

Quiz meets erase denominational barriers

Children and adults alike meet Jesus through Scripture competitions

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A competitive Scripture memorization program is crossing denominational borders.

When Tom and Judy Vincent began directing the Christian and Missionary Alliance's (C&MA) Canadian Midwest District Bible quizzing program in 1981, there were five churches involved. Twenty-five quizzers—children up to Grade 12—memorized selected Scriptures and put their knowledge to the test at competitions.

Today, district meets include more than 400 quizzers from across Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Dryden, Ontario.

About one quarter of the 31 churches represented are from denominations other than the C&MA, including Baptists, Mennonites, Methodists and, through Regina's Christ the King parish, Roman Catholics. Even some C&MA teams include quizzers from several denominations.

"The [denominational]

barriers adults erect based on some theological point become moot when it comes to quizzing. Kids don't care," says Erin Petty, a quizzing coach at Erindale Alliance in Saskatoon, where Bible studies spur intense youth-led discussions.

With the foundation they get through memorizing Scripture, the teens are able to compare what their churches teach to the Bible. "You can see them maturing and you can see them thinking...and applying [what they're learning]," says Petty.

As a teen, Tom Vincent was puzzled when adults talked about their intimate relationship with Jesus. It was through quizzing that he found the passionate, Scripture-driven faith that drove him to want to help youth find their way to God through reading the Bible, no matter what their background.

"I don't in any way distinguish one [denomination] from another," says Vincent. "We are here as a body, to see young people strengthened by the sufficient Word of God."

But multid denominational quizzing wasn't always so clear-cut.

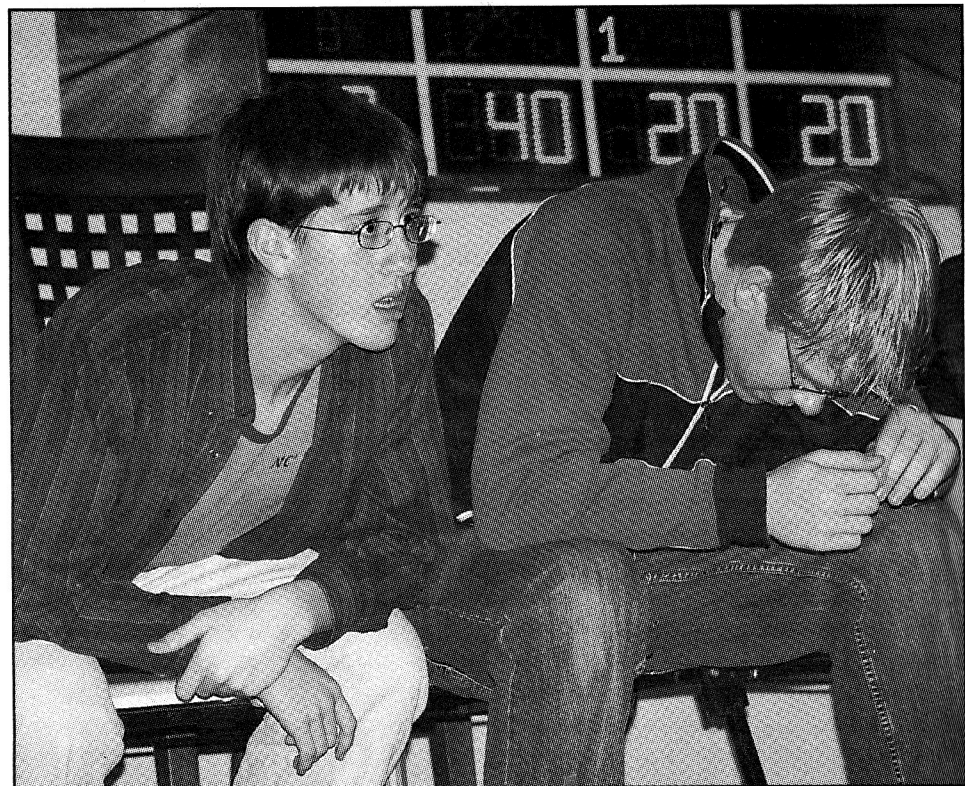
When Leah Perrault, who founded Christ the King's program, got involved with quizzing 10 years ago through a Protestant friend's church, she sometimes heard that "Catholics aren't Christian." Later, when she proposed quizzing to several parishes, parents worried that their kids would abandon the Catholic faith.

Today, Catholic quizzers take confidence in their identity and have learned to share and learn from other quizzers, she says.

As a coach, Perrault says she teaches the quizzers that "we shouldn't shy away from the fact that [denominational stereotyping] hurts. Christ doesn't want us to be divided. Christ wants us to recognize Him in each other, so it's okay that sometimes it hurts that we disagree about things."

However, she says, "we don't need to not like each other or deny someone the benefits of this program because we don't agree on Mary."

Tim Friesen started quizzing



Tim Friesen (left) waits for the next question during a recent quiz meet.

three years ago, and suddenly the homeschooled teen found his circle of friends had exploded in size. Although Friesen started quizzing with Baptists, last year his own Mennonite Brethren congregation, Parliament Community Church (PCC) in Regina, got involved.

Entire families at PCC became enthused, and by the first district meet PCC's team was quizzing in the toughest division. The church now has four teams.

Sometimes, Friesen says, he avoids pushing himself to learn

Scripture because of the impact it has on him.

"When I try and memorize the passages, I can't help but be convicted, like, 'Get out there and preach this message,'" he says. "That's the reason quizzing is so big and it grows quickly if it's done with the right spirit, because people are putting the Word of God in themselves and that's a dangerous thing."

Perrault knows that "danger" first-hand. Now a master of theology student at the University of Toronto, Perrault says it was

quizzing that taught her she could have a living relationship with Christ.

"I met Christ...so powerfully, and to know that was possible was so reassuring for me. I'd wanted it, but Catholic theology didn't offer me the language for it," she says.

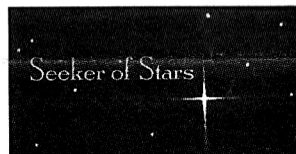
"I realized how important Scripture is for the growth of faith, whatever church you're in...Scripture grounds us, and that is something I wouldn't have learned if it hadn't been for quizzing."

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The story is well-written and short enough to be read