

A Lit Adventure in the Dark

by Peter Covington

Sometimes darkness is a gift because it helps us focus on the thing that is lighted in front of us.

In college, I worked with the high school youth group at church and was very committed to several young men. The philosophy of youth ministry in those days was called, “The incarnation ministry,” whereby adults spent close time with young people, becoming one of them in some ways, but also being the Jesus in their lives, showing them the love of God.

So I was often up for pretty much anything. It wasn’t a strange request when several of my usual group asked if I could drive them to another church of our denomination, about 80 miles away. It seems that at a recent youth event all three of these guys had met and fallen for a different girl at the other church.

I agreed—It seemed a good way to just “hang out.” Besides, we were going to a youth service, so “what could happen,” right? On the designated evening, everyone piled into my old, hand-me down Oldsmobile at 6 pm, and by 7, on a California summer evening, the landscape was dark.

We seemed immune from the dark in the Oldsmobile with the cabin lights on and conversations and music flowing across the car. We had nothing to pay attention to except each other as we hurtled down the freeway. We glided into the church parking lot at the time planned and the boys hurried into the church. I told myself I didn’t really have to chaperone in a traditional sense, but I watched each boy working his social angles as he found and settled in with the girl he was looking for.



After the planned activities we were soon on the road heading home. But, after only a short time, the engine was overheating. We pulled off the freeway, found a gas station, but the engine stopped before we could fully pull in and I coasted to a spot near a water hose. We opened the hood and found steam and smoke coming from the engine. One boy opened the radiator cap and he barely

escaped being scalded by the water that shot out, I filled the radiator with new and cooler water. The car would not start right away, needing to cool a bit more. As men in training, the boys gave me advice on how to fix the problem. Mostly we just waited.

Soon, the car begrudgingly started and we were off again in our bubble of light, surrounded by darkness, which now seemed more menacing as our ability to keep moving was in some doubt. Light took on new meaning as we began to scan the off ramps for gas stations. We found that the car could go about 20 miles before needing fresh water and a short rest.

We continued to press forward and even to enjoy the adventure of the night. The light of camaraderie in the vehicle kept us strong as we ventured through the dark. When we got back, I dropped the boys off at their homes. Fortunately Cliff, the one boy with some muscles, was still with me for the final near-breakdown, and he helped me push the car up an off ramp to the last station, where it started again.

We all built some strong relationships that night through the gift of light to hold us together and the gift of darkness for the opportunity to share in the adventure.