

Bright Tomorrows

*Reflecting the Compassion of Jesus Christ
to Those with Mental Health Concerns*



Waiting for the Prodigal to Return

BRIGHT TOMORROWS EDITOR'S NOTE: With permission we are sharing a portion of a mother and son conversation originally published in its entirety in the Tony Cooke Ministries newsletter. BT came to know Andrew and his parents, Tony and Lisa, as a result of Andrew being diagnosed with a bipolar disorder. Brain-based health challenges never take place in a vacuum. In Andrew's case there were multiple events and life choices that had been contributing to instability in his life. I am happy to say that, over a period of time, Andrew and his family made courageous choices to humbly work with assistance from multiple sources to realize sustainable healing/recovery.

*But now this is what the LORD says: "Do not weep any longer, for I will reward you," says the LORD.
"Your children will come back to you from the distant land of the enemy. There is hope for your future," says the LORD. "Your children will come again to their own land."
Jeremiah 31:16-17 NLT*

ANDREW: My name is Andrew, the son of Tony and Lisa Cooke. I was as prodigal as prodigal gets in my past, abusing drugs and alcohol, engaging in reckless behavior, and rebelling against anything that had to do with God or church.

If you are a parent, friend, or family member of someone who is rebelling and living a destructive lifestyle, never cease in praying for that person. Without a doubt, the only reason I am still breathing on this earth today is because of divine intervention, caused by prayer, during dangerous scenarios. This intercession kept me alive until I finally responded to God's love and redemption.

LISA: So many of us have at least one child who has wandered from the faith they were raised in from their birth.

Many of those children were strong in their early devotion, praying beautiful little prayers and living lives that honored God. But somewhere along their journey, they began to let go of beliefs they had followed so earnestly. Our hearts were devastated as we watched them make choices that seem to take them farther and farther away from the life that we as parents had envisioned for them. We would soon come to the conclusion that we have a prodigal child—something we never anticipated.

At first we blame our parenting, likely because it was something we feel we could have controlled. There's nothing harder than to feel like something is out of our control. Accepting the fact that our children have a free will is the first step toward having a healthy perspective on how our child/children could wander away from the Truth. Perfect parenting is not the prerequisite for avoiding "Prodigalism."

Wise parenting, however, is the attainable goal we should all seek. It is reasonable and scriptural to be wise, with many scriptures encouraging us that God will give us the needed wisdom, the most obvious one being James 1:5. Wise parenting realizes not everything is under our control. Wise parenting realizes that we can't always make things happen the way we want them to. Wise parenting learns to trust the Father's love for our children in such a way that we are able to believe that "God's Got This," even when circumstances and situations indicate otherwise. I think the hardest thing for a parent to do is to daily watch the decline of our children's lives as they make wrong decisions, as they suffer the consequences of those decisions. We are so tempted to rescue them from their self-made messes, but is that wisdom?

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Bright Tomorrows is dedicated to reflecting the compassion of Jesus Christ by promoting mental health, helping those struggling with mental illness toward a healing-recovery lifestyle, and by assisting churches in their mission to better serve those with mental health concerns.



JEREMIAH 29:11

"For I know the plans

I have for you,
declares the LORD,
"plans for wholeness
and not for evil,
plans to give you
hope and a future."



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ATTENTION CHURCH LEADERS & CLINICIANS

SAVE THE DATE
10-28-2016



Dr. Matthew Stanford

- Bright Tomorrows is excited to announce that we are joining together with the Tulsa Chapter of CAPS (Christian Association for Psychological Studies) to bring Dr. Matthew Stanford to Tulsa on October 28, 2016.
- Dr. Stanford will be speaking to the importance of integrating biblical and clinical perspectives on mental illness in service to the needs of the afflicted.
- This will be a **SPECIAL ONE DAY EVENT** held at Asbury United Methodist Church for pastors, chaplains, theologians, pastoral counselors, lay ministers, psychologists, educators, psychiatrists, physicians, marriage and family therapists, social workers, psychiatric nurses, professional and lay counselors, researchers, psychological assistants, interns, and students.
- Read more on our Mission Update Report page.

You are such an overcomer, Tim! You and your amazing wife walk in love and power. CHRIST draws close to the humble—love you both!

—A Bright Tomorrows Supporter

I am so thankful that I attended group last night. As I write this, I have tears of joy. Your meditation made me realize that God is with me even through the darkest of dark and He will bring me through. Thank you for being such a great leader!

— A Support Group Participant

Tim & Nancy, you are AMAZING advocates & Bright Tomorrows is so very special. Love the hope and the opportunities you provide and appreciate you and the work we do together.

—Director of Education,
Mental Health Association of Oklahoma

Words cannot describe what a blessing you are and how your life is bringing healing to precious forgotten people. I am grateful that you have made this your life's work. You are a "God thing" as is Nancy and your journey together.

—A Tulsa Pastor

Mission Update Report

SAVE THE DATE—OCTOBER 28TH: BT & CAPS are co-sponsoring a seminar — “Grace for the Afflicted: A Biblical and Clinical Perspective on Mental Illness.” Matthew S. Stanford, PhD will be the featured presenter. He is CEO of the Hope and Healing Center & Institute (HHCI) in Houston, Texas and adjunct professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor College of Medicine and the Department of Psychology at the University of Houston. Dr. Stanford is the author of two books, Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness (InterVarsity Press, 2008) and The Biology of Sin: Grace Hope and Healing for Those Who Feel Trapped (InterVarsity Press, 2011).

FOR A SPECIAL INVITE TO THIS OCTOBER 28TH EVENT: Send your request to Tim Reside at treside@brighttomorrows.org or via our website CONTACT US page (www.brighttomorrows.org). Along with your invitation you will begin receiving update information as we approach the date.

BT offers two curriculum-based support groups from September-May. The faith-based and hope-affirming Christian materials used are clinically accurate. The **Bright Tomorrows Support Group** (BTSG), meeting on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays at 7PM, is designed for adults with a bipolar disorder or a depression diagnosis. The **Bright Tomorrows Family Group** (BTFG), meeting the 2nd & 4th Thursdays at 7PM, is a support group designed for the family and friend support givers of those with mental health concerns. (See our website for details.)

BT continues to offer to pastors, ministers, lay leaders and chaplains, **FREE Bi-Monthly Breakfast Seminars** led by qualified presenters discussing topics pertinent to church ministry.

BT's March Breakfast Seminar topic, **“When Mental Health Counseling is Needed: Making a ‘Best Fit’ Referral,”** was presented by Dr. Brian Goetsch. With experience as a pastor and as a Doctor of Clinical Psychology, he addressed issues related to facilitating care and follow up for those who might benefit from professional counseling. With underscored emphasis on the vital role of the minister in the therapeutic process, Dr. Goetsch discussed common approaches to therapy utilized by Christian counselors, how each therapy views “change”, some of the techniques used, and what kind of issues might be a best fit for each approach.

BT co-sponsored the 15th annual **Caring for Your Congregations Mental Health** symposium at University Village in Tulsa with the Mental Health Association Oklahoma and other fine organizations. This year's theme was **Emotional and Spiritual Care in the Midst of Disaster**. This FREE one-day 5 hour event for clergy, staff, chaplains, and lay leaders took place on April 22—a delicious hot lunch was served. Oklahoma ministry leaders are fully aware that disasters such as floods, tornadoes, fires and shootings can and do impact their communities. The question of the day: “How prepared are you, and your congregation, to respond when disasters occur?” Specific topics addressed included: (1) A Spiritual Response to Disaster: Resources for Help and Healing; (2) Emergency/Disaster Preparedness: The Cost of Doing Nothing; (3) Fostering Resilience: Addressing Weather Anxiety; and (4) Personal Resilience; Psychological First Aid - An Introduction.

Opportunities of Support



Tim & Nancy Reside
Work and Ministry Support

Please indicate on check whether you are making
a monthly pledge OR **a one-time donation.**

Make checks payable to Bright Tomorrows.

Donations are tax-deductible.

To make one-time credit card donations or recurring monthly donations by way of a PayPal account, please visit www.brighttomorrows.org and click the “donate” button on the left side of the web page.



“Waiting for the Prodigal to Return”

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At times mercy is called for, at other times, rescuing only hinders the process. This is where the wisdom of God is so needful, and it is given on an individual basis.

ANDREW: Make sure you are supporting the person, but not their prodigal lifestyle indirectly through financial support or anything that they can use to continue in their destructive behavior. Like myself, sometimes we must experience the full effects of our decisions and the pain caused by sin (hit rock-bottom) to realize we need to change and turn back to our Savior.

The most important thing to know is that no matter how much you may want them to change, it will never take hold until they are ready and want the change for themselves. From first-hand experience I can tell you beyond a shadow of a doubt that His promise for my life has not returned void even though I went deep into the rabbit hole.

LISA: Wisdom often calls for patience, and as any parent of a prodigal child knows, your patience is strained to the max! As a parent you find yourself needing patience with yourself, with your children, and even, if I may say it, with God.

Typically the restoration of a child back to the ways of the Lord is not a quick work, and therefore, patience becomes an ally in the battle. It requires us to “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward. For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:35-36).

But the greatest anchor of our hope is love. The known love of God toward our children, even when they have wandered from the ways of the Lord, is what holds us steady in turbulent times. It is our part to imitate that love of God toward our children, even when it appears they reject that love. Kindness leads to repentance (Romans 2:4), and we know that God is kind toward all. In the same way, our kindness, as opposed to rejection or anger, may be the thing that draws our children back into relationship with us as well as God.

ANDREW: When I returned to His grace, He was waiting for me with open arms and He is still holding his arms wide open for the person living the prodigal life. No sin will ever fill the God-sized void in their life no matter how long they search. Where our sin runs deep, His grace runs deeper.

LISA: A parent’s longing heart for their wayward, prodigal children is but a faint echo of God’s heart’s longing for those children.

ANDREW: I am currently attending Charis Bible College in Colorado, leading worship at a local church, and have started a music project that will send aid to orphans and those who are in need. This life I’m living today still blows my mind in comparison to my past life not too long ago, and it’s all because of Christ.

See more at: <http://www.tonycooke.org/articles-by-lisa-cooke/waiting-for-the-prodigal-to-return/>

Contact Information & Resources

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CHURCH MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

NAMI FaithNet: www.nami.org/namifaithnet

Pathways to Promise: www.pathways2promise.org

Mental Health Ministries: www.mentalhealthministries.net

Intl. Bipolar Foundation: www.internationalbipolarfoundation.org

Mental Health Grace Alliance: www.mentalhealthgracealliance.org

Bright Tomorrows Support Group (BTSG)

(Adult Bipolar & Depression Support Group)

1st & 3rd Thursdays at 7 P.M.

Bright Tomorrows Family Group (BTFG)

(Family & Friend Support Givers Group)

2nd & 4th Thursdays at 7 P.M.

These 7:00 P.M. Thursday Evening Christian Support Group Meetings take place September thru May at Asbury United Methodist Church, 6767 South Mingo in Tulsa. OK. For meeting descriptions, a detailed map and complete driving directions, please visit our website.

To receive this free newsletter please e-mail us or visit our website. if you prefer postal delivery, please provide us with your mailing address.

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