

## LIGHTING THE PATH TO FREEDOM

(Written by Angie Batluck and originally published by Renewing The Heart a ministry of Focus on the Family  
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An older man and his wife walked from booth to booth at a pastor's conference, observing the various ministry resources and materials. Upon seeing Lisanne and Tom McMurray's booth they stopped suddenly. Still standing ten feet away, their eyes widened in disbelief as they studied the sign that read "LIGHTDANCERS" and the neatly arranged materials on the table. How could such a booth be present at a pastor's conference? Tom McMurray motioned for the man to pick up any materials that he wanted, but the man only raised his index finger and wagged it back and forth, clearly expressing his disapproval of the McMurray's ministry.

Despite this incident during their first year of ministry, Lisanne and Tom McMurray didn't allow themselves to be discouraged. The McMurrays know that God has called them to minister to exotic dancers, and for four years now, they have been obeying this calling through LIGHTDANCERS, a spiritual ministry for exotic dancers.

### **Receiving The Call**

In 1998, God placed a burden on Lisanne McMurray's heart to reach out to exotic dancers. Having once been a dancer herself, McMurray understands the feelings and emotions—the world of an exotic dancer. Partying, drinking, drugs, bikers and sex filled McMurray's life as a dancer. However, rather than hiding her past in shame, McMurray is using her testimony to reach out to dancers and show them that God really does care about them.

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When LIGHTDANCERS first began, McMurray and her husband were living in Phoenix, Arizona. During their time in Phoenix, the McMurrays held special dinners for the dancers, conducted Bible studies and took gifts into the clubs. However, from the very beginning, the McMurrays realized that there were no resources for dancers or for Christians who wanted to minister to dancers.

To fill this void, McMurray began to create the much needed materials. *Dancing In His Light* is a devotional that McMurray has written specifically for dancers, and *Coming Out Of The Darkness* is a manual that helps Christians understand the world of a dancer and therefore minister more effectively. In addition, McMurray writes a quarterly newsletter for dancers called *The Color of Light*.

As a result, McMurray began to post the newsletter as well as the devotional, manual and tracts on their web site, reaching a larger audience with the materials.

## **Going Beyond The Clubs**

Aside from their web site, God has opened a second door of ministry for the McMurrays—the Gentlemen Club Expo. Each year in Las Vegas, club owners from around the country gather at the Gentlemen Club Expo to share with each other their wisdom on how to promote the business. At the end of the expo, dancers from around the country gather for Fan Fair. McMurray explains that these dancers are the “best of the best,” and fans come from all over to meet the dancers face to face.

McMurray and her husband have had the opportunity to attend these events for three years, and last year, the McMurrays were able to secure a booth alongside the industry booths. McMurray explains, “We were able to talk with a lot of people and basically just serve the girls the best that we could.”

McMurray adds, “We got some strange looks. Some couldn’t believe that we would be right there in the midst.” However, McMurray says that the dancers responded well.

Having been a dancer herself, McMurray can talk to the dancers at Fan Fair with an understanding heart. “When you’re trying to share the love of the Lord, it’s the one common thread,” McMurray explains.

## **Planting Seeds**

McMurray and her husband don’t always see the fruit of their work, but they know that they are planting seeds in the lives of dancers and even club owners. LIGHTDANCERS is also an encouragement to the Christians who may be hidden within the industry.

McMurray says, “It’s strange because there are a lot of Christians in the industry, and they’re kind of straddling the fence. They can’t share their profession with the Christians they encounter at church, and they’re awkward about sharing their Christianity with the people they work with. Our presence there last year seemed to give them an outlet to be able to step up and be a little more open.”

LIGHTDANCERS also serves as an encouragement to the dancers who have left the industry, but don’t know where to turn for support as they make the transition out of the adult entertainment industry. In McMurray’s words, “They have no spiritual lifeline.”

## **Undoing The Wrong**

Making the transition out of dancing involves many challenges. In most cases, transition takes at least one year. “It may take longer if people are more intertwined with a group,” adds McMurray.

Walking away from the money is one of the most difficult challenges because normal jobs can’t pay the same as dancing. In addition, McMurray says that another challenge is “readjusting to what you and I would consider a normal pattern of thinking.” She explains, “Your perceptions

**Walking away from the money is one of the most difficult challenges because normal jobs can't pay the same as dancing.** really get twisted when you're in that industry, and stuff that we would look at as 'no way would I consider something like that' just becomes normal. You kind of have to reshuffle and relearn everything.”

Another issue that the McMurrays must deal with is the dancers' perception of Christians. McMurray explains, “I can't tell you how many girls we've run across who have been damaged by the Christians they've encountered wanting to save them. They've done more damage than they have good. You have to try to undo that on top of everything else.”

McMurray adds that despite good intentions, “A lot of people are on the crusade to rescue them from this lifestyle and usher them out at a rapid pace when you can't do that. You can't expect that of these girls. It's a slow, transitional thing.”

### **Obeying God, Not Man**

Just like most exotic dancer ministries, LIGHTDANCERS receives criticism from some Christians, particularly regarding McMurray's husband Tom.

However, McMurray is quick to defend her husband's role in LIGHTDANCERS. “Tom has been a very good example for a lot of the women we come in contact with. He's actually ended up being a big brother to a lot of them,” McMurray says. “He's a solid source of prayer.”

Most importantly, together the McMurrays serve as encouragers and role models to the dancers. McMurray adds with a laugh, “We are far, far from perfect.” Yet their imperfection shows dancers that they are human and that God still loves them.

The McMurrays won't know until they reach heaven how many lives LIGHTDANCERS has impacted. But numbers aren't important to them.

“Just the love of the Lord being so important, everything else aside. The fact that they're loved, that He loves them exactly as they are, accepts them exactly as they are. Just to be able to convey that to somebody-one somebody-would make any effort we had to go through worthwhile.” says McMurray.

To find out more information on LIGHTDANCERS or to download their free resources, visit [www.lightdancers.org](http://www.lightdancers.org)