



# RBC, RMM, RIC, AND... JUGGLING?

BY LAMAR YODER

Have you ever taken a test that lists four different things and asks you to choose which one doesn't belong with the rest? Here is my test. Out of the following four things, choose one which doesn't seem to fit: Rosedale Bible College (RBC); Rosedale Mennonite Missions (RMM); Rosedale International Center (RIC); juggling. If you are like most people, you probably picked the last item. Juggling has nothing to do with RBC, RMM, and the RIC. Or does it? My story has all four mixed together in a fascinating adventure, which has ultimately led me to start my own juggling show/ministry and to become the president of the Christian Jugglers Association (CJA).

This story is about how God has been faithful in being "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Walking with God the last few years has

been incredible. It has been a journey filled with meaningful relationships, encouraging education, counseling and healing, swallowing pride, dealing with struggles, adventurous antics, renovation, and of course, juggling.

It all started during the summer of 2006. For some reason, that summer I had acquired a large appetite for climbing trees. So I climbed them, in spite of people warning me. Sundays after church I would go to Oxbow Park in Goshen, Indiana, and walk through the woods looking for trees to climb.

Sunday, August 27, 2006, is a day I will never forget, because my life completely changed directions. At the time I was attending Maple City Chapel. That morning I had a conversation with Gary Miller, and I told him I was interested in teaching the Bible. He then told me about RBC and encouraged me to go get some education if I thought I was called to teach the Bible. That seemed to make sense. After all, a teacher needs to know something before he can teach it, right? He told me that RBC had six-week terms and that I wouldn't have to commit to a full year if I didn't want to. I wanted to go, but I was conflicted, because I was working a full-time job with a 401k, insurance, and benefits. How do you decide to throw all of that away to go to Bible college at age 25?

The singles group I was involved in at Maple City Chapel had planned to go



to the Michigan-Warren dunes that day. It was a fun day at the beach, and there were plenty of trees! So all day long, I was in search of good climbing trees; I found a bunch of them in an old river bed that led back to the beach.

On the way I was running ahead of everybody, scampering up and down the river banks, and up and down any tree I could find. I was jumping over logs and having a great time, until I found a tree that was growing sideways. A big, tall tree. About 20-25 feet up, a thick vine that was attached to it came all the way down to the ground. I had found vines many times and was always able to pull them off the tree. I grabbed this one, pulled it, yanked it, hung on it, and swung on it, but I could not get it to break. Hmmm. So I started climbing



it, hand over hand. I went up about five feet and then jumped down. I looked up and a great question came to my mind. “I wonder if I could climb all the way up there?”

Only one way to find out, right? I started climbing. Hand over hand all the way up to the tree. Latching onto the tree, I hung upside down with my legs and arms wrapped around a limb that went out about five or six feet. Oh, the exhilaration!! Little did I know that the limb was dead. As I inched outward, the group was catching up to me, with my friend Laura in the lead. She looked up and saw me just as it happened. Crack!



The whole limb snapped off and down I went. I remember falling, and I'm still falling, and I am still fal-BOOM! Two things ran through my head while I was falling: Now everybody is going to think I'm stupid, and this is really going to hurt. Truth is, I was right on both accounts. I have never felt pain like that ever before in my life. I landed flat on my back, stretched out from head to toe, but tilted a little to the left. It knocked the wind out of me, and I actually thought I was going to die because I couldn't breathe. The whole group ran up and watched as I writhed in pain. I remember looking up and seeing a ring of heads, all looking down at me. After what felt like an eternity my breath returned. Once I finally could breathe I knew I wasn't going to die. So now the question was: how many things are broken?

I assumed everything was broken. Ribs, back, neck, everything. So I started feeling my upper torso with my right hand, wondering where the damage was. I started moving and nothing seemed wrong, until I looked down at my left arm. “Oh my goodness, look at my arm.” It was broken, badly broken. My guardian angel was with me that day, because I was able to get up and walk within five minutes. It was a miracle. The doctor set the bone and put a cast on it. The irony of the story was that I had just ordered my juggling torches the day before this happened.

This one event opened up the door to RBC – I couldn't do my job with a broken arm. So off I went. I showed up at RBC, cast and all. I got to tell my story a bunch of times, because everybody asked about it. I went to RBC with the idea of being there for six weeks, but got a two-year degree instead. I even took some additional classes the year after I graduated.

The first couple of terms were stretching for me, because I wasn't a Mennonite. I loved the classes, the people, and the family atmosphere. When somebody told me that the staff and faculty are really interested in building meaningful relationships with the students, I was surprised and skeptical. After I did some personal investigating, I found it was true.

One of the biggest reasons I think God led me to RBC was because I desperately needed something that a place like RBC could give. During fourth term, after some interesting leading of the Holy Spirit, I asked for counseling. I was an emotional mess when I got to RBC. I didn't understand the depth of pain and anger I carried with me on a daily basis. I became convinced that I needed counseling, so I asked Preston Yoder, the men's resident director, and Tim Stauffer, the dean of students, if they would help me. They agreed. So I met with Tim and Preston once a week for an hour during the fourth and fifth terms.

Those counseling sessions had a huge impact on me, leading me to an inward freedom that I enjoy every day. Hebrews talks about “a root of bitterness.” I had a sequoia tree of bitterness. It's amazing what happens to a heart when anger and

bitterness are removed. As the Holy Spirit started healing me inwardly, I became aware of what I call “the cluster of lies.” These lies were from the enemy. He stood on the platform of my anger and bitterness and reinforced these lies inside of me. I believed them. Only after unearthing the anger and bitterness did I start to understand those lies and how they were affecting me. I don't live under that oppression anymore. Praise Jesus! RBC is a great place, and I will always look back and thank my creator for letting me go there. I love RBC.

So what does RBC have to do with juggling? For starters, RBC has a number of great places for a juggler to practice. I used the chapel, the classrooms, the coffee shop, the guy's student lounge, and the gym. I have no idea why RBC was a catalyst for me in the area of juggling. I guess having a whole new group of people to show off to was encouraging.

Ever since I was a kid I loved to be on stage. The desire to be on stage has never really left me, and RBC was there to meet that need. Christa (Keim) Wolf had a major impact on me during my time at RBC. She put me in charge of building the stage for the play *The Miracle Worker* during my first year. I also had the pleasure of being on the drama team the following two years, and I took Christa's Intro to Fine Arts class. (Now called Intro to Dramatic Arts, this class is offered every other year.)

This was an extra class I wanted to take after I had gotten my associate degree. In order for me to take that class, I needed a full-time job close to Rosedale with flexible hours. At the time, Rosedale

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Mennonite Missions was right in the middle of buying what is now called the Rosedale International Center (RIC). I spoke with their property manager, Bob Stauffer, about it, and he said there was a





wall and new handrails. Watching the renovation process from the beginning was an incredible experience, and it is the perfect picture of what God did inside of me when I came to RBC. He kept the main structure of who I was and went to work. He had to tear me apart so He could put me back together again, better than I was before.

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I remember having to tear out the old boiler system. It had pipes going everywhere throughout the building, and the water in these pipes was black and sludgy. The boiler itself was made of about 15 sections of cast iron. Each section was about eight to ten inches thick and weighed between 200 and 250 pounds. We swung sledge hammers, breaking them into pieces we could handle. Every section had black, sludgy water in it, so once we broke through, black, sludgy water would splatter everywhere. A number of days in a row I ended the work day looking like Johnny Cash’s “Man in Black.” I couldn’t help but think that on some days, this is what God looks like after working on me. Maybe your story is similar to mine. Are you trying to run away from what God wants to do in your heart? I can tell you from personal experience that it’s worth letting Him do it. It’s painful, and sometimes exhausting, but worth it.

good chance I could hire in for the project. It ended up being a good fit, because RMM needed somebody to live at the RIC during the renovation for security purposes. The RIC is not in a great neighborhood, and it had been broken into a couple of times after RMM bought it. So I agreed to be security for the building and live there until the project was done. This situation took care of everything I needed: a place to live, a full-time job, and flexible hours so I could take classes at RBC.

The RIC will forever hold a special place in my heart, because of what it represents to me personally. It represents redemption. Working and living at the RIC, God continued to show me what He was doing inside of me – the work He started at RBC. As I lived and worked at the RIC, I was surrounded by a multitude of great people, including the RMM staff and the Send House staff. The two guys I worked with the most were Bob Stauffer and Randy Nisly. Bob was the boss; Randy and I were co-workers. Working with Randy was a great experience. He taught me a lot of things. We became

friends, and some of our conversations led to God working in my heart in a much needed way. I am thankful for Randy and his kind heart.

When RMM bought the RIC it was “Juanita’s House,” a run-down nursing home built back in the ‘60s before strict codes were in place. RMM needed to bring the building up to code and make the necessary changes to suit their needs. This meant keeping the main structure and redoing everything on the inside.

This was an extensive project. Not a stitch of insulation could be found anywhere, so insulating the exterior walls and ceilings needed to be done. We had to tear down masonry walls and raise up new ones in different places, replace most of the electrical wiring, and install all new lights, as well as a brand new heating/air conditioning system. New plumbing was needed, as well as new flooring, new windows, new cabinets, new sinks, new toilets, and a fresh coat of paint from top to bottom. New sidewalks went in around the back, along with a new retaining





So what do RMM and the RIC have to do with juggling? Nothing. Except in my story, living at the RIC gave me a place with high ceilings to practice any time I wanted throughout the winter. Many nights I would practice till 1 or 2 am. I also discovered a juggling club only 15 minutes from the RIC. I joined it as soon as I found out about it.

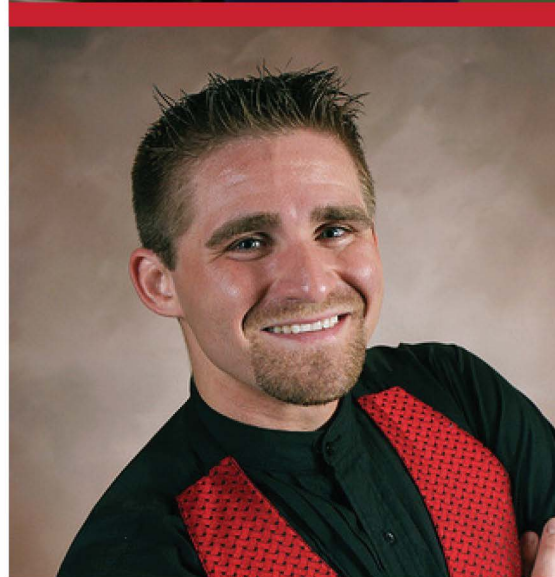
“The RIC will forever hold a special place in my heart, because of what it represents to me personally – redemption.”

As my technical skill with juggling grew, I started performing. Also, while living in Columbus I met a longtime Christian juggling entertainer by the name of David Cain. He is a world-class juggler and has been using his juggling ability to teach God’s word. He also wrote “The Handbook of Christian Juggling Routines.” He at one time was the president of the Christian Jugglers Association. David helped me get started doing juggling as a ministry, and ever since I have been developing my own juggling show/ministry.

The year of 2010 has been a big transitional year for me as I helped finish the project with RMM, moved back to my home area, and became the president of the Christian Jugglers Association. ([www.christianjuggling.com](http://www.christianjuggling.com)). During the summer and fall I enjoyed developing my show and media, including: custom music, photography, a logo, brochures, fliers, a promotional video, routines of my own, and of course, a website – [www.juggleryoder.com](http://www.juggleryoder.com). Check it out! I am sure you won’t be disappointed.

So all in all, God has been faithful in being “a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Looking back over my life, I see how God has been guiding me to this point. My own juggling show/ministry is the only place where all of my passions and interests come together in a meaningful way. For a long time, I thought God was leading me into the ministry to become a pastor or something along those lines, and those plans might still take shape in the future. But as of right now, I am enjoying using my performing talents to glorify God. It’s the best job I could have ever hoped for!

*LaMar currently resides in Goshen, Indiana.*



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