. I challenged my parents consistently while growing up but they never gave up on me and just kept loving a sometimes unlovable son. One particular event is etched in my heart for a lifetime. My father had a serious heart condition his entire life and had to have a major surgery where two outcomes were the option, live or die. On a Wednesday before his surgery on Friday, he told me three things in his hospital bed that he wanted me to remember. The first was to honor God in my personal life as well as in leading the company. The second was to be Christ like in my personal life as well as in the company (strive to treat people like Jesus would treat them). The third was to be a good steward of what God has given me. Dad's surgery took place a few days later but he did not survive. I am so thankful that dad knew our Father in heaven and is with Him today. I share this story with you about my dad because it constantly reminds me not to forget why I do what I do in life everyday. I am amazed at how often I forget these lessons or fail miserably at them but then I am reminded of our Lord's amazing grace. Ephesians 2:8-9, says **“For it is by grace you have**

been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast.”

In closing, I thank you for letting me share my journey in life with you. My prayer for us is that we will grasp what Coach John Wooden said, “make today a masterpiece” or what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

If I can ever serve you don't hesitate to contact me at slmclendon@sunbeltfire.com or call me at 1-800-642-8484 ext. 115.

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FIREFIGHTER QUILT TO RAISE FUNDS FOR BIBLES

Answering The Call Bibles have reached a landmark distribution through FCFI of over 37,000. Consequently it is time for another printing. At FDIC we raised over \$300.00 with the 2009 Firefighter quilt. We will present another quilt at our Appreciation Dinner

held during FDIC April 23, 2010. To help us reach our financial goal to reprint the Bibles, you can donate \$5.00 for one ticket, \$10.00 for 3 tickets, and \$20.00 for 7.



Send us one copy of your business card for each ticket desired or we will make up cards for you. Other donations are greatly appreciated. Please indicate how you would like your funds to be used.

Marriage - God's Plan

Craig Duck

Washington DC Fire Department - Engine Co. 11

Firefighting is a dangerous job; you don't need to hear that since you're a firefighter. Everyday in America firefighters put their lives on the line in order to save lives and protect property. We are able to do this because our equipment has been designed to withstand the punishment of the fire ground. Today's firefighters are able to go deeper into the fire and withstand more heat because of their "state of the art" equipment. Behind each piece of equipment there is a mastermind who designed each piece of equipment for a specific job. Whether it is a ladder, hose, or apparatus—or even marriage—there is a mastermind behind each master piece. God, the mastermind of marriage, has designed marriage for firefighters. God has a plan for marriage, and how it works best.

Understanding God's plan for marriage can be very confusing in today's world. Television, internet and magazines distort what love is and how a husband and a wife should interact with each other. Couples easily fall into traps looking everywhere for help with their marriages, except to the One who created marriage. **“Didn't the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are His. And what does He want? Godly children from your union,”** (Malachi 2:15). With help, couples can tap into God's plan for marriage and begin to learn how to have a love that will last a lifetime. The Bible is full of passages that will help couples understand how to work through life's challenges, and as a couple begin to draw closer to a loving God. I would encourage married firefighters to seek out godly couples who can help them find Biblical passages that will help them to have marriages that will last a lifetime.

**Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and they shall become one flesh.”
(Genesis 2: 24)**



International Board Present at 2009 Annual Meeting
George Rabiela, Russ Stammer, Lee Callahan, Dan Clegg, Craig Duck,
Gay and Sue Reynolds